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About this Journal

Sri Lanka Journal of Sociology (SJS) is a refereed sociological journal with an interdisciplinary approach to sociological phenomena. The journal has been newly established but follows a long tradition of sociological and anthropological research at Peradeniya. SJS is published twice a year, in June and December, by the Department of Sociology of the Faculty of Arts, University of Peradeniya.

Scope

This journal accepts original contributions focusing on sociological phenomena from Social Sciences and Humanities in general and Sociology and Anthropology in particular. Academic contributions from other disciplines are considered for publication if they have adopted a sociological approach in the analysis of theoretical and empirical content of sociological significance. Within these broad disciplinary boundaries, the journal accepts empirical and theoretical contributions, which focus on peace and development issues, displacement, post-war reconstruction, reconciliation, poverty, religion, health and diseases, governance, social media, etc. The journal is envisaged as a forum for discussion, comment and review of innovative, novel and trend-setting research studies in Sri Lanka as well as in the South Asian region.

Aim

Sri Lanka Journal of Sociology aims to disseminate original and cutting-edge research on Sociology and Anthropology and related social sciences and humanities disciplines among the local and international academic community. It maintains rigorous standards of academic quality and provides a forum for high quality empirical and theoretical contributions. The journal also contributes to the production and dissemination of culture-specific knowledge and the development of social sciences within Sri Lanka and South Asia.

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Contents

Sri Lanka Journal of Sociology

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VARIETIES OF CASTE CONSCIOUSNESS. Edited with an Introduction by Kalinga Tudor Silva and Mark E Balmforth. In *CASTE: A Global Journal on Social Exclusion*, *Vol 6: No. 1, April 2025*

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VARIETIES OF CASTE CONSCIOUSNESS. Edited with an Introduction by Kalinga Tudor Silva and Mark E Balmforth. In *CASTE: A Global Journal on Social Exclusion*, *Vol 6: No. 1, April 2025*

A Review Article

Jayantha Perera

Caste is a social reality that structures human relationships. A caste system, with its complex history and multifaceted institutions, encompasses the social, economic, cultural, and religious aspects of human life. It serves as a framework for managing interactions among individuals, and sometimes, as a platform for organising political, social and economic reforms. It guides and sometimes forces people to live in a complex social, cultural, political, and religious milieu. Religious, social, and political traditions, along with targeted actions, sustain bundles of rules and values that have emerged from within. A caste system, over time, becomes an engulfing subculture that organises people into a rigid system of relationships, hierarchically organised, and sometimes, sanctioned by dominant religions, such as Hinduism. Caste is deeply lodged in the minds of the people in South Asia. It has historically been a set of unequal relationships characterised by power, privilege, inequality, and marginality. A minority has usurped power and privilege as members of high castes, while the majority, as low castes, suffer from social marginality and inequality, poverty and caste violence.

As a rigid hierarchical system, caste thrives on systemic *a priori* inclusion and exclusion modalities. B. R. Ambedkar aptly summarised the roots and the mechanisms of inclusion and exclusion as follows:

The outcaste, a term used to describe those who are considered untouchable and outside the caste system, is a by-product of the caste system. There will be outcasts as long as there are castes. Nothing can emancipate the outcaste except by the destruction of the caste system. Nothing can ensure their survival except the purging of the Hindu faith of this odious and vicious dogma (1932:3).

Ambedkar's tireless advocacy for outcaste (Dalit) communities to adopt his visionary ideals of liberty, social justice, and equality took caste out of parochial village spaces and premised it in a broader public sphere. His relentless efforts, despite the challenges, inspire marginalized communities to continue the fight for a more just society. According to Ambedkar, national and regional Hindu dominance in India blocks Dalits' aspirations for a more just society. Ambedkar rejected Gandhi's *Harijan Seva Sangh* (Dalit Service Congregation) because he thought it was a paternalistic mechanism that reinforced Hindu dominance instead of empowering Dalits. Moreover, the *Harijan Seva Sangh* denied low castes the opportunity of expressing their authentic social identity, thereby tacitly claiming their acquiescence to an in-egalitarian social and ethical set of values. Ambedkar recognised the embeddedness of the caste system in Hindu society and the Indian economy. He wanted to 'annihilate' the caste system because nothing, he believed, can emancipate the outcaste without first destroying the caste system (Teltumbde, 2024).

Ambedkar, born an untouchable in India, proposed a new Buddhism to enable millions of low caste and Dalit members to gain social, economic and political freedom. His interpretation of Buddhism

focused on social justice and equality. By adopting the new Buddhism, he believed that untouchables and low castes could carve out a new identity for themselves as it offered individualism and socio-political commitment of the state as the basis of a new social order. Although millions of low caste and Dalit members had converted to the new Buddhism, Ambedkar and his followers failed to promote equality among different strata of low castes and Dalits. The new Buddhism helped identify widespread caste oppression and exploitation in Indian society. However, it was unable to show the way forward toward radical social change.

Caste systems take different forms in different countries. In India, an ancient Vedic framework classified society into four *varnas* (social classes). Brahmins (priests), Kshatriyas (warriors), Vaishyas (merchants), and Sudras (labourers) form the core of a strong caste system. This framework excludes Dalits (outcastes or untouchables), who are not a part of the *varna* system. The sacred dimension of the caste system enables the Brahmins to become the custodians of Hindu values, beliefs, practices and resources. The binary of 'sacred' and 'polluted' not only keeps the Dalits out of the caste hierarchy but also justifies exploitation and violence against them (Dirks, 1988). In Sri Lanka, on the other hand, the caste system does not have a manifested sacred dimension as is found in India. There is no Brahmin caste in Sri Lanka, except for a few Hindu priests who handle Hindu rituals. The allocation of people and communities to various castes based on 'sacred' and 'polluted' criteria is absent in Sri Lanka. Instead, employment and differential ethics of interaction among castes indicate the relative status of a person and a community in the caste hierarchy.

Although a caste system is a vertically organised system with formidable barriers against upward mobility, there are several mechanisms that facilitate caste mobility. One key mechanism is 'Sanskritization', a term

coined by M.N. Srinivas (Srinivas, 2009). It refers to the process by which lower castes, by imitating the value system and general behaviour of the upper castes, can, over a long period of time, move upward in the hierarchy. However, this process can still create a 'shadow effect' on the Dalits (Guru, 2018). Another way to climb higher is to embrace westernisation, primarily through education, by mastering new skills, and making investments in land and businesses. State and non-state sectors also provide a promising path for upward mobility through development programmes aimed at social transformation and land reform. Such programmes empower the lower castes and outcastes by treating them as normal citizens with equal rights to life, who can share state welfare benefits.

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The co-editors of the 'Varieties of Caste Consciousness' introduced the four articles (read at a symposium on Caste in Sri Lanka and the Sri Lankan Diaspora) and succinctly outlined their main arguments and findings under three main themes. One theme is the legacy of the colonial administration, which attempted to separate caste from class to create the impression that caste is dead and class is triumphant. The second is historical mediation, which has shaped the expectations and imaginings of different castes and their coexistence with class identities, without erasing the binary of inclusion and exclusion. The third theme is that the caste system remains alive as a complex social reality influencing political, economic, cultural, and social space, refuting the belief that it has succumbed to modernisation and globalisation. The findings underscore the urgent need for further research and policy actions to address these persistent issues.

Article 1 – 'Dynamics between Cinnamon and the Salagama People' -- examines how the domestication of cinnamon production helped consolidate the caste system in southern Sri Lanka. It is premised on a 'multispecies' perspective to highlight the roles of human and non-human actors in shaping the Sinhala caste system. Apart from human interlocutors, a particular plant species, cinnamon, is associated with the natural resource base of the Sinhala caste system. Thus, the specificity of and challenges for caste need to be understood not only from the angle of social justice and human rights, but also in terms of environmental justice and the sustainability of caste occupations. The article discusses changes in the global market, the absence of quality control mechanisms, land scarcity, urbanisation, and smallholder farming practices, and how these factors have impacted the coexistence between the plant and the caste, and encouraged the formation of a subaltern group of low-paid cinnamon workers.

Article 2 – 'Cultural Ambivalences Towards and Among Drummer Caste Members' -- explores three types of cultural ambivalences. One is Sinhala society's attitudes towards the drummer caste; the second is the state's hesitancy towards providing the drummer caste increased access to a formal education system which appreciates arts and traditions; and the third is the mixed attitudes towards drumming and rituals within the caste itself. The article argues that the neoliberal economic framework has enhanced such ambivalences in the context of radical political movements such as the Janatha Vimukti Peramuna (JVP). It highlights quite cogently how the drummer caste has reacted and coped with such ambivalences. Some members of the caste gave up drumming and ritual dancing altogether and transitioned to non-caste employment and businesses. In contrast, others

took advantage of the new opportunities opened up by the local tourist economy to earn a living through ritualistic performances.

Article 3 – 'Recasting the Brahmin: the Epistemic Critique of Caste'- discusses how Sinhala literature has emphasised ethnicity, rather than caste, in selecting creative writing themes, reflecting public silence on the caste system. Based on Martin Wickramasighe's *Bava Tharanaya* (Crossing the Cycle of Existence) and *Bamunu Kulaye Bindavatima* (Fall of the Brahmin Caste), the article examines the limitations of knowledge and beliefs, questioning how and why particular claims are accepted or rejected, thereby fostering a deeper understanding and enhanced critical thinking among readers. As allegorical narratives, the two books present stories where characters, events, and settings represent deeper, more symbolic meanings that are moral and political in nature. They are useful literary devices to sensitise the Sinhala reading public about the caste system at a time when caste has become politically salient.

Article 4 – 'Caste, Space, and Retail Religiosity in Tamil Toronto' – describes how the Sri Lankan caste system still plays an important role in the Tamil diaspora in Canada, particularly in the selection of marriage partners at the family level, and temple construction and welfare activities at the community level. The article shows that emigrants from Sri Lanka to Canada think that their community cultural centres, such as Hindu temples, should deploy caste as a part of their cultural heritage that includes temples, the Tamil language, and Tamil music. They believe that preserving such heritage would undoubtedly help them and their children to survive in a foreign environment. The first generation born in Canada, on the other hand, is reticent about caste and sees it as an inappropriate transplant that makes it more difficult for them to assimilate into local Canadian communities. The article describes significant differences between

diaspora temples in Toronto and Tamil temples in Sri Lanka. Such differences are structural and could impact the survival of caste in its current form. Hindu temples in Toronto are often movable entities, frequently located in urban areas in rented warehouses. Local zoning laws and the 'light industrial' retail market limit the sacred rights of the Hindu caste over temple land. Toronto temple custodians move back and forth between describing temples as businesses and as *kōvils,* moving away from their traditional roles. Temple managers in Toronto use mass media to attract devotees in a competitive temple market. Moreover, Toronto temples attract diaspora devotees by offering shelter from certain imagined identity-eroding influences of urban Canada.

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Five general research articles on Indian caste issues follow the four symposium articles. The first research article – 'Reimagining Resources: The Politics of Dalit Land Struggles' -- analyses the history and dynamics of land alienation in Kerala, a representation of land in social reform movements that transcends Brahmin-imposed caste fragmentation strategy, and how social reforms provide a platform to assert the rights of deprived sections of society. Although some reform movements have unified the untouchable castes around common concerns such as land ownership and education, the ruling classes, dominated by higher castes, with the support of the Communist Party in Kerala, have thwarted such movements by employing the strategy of caste fragmentation. The article recognises the value and usefulness of charismatic leaders who can guide social mobilisation, particularly in a caste-ridden society, to build trust and unity among the depressed castes.

The second general research article – 'Struggle for Emancipation and Dalit Consciousness -- analyses intergenerational struggles among Dalits to emancipate themselves from high-caste aggression and violence. The article focuses on the autobiography of an activist, written by Satyanarayana, titled *'My Father Baliah'* (2013). By following one family over three generations, the autobiography examines the rise, fall, and resurgence of the caste system. In the second ascending generation, 'untouchability presented itself glaringly just like the sound of a howling steam engine.' During the British period, the caste system became antithetical to the modernity introduced through colonialism. However, even during British colonial rule, caste aggression and violence did not vanish altogether. Instead, they transformed into subtler forms of aggression. Now, they have infiltrated modern institutions stealthily, thereby posing a threat to the struggles for Dalits' emancipation. The upper castes, and even the Sudras, have been reluctant to discard their claims of superiority, not only within colonial institutions but also in post-independent India. The book reaffirms Ambedkar's observation, that no constitutional safeguards, so far, have really helped the hapless Dalits; they remained excluded, segregated and untouchable in free India. In other words, the mindset of upper-caste Hindus have not changed much, despite the relentless efforts of activists like Ambedkar.

The third general research article – 'From Margins to Mainstream: Caste, Women, and Panchayati Institutions' -- evaluates the effects of the Haryana Panchayati Raj Amendment Act (2015) in empowering Scheduled Caste women, especially in Panchayati Raj institutions. The article argues that the empowerment of women, particularly in political contexts, is vital for advancing gender equality and enabling them to combat social and economic marginalisation and exploitation by higher castes. The article

emphasises the need for targeted educational initiatives to encourage female participation in development discourse.

The fourth general research article – 'Caste Prejudices in Denial: University Students' Perceptions' -- points out that caste prejudices are more pronounced among dominant castes than among others, and are more likely to resist caste-focused reforms such as 'reservations' and inter-caste marriages. Dominant castes attempt to delegitimise the importance of caste as a category of contemporary discrimination. At the same time, the disadvantaged communities demonstrate their acute awareness of structural inequalities that suppress them. The above patterns of perception mirror broader societal trends in India, where dominant caste groups often endorse economic or meritocratic framings to avoid the acknowledgement of caste inequalities. Caste groups' identification has emerged as a key predictor in shaping views on the state's reservation policies. Those in the 'General' category normally perceive these policies as unfair and discriminatory, believing such policies would limit their opportunities to gain advantages. Conversely, scheduled castes, scheduled tribes, and other backward caste categories support the reservation policies, as they can benefit directly from such affirmative actions. The article also reaffirms the importance of higher education as a potential space for social transformation, as it engages students of all castes in meaningful reflection and cross-group interactions. The fifth general research article – 'Consciousness Not Without Dangers' - examines Dalits' willingness to renounce Hinduism as a protest against untouchability, a statement of their rights as citizens, and an escape from caste oppression and violence. The key question is whether the Dalits have the capacity to break free from the caste system and construct new, independent Selves. The article points out the risks and dangers that surround such a willingness and such group actions. The majority of

Hindus would consider such converted Dalits as transgressors who have challenged the social stratification of the sacred Hindu caste system. Such actions would inevitably invite physical violence and violations of Dalits' constitutional rights. In the case of Dalits' conversions to non-Indic religions, violence tends to be overt, raw, and physical, often driven by a fear of losing cultural and social control within the Hindu fold. In contrast, conversions to Indic religions, which theoretically reject the caste system, face more covert forms of violence, such as legal and political obstacles.

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The absence of a concluding chapter, especially one summarising the five general research articles and providing a general conclusion for the entire collection, leaves the reader with the intellectual task of connecting the dots between the articles. From a stylistic point of view, the symposium articles are better-structured and edited than the five general research articles. Although the difference between an 'article' and a 'general research article' is known to academic journal readers, the general reader might become confused by the distinction. Such readers might assume that the distinction reflects the quality or the depth of an article.

Taken as a whole, the nine articles cogently deliver a cohesive narrative of how caste is embedded in the South Asian social fabric, reinforcing social hierarchies, maintaining power structures, and ensuring their continuity. The authors have elaborated on covert forms of everyday caste aggression, resistance, and compliance in rural spaces and urban environments. Some articles have shown how school education and the generation of non-caste employment help the privileged and the non-privileged to move upwards on social and economic ladders. This collection of articles highlights the need for further anthropological

research on caste systems, caste politics, social and economic transformations, Dalit resistance movements, and the role of the state in actively promoting Dalit emancipation. The articles will also interest those curious about caste and mobility, as they offer a compelling and multifaceted examination of mobility within the caste system.

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Pregnancy Cravings (*Dola Duka*) in Relation to Social Structure and Personality in a Sinhalese Village by Gananath Obeyesekere

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Pregnancy Cravings (*Dola Duka*) in Relation to Social Structure and Personality in a Sinhalese Village by Gananath Obeyesekere

A Review Article

R. M. Auchithya Rathnayake

The main purpose of this paper is to review one of the articles written by Professor Gananath Obeyesekere. The chosen article is titled "***Pregnancy Cravings (Dola Duka) in Relation to Social Structure and Personality in a Sinhalese Village***". Obeyesekere graduated from the University of Ceylon (now known as the University of Peradeniya) in 1955.Thereafter, he completed his master's degree and Ph.D at the University of Washington, Seattle. He taught at several Universities such as the University of Ceylon, the University of Washington, Seattle, and the University of California, San Diego. Thus, Obeyesekere, an eminent native Sri Lankan anthropologist, worked at both national and international levels (Vitharana & Ranasinghe, 2018).

Professor Obeyesekere was Chair of the Anthropology Department at Princeton University and worked there as a professor from 1980 to the year 2000 (de Silva, 2021). In 2002, he retired from service at Princeton. Though retired, he chose to carry out further investigations related to Sri Lankan society and culture. From the outset, he chose to work in the English language rather than in his mother tongue i.e., Sinhala. This was done for the purpose of enlightening the perspectives of foreign scholars and directing their attention to Sri Lankan society and culture. This venture has proved to be an unqualified success, since his work is still being subjected to discussions and citations worldwide. Through his work, Obeyesekere has attempted to review the unspoken traditional and cultural conventions of Sri Lankans. Thus, Obeyesekere's works can be identified as masterpieces in the disciplines of anthropology and sociology.

When considering Obeyesekere's publications, the following have drawn serious scholarly attention.

- *Land Tenure in Village Ceylon: A Sociological and Historical Study, 1967*
- *Medusa's Hair: An Essay on Personal Symbols and Religious Experience, 1981*
- *The Cult of The Goddess Pattini, 1984*
- *Buddhism Transformed: Religious Change in Sri Lanka (with Richard Gombrich), 1988*
- *The Work of Culture: Symbolic Transformation in Psychoanalysis and Anthropology, 1990*
- *The Apotheosis of Captain Cook: European Mythmaking in The Pacific, 1992*
- *Imagining Karma: Ethical Transformation in Amerindian, Buddhist, and Greek Rebirth, 2002*
- *Cannibal Talk: The Man-Eating Myth and Human Sacrifice in the South Seas, 2005*
- *Karma and Rebirth, 2005*
- *The Awakened Ones: Phenomenology of Visionary Experience, 2012*
- *The Doomed King: A Requiem for Sri Vikrama Rajasinha, 2017*

Apart from these influential books, Obeyesekere has written a vast variety of articles for various reputed journals. Among them, the article that has been chosen here, "Pregnancy Cravings (Dola Duka) in Relation to Social Structure and Personality in a Sinhalese Village," was published in the journal "*American Anthropologist*" (volume 65, issue 2) in 1963. This article attempts to explicate how the Dola Duka complex was institutionalized in Rambadeniya, an isolated jungle village in the Pattu

(district) of Laggala, which lies to the Northeast of Matale in the Central Province of [Sri Lanka] (Obeyesekere, 1963, p. 323). In order to achieve his objective, Obeyesekere has divided the article into a few sub-sections. This helps the reader to have interesting and continuous reading while being privy to classical Sri Lankan society and culture. This manner of presentation helps the reader to better comprehend the notion of the Dola Duka complex, even though they may not be familiar with the concept.

The article, which is structured into several key sections, begins with an introduction, followed by an exploration of the psychological basis of 'Dola-Duka' and its cultural background. It then delves into the interpretation techniques of 'Dola-Duka' and examines the physical and psychological conditions of women experiencing it. It also discusses food rejection as a precursor to cravings, categorizing these cravings into eight distinct types: sweets and childhood foods, sour foods, festival foods, expensive and rare foods, foods expressing hostility, male foods, foods symbolizing the penis, and idiosyncratic foods. The article concludes by summarizing the findings and interpretations of the concept of 'Dola-Duka.'

When studying the above classification, it is clear how the article is structured to provide a broad idea about the Dola Duka complex. At a glance, it can be seen that through this article, Obeyesekere has considered not only the psychological aspects of these cravings, but also the functional and symbolic aspects of pregnancy food cravings known as Dola Duka. Thus, it can be argued that Obeyesekere has addressed the most essential characteristics of the Dola Duka complex, both theoretically and practically. In discussing the article, it is beneficial to compare Obeyesekere's findings with similar research conducted in other societies. In many cultures, pregnancy cravings are understood through various lenses, including psychological, sociocultural, and even medical

perspectives. For instance, in Western societies, pregnancy cravings are often attributed to hormonal changes and nutritional deficiencies. Research conducted by authors such as Dickens and Trethowan (1971), Tierson et al. (1985), Weingarten and Elston (1990), Bayley et al. (2002), Orloff & Hormes, (2014), Hainutdzinava et al. (2017), and Blau et al. (2020), highlights that cravings can reflect a woman's subconscious desires or unmet needs during pregnancy, a perspective that resonates with Obeyesekere's assertion that Dola Duka is a culturally constructed phenomenon rather than merely psychological weakness.

Moreover, studies of Indigenous cultures, such as the Navajo, reveal that food cravings during pregnancy are often tied to spiritual beliefs and cultural practices. For example, pregnant women may crave specific foods believed to ensure the health of the baby or to fulfill cultural obligations. This contrasts with Obeyesekere's findings, which emphasize the social dynamics and gender roles within the Sinhalese context, suggesting that Dola Duka serves as a mechanism for women to express envy (without being judged) and assert agency within a patriarchal society. Additionally, the Dola Duka complex can be compared to similar concepts in other South Asian cultures, such as the "pica" phenomenon in India, where pregnant women crave non-food substances. While Obeyesekere focuses on pregnancy food cravings as a manifestation of cultural and psychological constructs, the broader literature suggests that cravings can also encompass a range of desires that reflect societal norms and individual experiences.

By situating Obeyesekere's work within this broader comparative framework, it becomes evident that while his analysis is deeply rooted in the specific cultural practices of the Sinhalese, there are parallels and contrasts that can enrich the understanding of pregnancy cravings across

different societies. By examining each section of this work as described below, we can gain a better understanding of the concepts explained above. The introductory stanza of the work attempts to shed light on how pregnancy and food cravings are interrelated, and through this, the author reveals how these factors have an unseen relationship. This has been illustrated by quoting from Webster's well-known play, The *Duchess of Malfi.*

> Bosola: So, so, there's no question but her tetchiness and most vulturous eating of the apricocks, are apparent signs of breeding.
> (Obeyesekere, 1963, p. 323)

The *Duchess of Malfi* is a tragedy written by the English dramatist *John Webster* in 1612-1613. At that time, this play enjoyed a huge audience both nationally and internationally. By quoting from this famous tragedy, Obeyesekere reveals that western society and culture, even in the 17th century, had also identified that there is an unseen/inevitable relationship between food craving and pregnancy. Therefore, it is clear that the introduction to this article is an interesting one, and shows how *skillfully Obeyesekere situates a local cultural phenomenon within a broader intellectual tradition*. By quoting from this play, he draws the perspectives of an international audience into dialogue with Asian (especially Sri Lankan) society and culture through a single, carefully chosen, literary reference.

Typically, as discussed, the introduction provides a guided pathway to the article. It illuminates the meaning of Dola Duka, how it differs from a normal dietary requirement, and has become a hidden desire of a pregnant

woman. Nevertheless, the main difficulty with this article, its primary limitation, arises from its aligning of the concept of Dola Duka only with Sri Lankan Buddhists and their society and culture. It could be argued that it would have been more enriching if Obeyesekere had also considered perspectives from other religious traditions in Sri Lanka. However, this omission does not necessarily reflect neglect; rather, it can be understood as a methodological choice. Since his ethnographic study focused on a particular traditional Sinhalese Buddhist village, the practices of other religious communities may not have been directly relevant to the scope of his analysis. As readers, while we may expect a broader comparative discussion, it is important to recognize that Obeyesekere's main objective was to provide a detailed, context-specific exploration of one cultural setting rather than a multi-religious overview.

In the article, Obeyesekere attempts to explicate the Dola Duka complex through a psychological perspective while being anchored to the chosen study area, i.e., the Laggala village. For this, Obeyesekere has used the research findings of Deutsch, Benedek and Sigmund Freud. Though much of the discussion has been based on Deutsch and Benedek, Obeyesekere eventually links his analysis to the stages of human development introduced by Sigmund Freud, especially the oral stage. However, in his analysis, Obeyesekere concludes that Dola Duka is a culturally constructed idea, not simply the reflection of a psychological desire.

> In a final analysis, dola-duka should be treated as a cultural complex, and not as a simple psychobiological constellation of symptoms, as it may be in Western society (Obeyesekere, 1963, p. 325).

In this way, Obeyesekere links the psychological aspect of Dola Duka to the culture of the village in Laggala. Through this, the reader can gain an understanding of not only Dola Duka but also the psychological and cultural conditions related to it.

As mentioned above, Obeyesekere sees Dola Duka as a culturally constructed phenomenon. Therefore, "*The cultural background of Dola-Duka*" explicates the way in which the Dola Duka complex has become rooted in Sri Lankan society and culture. This segment of the article has provided much detail on Sri Lankan society and culture and has attempted to give a constructive base to the Dola Duka complex as well. Here, Obeyesekere describes the cultural background of Dola Duka using the smallest social unit in society i.e., family. At the beginning of the segment, Obeyesekere describes the social status of men and women in the area. As the discussion develops, he extends this to cover children's behavior, the transition during puberty, the processes of socialization, patterns of marriage, the roles and duties within the household, and even adultery. These aspects are not discussed in isolation but rather as part of the broader cultural context in which the Dola Duka complex is situated. For instance, the emphasis on women's subordinate position, the regulation of sexuality, and the moral codes surrounding purity and impurity all provide a backdrop that helps explain why pregnancy cravings have become symbolically significant. By situating Dola Duka within these wider social institutions, Obeyesekere reveals that it is not merely a psychological phenomenon but one embedded in gender relations, kinship structures, and the moral expectations of village life.

According to Obeyesekere, it is clear that in the 1960s the social position of females was considerably weaker than that in modern society. Women were judged according to notions of purity and impurity, and their

social interactions were constrained by strict moral codes. For example, women were expected to maintain unquestioned faith in their husbands, and they were often discouraged from even looking directly into their husbands' faces. This sense of inferiority is further illustrated in the remark: *'How can it be so? Look at us with our monthly periods'* (Obeyesekere, 1963, p. 330), which highlights how menstruation was used as a justification for viewing women as impure and subordinate within the village context. Nevertheless, it is noteworthy that there is no difference in the amount affection and love shown to girl children and boy children, contrasting, perhaps, with the social situation in India. Though Obeyesekere tries to construct a picture of the background of the village, and its socio-cultural aspects, the readers of this segment may feel that he has strayed from the main goal of the article. The patterns of adultery in the Laggala village area might be interesting reading, but when considering the goals and aims of the article, the discussion is somewhat excessive and wanders beyond the main thesis.

However, when considering the overall theme of "*The cultural background of Dola-Duka*", Obeyesekere has provided theoretical support for his observations. He has diligently interpreted the social, cultural and traditional conventions in the study area. By demonstrating the social pressure at work on females, Obeyesekere convinces the reader that the phenomenon of Dola Duka is their way of expressing envy of males, albeit in a socially and culturally approved manner. Thus, Obeyesekere opines that Dola Duka functions as a mechanism of self-protection.

> The mechanism of dola-duka… gives a woman an unfailing opportunity to emulate male roles and thus give expression to male envy in a culturally approved manner
> Obeyesekere, 1963, p. 334).

The segment *"Dola Duka: technique of interpretation"* attempts to expound the salient features of the Dola Duka complex. In this interpretation, Obeyesekere demonstrates how Dola Duka, and the desires of real life have become symbolic inputs for women's imaginings. These imaginings give rise during sleep to "dreaming". Obeyesekere argues that in order to achieve something that is built in the mind, women will see it in their dreams, and they would become their Dola or desire. Therefore, Obeyesekere illustrates in a systematic way how Dola Duka has an unseen relationship with dreams which function as symbols and also express the hidden desires of women.

Another section of the interpretation draws on Sigmund Freud's symbolic interpretation of food. Obeyesekere relates the concepts of 'dreams' and 'food' with the Dola Duka phenomenon, suggesting that these two factors have a direct influence on pregnancy cravings in the Laggala village. In Freud's framework, food often functions as a symbolic substitute for deeper unconscious desires (Freud, 1900), and Obeyesekere adapts this idea to show how culturally mediated cravings and dreams become socially meaningful within the Sinhalese context.

In the section "*Physical and psychological condition of the woman during Dola-Duka*", Obeyesekere connects all the psychological conditions and the physical changes of these pregnant mothers. He also sheds light on how women are treated by their relatives and their husbands. However, by reading the earlier segment and the next segment along with this segment, the reader might feel that the flow of ideas has been interrupted. The reason is that this segment of interpretation contains similar ideas to those included in the earlier segments. Therefore, a certain degree of repetition of ideas has taken place.

All the above explanations, and arguments are concentrated in the next two segment of the article titled "*Food rejection-precondition to craving*" and "*Food Cravings."* Generally, in the "*Food rejection-precondition to craving"* segment, Obeyesekere tries to illustrate the types of foods that tend to be rejected and the foods that are more attractive to consume. On the other hand, Obeyesekere illustrates how the community has given a symbolical value for every food item that is consumed by the peasants in the research study area. In order to provide a better discussion on food items, Obeyesekere has divided this segment into two sub-segments. Thus, it can be argued Obeyesekere has carried out an in-depth investigation on the food culture of traditional Sri Lanka.

The "Food Cravings" segment comes next. This segment is much more interesting reading than the other segments. It is possible, here, to obtain a sense of how difficult it is to find some food items and how precious the resources are. Thus, to provide a clearer idea on Sri Lankan society and culture, Obeyesekere has classified this segment into more sub-segments. In the long run, Obeyesekere points out, fulfilling the Dola Duka of a pregnant mother is important not in a nutritional sense, but within the local cultural ethos. It reflects a husband's ability to demonstrate care, responsibility, and social competence. In this context, men are expected to be resourceful and tactful enough to meet these cravings, since doing so symbolizes their commitment to their wives and reinforces their status within the community.

Almost all the details discussed previously are concentrated in the *Conclusion* segment. In the conclusion, Obeyesekere attempts to synthesize his analysis by moving from a broad cultural perspective (macro level) to a more specific, individual perspective (micro level). He recalls the major points discussed throughout the article and emphasizes that Dola Duka is

not merely a personal craving, but a culturally constructed phenomenon embedded in social structures. In doing so, he highlights how an individual experience, such as a pregnant woman's food craving, reflects and reproduces larger cultural norms and social dynamics. In doing so, Obeyesekere has recalled the major premises of the article and pointed out that Dola Duka is not only a hidden desire, but also a culturally constructed phenomenon, as it is in Indian culture. Thereafter, Obeyesekere invites future research to verify the claims presented in the article.

Obeyesekere's article "Pregnancy Cravings (Dola Duka) in Relation to Social Structure and Personality in a Sinhalese Village" presents a significant exploration of cultural practices surrounding pregnancy cravings within the Sinhalese context. However, while his work is foundational, several critiques can be made regarding the scope and execution of his ideas.

A main limitation that can be identified is the repetition of certain points. From the outset, Obeyesekere classifies and elaborates on the key cultural constructs related to Dola Duka in a systematic way. However, in several sections, similar ideas are revisited without adding interpretation that is new. This tendency to restate earlier arguments makes the article somewhat dense and, sometimes, difficult to follow.

Another limitation can be identified in the introduction, which is that of not introducing the roots of the idea of Dola Duka. Had the author begun the introduction by referring to the Indian ideologies influencing Sri Lankan society, it would have improved the introduction, as he concludes that the notion of Dola Duka had its origins in Indian society and culture.
The other important shortcoming is the lengthy discussion of somewhat irrelevant details. Since the main goal of this article was to explicate how the Dola Duka complex had been institutionalized in the Laggala village,

readers will expect a brief description of the village, and a detailed discussion of the socio-cultural validity of the Dola Duka complex. Instead, by describing the socio-economic activities of the Laggala village in great detail, Obeyesekere has, to some extent, deviated from achieving the main objective of the article.

When approaching the concept of the Dola Duka complex as a whole, it is evident that Obeyesekere views it as a kind of socially constructed shield for women and also as a means women have to compete with men, as the latter enjoy greater respect in society. However, when considering the validity of this idea in the present context, it is clear that the situation is more complex and would entail a deeper analysis.

Additionally, the article's primary focus on the Sinhalese Buddhist context may limit its applicability to other cultural or religious frameworks. While Obeyesekere provides an in-depth analysis of Dola Duka within this specific context, there is a missed opportunity to compare these findings with similar practices in other communities, such as Hindu or Muslim populations in Sri Lanka. This rather narrow focus could lead to an incomplete understanding of pregnancy cravings and their cultural significance, as other religious traditions may offer contrasting or complementary insights.

Generally, the article discussed not only the Dola Duka concept but also Sri Lankan society and culture. Thus, the author succeeds in opening the hidden, yet persistent cultural context of the Dola Duka complex. Therefore, Obeyesekere has provided an excellent opportunity to his readers to study, comprehend, re-investigate and compare the study with others as a time horizon-based study. In addition, the article; ***Pregnancy Cravings (Dola Duka) in Relation to Social Structure and Personality in a Sinhalese Village*** has provided insights into the social norms, traditions

and conventions of the Sinhala village community in Sri Lanka. In addition, Obeyesekere has furnished ample examples to support his theories and perspectives. Therefore, the article is theoretically original and empirically sound.

In conclusion, while Obeyesekere's work remains a significant contribution to the field of anthropology, sociology and other related disciplines, addressing the critiques advanced in the current paper through comparative analysis and broader cultural engagement would enhance its scholarly rigor and relevance. A more comprehensive and interdisciplinary approach could yield deeper insights into the cultural practices surrounding pregnancy cravings in Sri Lanka, ultimately enriching our understanding of the Dola Duka complex.

When viewing the article as a whole, it should be mentioned that this seminal paper has not only provided insights into Sri Lankan traditions, customs and practices but has also focused international attention on Sri Lankan society and culture. Therefore, this ground-breaking work can be recommended to anthropologists, sociologists, researchers and other interested readers who are keen on knowing more about the inhabitants of Sri Lanka and their traditions, customs, marriage patterns and other socio-cultural characteristics.

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A Sociological Study on the Discrimination Experienced by Transgender Individuals When Accessing Public Health Services

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A Sociological Study on the Discrimination Experienced by Transgender Individuals When Accessing Public Health Services

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Abstract

This research investigates the pervasive gaps existing within Sri Lanka's healthcare facilities for transgender individuals, and explores the discrimination and challenges they face when accessing public health services. Discrimination significantly impedes basic healthcare access of transgender individuals, affecting not only general health services but also specialized critical support services such as HIV care and gender-affirming medical services. Chronic stress experienced by transgender individuals due to societal exclusion compounds the situation, resulting in disproportionately lower emotional wellness and heightened mental health concerns among the community, including anxiety, and suicidal ideation. Utilizing a qualitative approach, in-depth interviews were conducted with 20 transgender individuals, delineating their experiences within the healthcare system. Findings unveiled widespread denial of general health services, instances of misgendering, and exposure to judgment and discrimination within healthcare settings. Limited access to hormone therapy compounded by the scarcity of estrogen for male-to-female transgender individuals, in contrast to the relatively ready availability of testosterone shots for female-to-male individuals, highlighted systemic disparities. Transgender individuals also faced discomfort and avoidance of healthcare due to the lack of knowledge and insensitivity of healthcare staff toward transgender issues. Furthermore, access to counseling and gender-affirming surgeries within public health institutions was marred by discrimination and abuse, perpetuating the transgender community's marginalization. Therefore, this study serves as a vital contribution to the local research literature, addressing the critical gaps and advocating for a more inclusive and informed healthcare approach for the currently marginalized transgender community in Sri Lanka.

Keywords: accessibility to services, body modification surgeries/sex reassignment surgeries, chest or breast reconstruction surgeries, discrimination, gender identity/expression, genital surgeries, hormone therapy, social stigma, transgender identity

Introduction

In Sri Lanka, the transgender community faces a myriad of challenges when attempting to access healthcare services. These difficulties reflect broader societal issues, including conservative thinking patterns, sex stereotyping, and other specific forms of discrimination, particularly marginalization and exclusion based on gender identity. This paper aims to illuminate the gaps in healthcare facilities available to transgender individuals in Sri Lanka, outlining systemic discrimination, limited access to basic healthcare, and the resulting psychological, emotional, and physical implications for this marginalized community.

Transgender individuals are those whose gender identity differs from the sex they were assigned at birth. This spectrum includes a diverse range of identities where a person's innate sense of their gender does not align with societal expectations based on their biological sex. Some transgender individuals may transition socially, medically, or both, to affirm their gender identity. This transition can involve various elements, such as changes in clothing, name, and, for some, medical interventions like hormone therapy or surgeries. It is essential to recognize that transgender people encompass a wide range of identities and experiences, and their journey of self-identification and affirmation is deeply personal and unique to each individual (American Psychological Association, 2020). Only very recently have Sri Lankan scholars commenced researching on transgender health issues. Therefore, understanding and addressing the challenges faced by the transgender community within the country's healthcare framework is crucial. This study seeks to bridge this gap by conducting a detailed analysis of the discriminatory barriers and structural challenges faced by transgender individuals when seeking healthcare services in Sri Lanka. By shedding light on these barriers, this research

aims to advocate for improved healthcare access and the establishment of inclusive practices within the Sri Lankan healthcare system.

Transgender individuals in Sri Lanka encounter numerous and multifaceted challenges in accessing adequate healthcare services, reflecting broader systemic discrimination prevalent within the healthcare system (Fernando & Perera, 2019; Gunasekara et al., 2020). This marginalized community experiences a spectrum of discrimination, ranging from denial of general health services to misgendering and judgment based on their gender identity or expression (De Silva, 2018). Often, trans individuals are referred to according to their sex assigned at birth rather than their affirmed gender, perpetuating feelings of stigma and disrespect within healthcare settings. This discriminatory treatment not only violates their dignity but also obstructs their access to essential healthcare support.

This type of discrimination extends to healthcare settings where transgender individuals are often misgendered or referred to according to their sex assigned at birth, a practice that denies their affirmed gender identity (Fernando & Perera, 2019). Misgendering not only violates their dignity but also leads to the denial of basic healthcare services and fosters discriminatory behaviors within healthcare settings.

The limited availability of gender-affirming healthcare services further compounds the challenges faced by transgender individuals in Sri Lanka (Perera, 2017). Female-to-male (FTM) individuals often have access to testosterone shots through psychiatric clinics in general hospitals, but do encounter certain limitations. Meanwhile, male-to-female (MTF) individuals often face barriers in obtaining estrogen, a critical component of their gender-affirming treatment (Samara & Bandara, 2018). Thus, the

scarcity of accessible gender-affirming services adversely impacts their health and well-being.

The compound effects of discrimination and limited healthcare access contribute to high levels of chronic stress among transgender individuals in Sri Lanka. This chronic stress is linked to social exclusion and results in disproportionately lower emotional wellness and heightened mental health issues, including anxiety and suicidal ideation. The lack of sensitive mental healthcare exacerbates these challenges, restricting counseling opportunities and compounding the psychological distress experienced within the community.

Access to gender-affirming healthcare, a critical aspect of transgender individuals' well-being, remains significantly restricted in Sri Lanka. The scarcity of gender-affirming services for medical transition, including hormone therapy, chest or breast reconstruction surgeries, and other body modification surgeries, poses significant challenges. Female-to-male (FTM) individuals are often provided testosterone shots through psychiatric clinics in general hospitals, while male-to-female (MTF) individuals face a scarcity of accessible estrogen and are advised to resort to alternatives like contraceptive medication that may pose health risks. Such disparities in access to hormone therapy exacerbate the health concerns faced by the transgender community.

In Sri Lanka, the dominance of patriarchal norms significantly impacts the experiences of transgender individuals. Male dominance in the social, economic, and political spheres creates a rigid gender hierarchy that marginalizes those who do not conform to traditional gender roles. This entrenched patriarchy not only reinforces the binary understanding of gender but also exacerbates the discrimination and violence faced by transgender people. As a result, transgender individuals often struggle with

limited access to resources, lack of social acceptance, and absence of legal protections.

Moreover, the implications of discrimination within healthcare profoundly impact the mental health of transgender individuals in Sri Lanka (Ranasinghe & Dias, 2021). Studies indicate elevated levels of chronic stress, leading to disproportionately low emotional wellness and increased mental health concerns such as anxiety and suicidal ideation among this community (Perera & Gunawardena, 2020). The limited access to sensitive mental healthcare and counseling further exacerbates the psychological distress experienced by a majority of the transgender community (Gunasekara et al., 2020).

The dearth of comprehensive research dedicated to understanding and addressing the challenges faced by transgender individuals within Sri Lanka's healthcare system underlines the necessity for in-depth investigations in the area (Fernando & Perera, 2019). This research aims to fill this gap by shedding light on the systemic barriers impeding healthcare access for transgender individuals (De Silva, 2018). Through qualitative analysis that examines firsthand experiences within healthcare settings, this study seeks to provide a comprehensive understanding of the discrimination, the limitations in access to essential medical support, and the implications for health and well-being faced by the transgender community in Sri Lanka.

To sum up, the challenges faced by transgender individuals in accessing healthcare services in Sri Lanka encompass systemic discrimination, limited access to gender-affirming services, and profound implications for their mental health. A comprehensive investigation into these challenges is essential to advocate for a more inclusive and responsive

healthcare framework that caters to the unique needs of the transgender community in Sri Lanka.

Limited existing research on transgender health issues in Sri Lanka necessitates an in-depth exploration to understand the dimensions of discrimination and challenges faced by this marginalized community. This study seeks to fill this critical gap in the literature by offering a comprehensive examination of the structural barriers impeding the healthcare access of transgender individuals. This sociological study investigating the discrimination faced by transgender individuals within public health services has substantial significance within the field. By analyzing the multifaceted forms of discrimination encountered by transgender individuals seeking healthcare, this research illuminates the intricate interplay between societal norms, institutional biases, and healthcare access. It sheds light on the structural inequalities and systemic barriers deeply embedded within the healthcare landscape, reflecting broader social prejudices and institutional practices that hinder transgender individuals' access to gender-affirming care. Furthermore, the study underscores the sociocultural complexities surrounding gender identity and healthcare, emphasizing the social construction of gender norms, the impact of stigma, and the institutional failures contributing to a marginalized healthcare experience. Through sociological inquiry, this study offers critical insights into the social, cultural, and structural factors that perpetuate discrimination within public health services, facilitating a better understanding of the broader societal implications and the urgent need for systemic changes to foster an inclusive and equitable healthcare environment for transgender individuals.

In the subsequent sections, this paper will delve deeper into the methodologies employed to study these discriminatory practices, the

firsthand experiences shared by transgender individuals in healthcare settings, and the implications of these discriminatory practices for their health and well-being.

Research Methodology

This study implemented a qualitative research design aimed at exploring the discrimination encountered by transgender individuals when accessing public health services in Sri Lanka. The selection of a qualitative approach stemmed from its ability to delve deeply into individuals' experiences and perspectives concerning discrimination within healthcare settings, offering a comprehensive understanding of the multifaceted challenges experienced by transgender individuals within the Sri Lankan healthcare system.

The study engaged a sample of 20 participants, equally divided between female-to-male (FTM) and male-to-female (MTF) transgender individuals. These participants were purposively selected based on their accessibility and willingness to engage in in-depth interviews centered on their encounters within Sri Lankan public healthcare settings.

Data collection relied primarily on in-depth interviews, providing participants with the opportunity to freely and extensively share their experiences. These interviews were conducted in a semi-structured format, ensuring flexibility for participants to elaborate on their encounters within healthcare facilities. To ensure accuracy in capturing participants' experiences, the research utilized audio-recording and the meticulous taking of field notes throughout the interview process.

Thematic analysis served as the primary method for interpreting the qualitative data obtained from the interviews. This approach facilitated the systematic identification, organization, and interpretation of recurrent

patterns and themes within the interview transcripts. It involved several iterative stages, ensuring a comprehensive and nuanced understanding of participants' experiences.

Ethical considerations were considered to be of paramount importance throughout the research process. Informed consent was diligently obtained from all participants, emphasizing the voluntary nature of their participation and ensuring their anonymity and confidentiality. Participants were thoroughly informed about the research objectives, their rights to withdraw from the study at any point, and the meticulous and secure handling of their data to maintain confidentiality.

The research team also took extensive measures to establish rapport and trust with the participants, ensuring a safe environment for sharing sensitive and personal experiences. Furthermore, continuous reflexivity among the researchers was maintained, acknowledging personal biases and preconceptions throughout the study, and taking steps to mitigate their influence on data collection and analysis.

Moreover, the research methodology incorporated member checking, a process involving the verification of findings by participants, to enhance the credibility and validity of the study results. This iterative review allowed participants to validate the accuracy and authenticity of the interpretations made utilizing their shared experiences, further reinforcing the credibility of the research outcomes.

Research Findings

The narratives and shared experiences of transgender individuals in Sri Lanka unveil a multi-dimensional tapestry of challenges, bringing to light the pervasive discrimination and formidable barriers existing within public health settings. These findings underscore the pressing need for

significant systemic changes to establish a more inclusive and accessible healthcare system that caters to the unique requirements of the transgender community.

Unpreparedness/ limitations of the colonial nature of General Health Services

Transgender individuals recounted distressing and recurring incidents of being misgendered and denied general health services based on their assigned sex at birth. Trans women consistently faced the distressing reality of being referred to as men within healthcare settings, while trans men often encountered being overlooked or mislabeled. These instances perpetuated judgment and discrimination, creating a climate of marginalization and discomfort for transgender individuals. Moreover, the existence of sex-segregated hospital wards and clinics exacerbated these challenges, amplifying feelings of exclusion and unease within these environments.

> I am a female-to-male transgender individual. I get testosterone hormone shots from the General Hospital, where the attendants provide me with the medicine. Every day, a woman asks me, 'Why are you like this? What a beautiful girl you are.' While she speaks with what seems like sympathy, her words make me feel like a failure as a man. (Female to Male trans Individual A: Field Data, 2021).

The denial of general health services perpetuates a cycle of discrimination, denying transgender individuals access to essential medical care. Being misgendered not only violates the dignity of trans individuals

but obstructs their access to healthcare, leading, very often, to avoidance of seeking care, resulting in neglected health concerns and worsening well-being.

Challenges in Accessing Gender-Affirming Healthcare Services

The findings highlighted a significant gap in accessing gender-affirming healthcare services, particularly concerning hormone therapies. Male-to-female transgender individuals faced substantial hurdles in acquiring estrogen due to its severe shortage in Sri Lanka and alternatives like "Mithuri Tablets (contraceptive tablets)" were utilized, leading to health risks and, at times, discriminatory behavior from healthcare staff.

Conversely, while female-to-male individuals could more easily obtain testosterone shots through psychiatric clinics in general hospitals, though certain limitations persisted. However, even when hormones were unavailable in general hospitals, testosterone was available, at a price, on the black market.

> I am a male-to-female transgender individual. In Sri Lanka, estrogen isn't readily available; instead, we're advised to take high doses of 'Mithuri' tablets. The long-term effects on our bodies remain unknown due to this substitute. Despite its unavailability in dispensaries, testosterone can even be found on the black market. (Male to Female trans Individual B: Field Data, 2021).

The challenges in accessing gender-affirming healthcare perpetuate significant health concerns and contribute to the worsening of mental and physical well-being among transgender individuals. The absence of

accessible hormone therapies poses severe health risks and further exacerbates the marginalization experienced within healthcare settings.

Discomfort and Stigmatization in Healthcare Settings

Transgender individuals expressed significant discomfort in exposing their bodies and disclosing their transgender identity within healthcare environments. This discomfort arose primarily from the lack of knowledge and understanding among healthcare providers regarding transgender-related issues. The requirement to expose their bodies to medical professionals who lacked sensitivity induced anxiety and unease, often resulting in the avoidance of seeking care or receiving inadequate attention to their health concerns.

> I am a male-to-female transsexual. I've undergone breast implant surgery. But I haven't yet had the surgery to change my genitals, so I am a woman who is still living with male genitals. I've had a very negative experience when I went urgently to an unfamiliar place to obtain medication. Sri Lanka has very regressive attitudes regarding these matters. (Male to Female trans Individual A: Field Data, 2021).

The discomfort and stigmatization experienced in healthcare settings lead to a pervasive fear of seeking medical assistance and disclosing one's transgender identity. The lack of sensitivity and awareness among healthcare providers exacerbates mental health challenges and hinders the overall well-being of transgender individuals.

Limited Access to Counseling and Support

Restricted access to counseling and mental health support emerged as a crucial concern within the transgender community. The findings highlighted that these essential services were predominantly accessible to those with financial means, restricting broader access for the transgender population. The absence of inclusive and readily available mental health support compounded the already significant mental health challenges experienced by many transgender individuals.

> In Sri Lanka, there is no available free counseling service for the LGBTQ community, particularly for the transgender community, despite significant societal and familial pressures. Unfortunately, depression among young transgender individuals is common. I've heard about a private counseling service for LGBT individuals at Durdans Hospital, but regrettably, not everyone has access to it." (Male to Female trans Individual I: Field Data, 2021).

This limited access to mental health support leads to exacerbated mental health concerns within the transgender community. The lack of inclusive counseling perpetuates the distress and isolation experienced by transgender individuals, further deteriorating their overall well-being.

Discrimination in Accessing Body Modification Surgeries

Despite the provision of body modification surgeries in government hospitals, accessing these procedures was fraught with discrimination and prejudice. Transgender individuals face psychological and physical abuse within healthcare settings when seeking sex reassignment surgery or other

body modification procedures, signaling the prevalence of deeply ingrained transphobia within these institutions.

> I prefer not to disclose the hospital's name. I was admitted for my breast removal. During my time at the hospital, I chose not to disclose my transgender identity to the health staff due to the negative stigma attached to it. They view it as an anomaly or mistake. A friend of mine also had a similar experience. I acted as though I were a breast cancer patient who was prescribed to remove my breast, just to avoid unwanted attention." (Female to male trans Individual C: Field Data, 2021).

The discrimination and prejudice faced by transgender individuals when attempting to access body modification surgeries intensify mental health concerns and deter them from seeking essential medical procedures. The transphobia ingrained within healthcare settings exacerbates feelings of marginalization and isolation within the community.

Legal and Policy Barriers

Beyond healthcare settings, the research also highlighted legal and policy barriers that further constrained the rights and well-being of the transgender community. Existing laws and policies often fail to address the unique challenges faced by transgender individuals, leading to legal discrimination, inadequate protection, and limited recognition of their gender identity. This legal framework contributes significantly to systemic marginalization and impedes the community's access to essential rights and services.

> I am a trans guy. While I was in school, I had a relationship with a girl who is also my best friend. When her mother discovered our relationship, she reported it to the police. I was subjected to humiliation when the police insisted on my removing my school uniform to prove my gender identity. They treated me with disrespect, as if I were a mental patient. This incident is something I will never forget. (Female to Male trans Individual D: Field Data, 2021).

The prevalent legal and policy barriers perpetuate the vulnerability and marginalization of the transgender community. The lack of adequate legal protections further exacerbates the discrimination and challenges faced within various levels of society, contributing to a cycle of exclusion and limited access to rights and services.

Social Exclusion and Economic Challenges

The narratives shared by transgender individuals revealed pervasive social exclusion and economic challenges. The societal stigma and discrimination experienced often lead to exclusion from educational and employment opportunities, forcing many transgender individuals into marginalized and vulnerable economic circumstances. This cycle of social exclusion and economic challenges further perpetuates the difficulties faced by the transgender community in accessing adequate healthcare and essential services.

> Transgender children typically begin facing issues at home around the ages of 16 to 17, which aligns with my own experience. In my case, despite our parents having money,

> once I started living true to my identity, withholding financial support became one of their forms of punishment. Fortunately, my transgender friends provided essential financial assistance. We are part of an organization that supports us, offering help in various ways. I secured a job through this organization, allowing me to earn some money. A hormone shot costs 500 rupees. It should be taken in the first week of every month. That's how the money was earned." (Female to Male trans Individual G: Field Data, 2021).

The social exclusion and economic challenges faced deepen the vulnerability of the transgender community, hindering their access to education, employment, and essential services. The marginalization experienced within society results in limited economic opportunities as well, perpetuating a cycle of exclusion and hardship within the community.

Cultural and Familial Rejection

Cultural and familial rejection emerged as significant factors impacting the mental health and overall well-being of transgender individuals. Many narratives recounted the distressing experiences of being ostracized by families or communities due to their gender identity. This rejection often leads to heightened mental health concerns, including anxiety and depression, and a lack of familial support, exacerbating their challenges in seeking and receiving adequate healthcare.

Cultural and familial rejection intensifies the mental health challenges faced by transgender individuals. The lack of familial support and acceptance leads to increased feelings of isolation and distress within

the community, hindering transgender individuals' overall well-being and ability to access necessary healthcare services.

> It's rare to find transgender individuals within our families who haven't faced physical abuse. We endure immense suffering and anguish until we eventually leave our homes. Often, we live in a hostile environment even among our own family members. (Female to Male trans Individual H: Field Data, 2021).

The research revealed that transgender individuals in Sri Lanka face systematic discrimination, denial of general health services, limited access to gender-affirming treatments, and pervasive discomfort in healthcare settings due to stigma and lack of awareness. These challenges significantly impact their access to necessary healthcare and contribute to mental health struggles within the community. The findings further exposed the distressing experiences of discrimination, harassment, and transphobic responses faced by individuals seeking body modification surgeries.

Results and Discussion

This comprehensive examination of the experiences of transgender individuals within Sri Lankan public health services has illuminated a spectrum of challenges, discrimination, and formidable barriers in accessing adequate care. These findings highlight the pressing need for an inclusive, sensitive, and culturally-aware healthcare environment designed to accommodate and address the unique needs of the transgender community within the socio-cultural landscape of Sri Lanka.

Cultural Barriers in Healthcare Access for Transgender Individuals in Sri Lanka

Sri Lanka, like many other societies, exhibits deeply ingrained traditional gender roles and binary perceptions, heavily influencing its cultural norms and value systems. Within this context, societal adherence to these established norms contributes significantly to the denial or limitation of general health services for transgender individuals. The prevalence of misgendering and the denial of care based on assigned sex at birth are intricately woven into the fabric of cultural beliefs. Addressing these systemic challenges within the healthcare system requires a holistic approach that encompasses both policy adjustments and cultural sensitivity. Integrating cultural awareness and education within healthcare practices is paramount to bridge the gap between traditional norms and diverse gender identities within the community.

The intersection of cultural norms, societal expectations, and healthcare practices creates significant barriers for transgender individuals seeking access to essential health services in Sri Lanka. Deeply ingrained traditional gender roles and binary perceptions influence both the availability and quality of care provided to transgender people. These cultural barriers manifest in various forms, from the denial of general health services to limited access to gender-affirming care and body modification surgeries. Understanding and addressing these barriers require a culturally sensitive approach that not only challenges existing stereotypes but also integrates respect for diverse gender identities into healthcare policies and practices. The following sections explore the different forms of cultural barriers that impede equitable healthcare access for the transgender community.

Access to Gender-Affirming Healthcare Services and Cultural Barriers

Cultural perceptions and values play a significant role in the limitations faced in accessing gender-affirming healthcare services. Deeply embedded stereotypes and societal norms may act as barriers, hindering equitable access to hormone therapies for transgender individuals. The scarcity of estrogen for male-to-female transgender individuals could potentially be influenced by cultural norms shaping the understanding of gender identity within Sri Lankan society. Similarly, the relatively ready availability and provision of testosterone for female-to-male individuals might be rooted in societal perceptions of gender roles. To create a more inclusive healthcare environment, policies must evolve to encompass a culturally sensitive approach to healthcare provision, ensuring that medical necessity aligns with cultural understanding.

Cultural Stigmatization and Discomfort in Healthcare Settings

Cultural stigmatization, rigid norms and hide-bound traditions could amplify the discomfort experienced by transgender individuals within healthcare settings. Traditional values and societal expectations may lead to discomfort and unease among transgender individuals when disclosing their gender identity, particularly if cultural values conflict with their self-identified gender. This discomfort, deeply rooted in cultural expectations, underscores the need for cultural sensitivity training among healthcare providers. Mitigating the cultural gap within healthcare systems involves fostering an inclusive environment where diverse gender identities are respected and acknowledged, and developing healthcare services that are adapted to the unique needs of the transgender community.

Limited Access to Counseling and Cultural Factors

Cultural factors often intersect with economic constraints, limiting transgender individuals' access to mental health support. Stigma around non-conforming gender identities within certain cultural contexts might even deter individuals from seeking mental health services. Therefore, understanding cultural influences on mental health-seeking behaviors is crucial. Moreover, providing culturally sensitive counseling and support services is essential to break through these barriers.

Discrimination in Accessing Body Modification Surgeries and Cultural Sensitivity

Cultural biases and societal norms significantly impact access to body modification surgeries. Prevailing cultural perceptions of gender may lead to discriminatory practices within healthcare settings. Fostering cultural sensitivity and awareness among medical professionals is crucial to provide safe and inclusive surgical procedures for transgender individuals.

Interpreting the Results Related to Cultural Context

Interpreting these findings within the existing cultural context underscores the need for an inclusive healthcare framework that respects and integrates cultural diversity. Addressing cultural barriers within healthcare systems, ensuring inclusivity, and cultivating a culturally sensitive approach are fundamental to creating an affirming healthcare environment for the transgender community in Sri Lanka.

In conclusion, aligning healthcare practices with cultural understanding is crucial in providing more inclusive and sensitive services. Integrating cultural sensitivity within policy reforms and healthcare

practices is pivotal for creating an affirming healthcare environment for transgender individuals in Sri Lanka.

Conclusion and Suggestions

Systemic disparities within the healthcare sector can significantly impact marginalized groups such as transgender individuals, exacerbating the challenges they already face. In the context of Sri Lanka, these disparities perpetuate the marginalization and discrimination experienced by the transgender community. The lack of inclusive policies and specific healthcare services tailored to the needs of transgender individuals results in restricted access to essential care. This exclusion often leads to a myriad of adverse consequences. Firstly, the absence of gender-affirming healthcare services directly impacts the mental, emotional, and physical well-being of transgender individuals. Without access to hormone therapies, counseling, and necessary medical procedures, individuals may experience heightened distress, psychological strain, and, in some instances, severely deteriorating physical health. Secondly, the discriminatory practices and misgendering within healthcare settings not only violate the dignity of transgender individuals but also inhibit their access to fundamental healthcare support. These disparities, stemming from systemic inadequacies, and the underdeveloped nature of medical facilities and healthcare systems in the country, perpetuate a cycle of exclusion, impacting the overall health and quality of life of the marginalized transgender community in Sri Lanka. Rectifying these disparities by implementing inclusive policies, providing specific healthcare services, and ensuring education and training for healthcare providers is crucial to mitigate these negative impacts and foster an

environment that is equitable for and supportive of all individuals, regardless of their gender identity.

Moreover, the binary gender norms entrenched in Sri Lankan society significantly impact the physical and psychological well-being of transgender individuals. The rigid adherence to traditional gender roles often leads to a lack of recognition and acceptance of gender diversity, thereby creating a hostile environment for individuals who do not conform to these norms. This societal pressure to fit within the binary constructs of male and female leads to substantial stress and mental health challenges for transgender individuals. The absence of acknowledgment and validation of diverse gender identities within the cultural framework of Sri Lanka contributes to feelings of isolation, anxiety, and depression among the transgender community. Furthermore, the pressure to conform to societal expectations regarding physical appearance and gender expression may result in heightened distress and can lead to body dysphoria, negatively impacting their mental health. The disparity between their authentic gender identity and societal expectations not only affects their psychological well-being but also creates obstacles in accessing gender-affirming healthcare, thus exacerbating the overall well-being and health outcomes for transgender individuals in Sri Lanka. Addressing these norms and fostering a more inclusive and affirming environment is crucial in alleviating the psychological and physical burden experienced by the transgender community.

This extensive exploration into the challenges faced by transgender individuals accessing healthcare services in Sri Lanka has uncovered a complex web of discrimination, barriers, and societal challenges. It is evident that systemic changes are urgently needed in healthcare policies,

provider training, and societal attitudes to cultivate an environment that is truly inclusive and supportive of the transgender community.

Implications and Broader Context

The implications of this study extend far beyond individual experiences, highlighting entrenched systemic and societal issues. Structural biases within healthcare, stemming from institutional and sociocultural factors, form barriers that limit access to adequate healthcare for transgender individuals. These biases manifest in policies, legal frameworks, and healthcare systems, perpetuating discrimination, limited provision of services, and hindering the receipt of gender-affirming care. The stigmatization faced by transgender individuals within healthcare settings results from societal prejudices and lack of understanding, influencing doctor-patient relationships and impeding appropriate care. Lack of training among healthcare staff exacerbates mistreatment and inadequate care, emphasizing the crucial need for education and sensitivity training. Intersectionality further complicates the negative experience for marginalized transgender individuals, combining discrimination with other societal challenges, and thus worsening health disparities. Advancing towards an inclusive and affirming healthcare system will not only enhance the health and well-being of transgender individuals but will also foster societal progress by promoting inclusivity and reducing healthcare disparities. In this process, advocacy and policy changes will play a pivotal role in challenging discriminatory structures and reshaping healthcare access, drawing from successful strategies implemented in other contexts to advocate for a more equitable and compassionate healthcare landscape.

Conclusion

In conclusion, this study serves as a clarion call for change, advocating for a healthcare system that respects, includes, and supports the diverse needs of the transgender community. Addressing the discriminatory practices, stigma, and barriers faced by transgender individuals in healthcare is a crucial step toward establishing a more equitable and compassionate society.

By implementing the suggested reforms and fostering a culture of acceptance and support, Sri Lanka can potentially create a more inclusive and welcoming environment for the transgender community, setting an example for the region and the world.

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A Critical Discourse Analysis of Ethnographic Fictions on Sri Lankan Cricket with Reference to Nationalism and Neoliberalism

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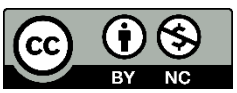

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A Critical Discourse Analysis of Ethnographic Fictions on Sri Lankan Cricket with Reference to Nationalism and Neoliberalism

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Abstract

This paper is based on a Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) of two popular books published on Sri Lankan cricket. The two books studied are Shehan Karunatilaka's Chinaman (2011) and Roshan Mahanama's My Innings (2021). This paper aims to examine the representation of cricket with reference to nationalism and neoliberalism in Chinaman and My Innings. We argue that a comparative reading of Chinaman and My Innings as text, discursive practice, and social practice illustrates the mutual entanglement of nationalism and neoliberalism in the sociological fabric of cricket. The two texts illustrate that the entwining of nationalism and neoliberalism functions as an an 'Ideological-Discursive Formation' which has predominant meaning making potential in the discourse on cricket. Our analysis reveals that the representation of this 'Ideological-Discursive Formation' serves distinct purposes in each text. The intermingling of neoliberalism and nationalism is naturalised in My Innings, whereas it is deconstructed and critiqued in Chinaman. Moreover, this paper demonstrates the manner in which sociological issues can be analysed and researched through "sports" as well as through literary works based on sports.

Keywords: chinaman, cricket, karunatilaka, mahanama, nationalism, neoliberalism

Introduction

Cricket is a popular cultural activity in Sri Lanka. Sri Lanka has earned international accolades in cricket in two major global events, namely, the 1996 One Day International World cup and the 2014 Twenty 20 World Cup, both of which events the country won. Apart from these two achievements, Sri Lanka has been one of the dominant countries in Asian cricket, winning the Asian Championship six times as well as many bilateral and triangular series. This paper is an amalgamation of sociology, critical discourse studies and sports literature and aims to evaluate cricket from a decolonial perspective in alignment with the theoretical view that decolonisation is a dialogue with the colonial past where complexities and ambiguities are nowhere more evident than in the vicissitudes of cricket in the former colonies (Appadurai cited in Perera, 2007, p.83). Its textual basis stems from two ethnographic literary works that belong to the genres of fiction and non-fiction. The books selected are Shehan Karunatilaka's *Chinaman: The Legend of Pradeep Mathew* (2011) (hereinafter referred to as *Chinaman*) and Roshan Mahanama's *My Innings: Roshan Mahanama Retired Hurt to the Best View of the Game* (2021) (hereinafter referred to as *My Innings*). We argue that decolonised cricket is in dialogue with its colonial past, specifically in its transformation from an elitist amateur pastime to a paid profession. In critiquing the two books, we observe a strong nexus between nationalism and neoliberalism, which is naturalised in *My Innings* but deconstructed in *Chinaman*. Cricket was introduced to Ceylon by British colonial administrators in the 19th century. As a result of its colonial legacy, before the 1980s or 1970s, cricket was considered a cultural practice that belonged to the elites. The selection of a team and the performance of cricketers, therefore, were associated with elitism. However, in the mid-1980s, cricket was attributed with a sense of

professionalism and commercialism (Biyanwila, 2007, p.141). In 1982, Sri Lanka received Test cricket status. Thereafter, Sri Lankan cricket reached its pinnacle of success with the 1996 World Cup victory. It became a historical cricket match played in the eyes of the world. There were more international cricket spectacles where victories were won, for example when Sri Lanka emerged as joint winners of the Champions Trophy (2002), semifinalists in the Cricket World Cup (2003), runners up in the Cricket World Cup (2007) and (2011), and champions in the Twenty20 World Cup (2014). As a result of the recognition received as a cricketing giant, Sri Lanka produced cricket stars like Ranjan Madugalle, Roshan Mahanama, Aravinda de Silva, Arjuna Ranatunga, Muttiah Muralitharan, Sanath Jayasuriya, Kumar Sangakkara, Chaminda Vass, Kumar Dharmasena, Mahela Jayawardene and Rangana Herath who became highly popular among global cricket fans.

Roshan Mahanama's autobiography published in 2021 is a new version of the book entitled *Mahanama Retired Hurt* (2001) which he co-authored with the Australian sportswriter Ken Piesse. The new edition in 2021 was published incorporating his experiences as an International Cricket Council (ICC) match referee. *Chinaman* was the first novel written by Shehan Karunatilaka who won multiple international awards for the book, including the Commonwealth Literature Prize for the best book in 2011. Furthermore, both books have been translated into Sinhala for the Sri Lankan wider readership.

Ethnographic Fictions

Our point of departure in this paper is to consider the two selected texts as ethnographic fictions embedded with the ethnographic impulses and social realities documented in them. This theorisation is borrowed from

Perera-Rajasingham's seminal work *Assembling Ethnicities in Neoliberal Times: Ethnographic Fictions and Sri Lanka's War* (2022). By framing the two texts as ethnographic fictions, the study positions them at contrasting points along the continuum of ethnographic fiction. *Chinaman*, as an ethnographic fiction, showcases creative writing as a medium of representation and mimesis. *My Innings* represents memoir/impressionistic writing where the protagonist, Roshan Mahananama, cognizes social reality as a travel writer. According to Perera-Rajasingham, coupling ethnography with fiction is a way of arguing that the truth is presented 'through the use of imagination and within specific historical contexts' (Perera-Rajasignham, 2022, p.10). She also theorises that:

> Ethnographic fictions can and do function as regulating apparatuses, as dream machines that participate in nationalist patriotic projects or sell neoliberalism as the good life. Yet, in other instances, such fictions function to critically interrogate, bear witness, and make meaning of otherwise terrifying and confounding forces such as war, nationalism, racism, race and global capitalism (Perera-Rajasingham, 2022, p.10).

We identify that neoliberalism and nationalism reinforce each other in discourses on cricket in Sri Lanka and we read this entwinement as an Ideological Discursive Formation (IDF) (Fairclough, 2013). Ideological Discursive Formations could be understood as a critical element in a discourse which contain language, power and ideologies within a certain societal structure that, over the passage of time, would be 'normalised' through the intervention of oppressive forces that disadvantage minority and oppressed groups. These Ideological Discursive Formations would

eventually help realise and shape social realities. A key characteristic of an IDF is its capacity to naturalise ideologies by representing them as 'common sense,' which hides their ideological power (Fairclough, 2013, p.30).

Chinaman as a work of imaginative literature functions as a regulating apparatus that deconstructs the mutual entanglement of nationalism and neoliberalism, whereas *My Innings* naturalises it. The naturalisation of social realities which takes place in *My Innings* is viewed critically in *Chinaman.* This helps the reader to further engage with the novel in the critical space available in order to interpret it freely. Thus, room is created for further negotiations in the illusionary /imaginative space of the fiction, as opposed to the realistic narrative space of the former work of non-fiction. Even though these two books are located at distinct positions on the broader spectrum of ethnographic fiction, they become key reference points in researching the literature on Sri Lankan cricket, covering a crucial era when it was transformed from a non-commodity to a commodity. As Mahanama elaborates in *My Innings*, 'there was hardly any money in the game to the time when payments increased substantially' (Mahanama, 2021, p.61). Memory becomes a key mode of communication that enables the characters /readers to engage in a more rational dialogue to interpret the nexus between nationalism and neoliberalism meaningfully. This reflects one of the key characteristics of ethnographic fiction; that they can be read as dialogic texts rather than as closed systems of knowledge (Perera-Rajasingham, 2022, p.12).

> Remembering is active and continual; it is personal, political, emotional and relational. Memory is also a destination, a place we inhabit or revisit in order to question or reflect the

> meaning of the past. Thus, memory is inquiry (Bochner cited in Davis and Ellis, 2008 p.114).

Mahanama's autobiography is an inquiry which cross-examines the past based on his sociological perspectives on cricket, which consolidates its function as an ethnographic quest. Furthermore, ethnographic narrative is an approach used in sociology in which stories let the reader or researcher understand life from a human point of view and help the readers see people as human beings and their lives within a framework they value as meaning or significance (Bochner and Freeman cited in Davis and Ellis, 2008, p.102) *Chinaman* can also be identified as an ethnographic fiction since Karunatilaka's work is a re-imagination of the history of Sri Lankan cricket within the larger postcolonial history of Sri Lanka/Ceylon through the narratorial voice of W.G. Karunasena, an alcoholic sports journalist. Karunasena is engaged in fieldwork to find the 'greatest cricketer this country has ever produced' (Karunatilaka, 2011, p.163). A researcher who engages in ethnographic fiction writes fictional episodes from the third point of view based solely on his/her experiences through fieldwork or personal experiences, creating introspective emotions shared between the researcher, the study participants and characters in his/her story (Davis and Ellis, 2008, p.104). Similarly, Karunatilaka conducts the reader through W.G. Karunasena's ethnographic quest and it is this alcoholic journalist's voice that validates Karunatilaka's criticism of the mutual entanglement of nationalism and neoliberalism within the sociological fabric of cricket. There is a pun based on the similarity between the name of the narrator and the author, where the familiarity between the authorial quest and the narratorial inquiry to find the truth also becomes a literary technique used by the writer to fuse truth with fiction. Unlike *Chinaman*, *My Innings* does

not criticise nationalism overtly, and it fails to acknowledge that ethnonationalism often masquerades as nationalism. It soft-pedals the consequences of neoliberalism, specifically of the 1977 neoliberal economic policies. Mahanama identifies himself as a key cricket player whose career was cut short by 'premature retirement' due to party-political inference in cricket administration, particularly after the 1999 World Cup. However, his critique remains limited to institutional dysfunction as he does not question how broader, national-level political structures or ethnonationalist agendas influence the sociology of cricket.

Research Method

This study utilises Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) both as an approach as well as a method to evaluate power and knowledge in modes of ideological representation of cricket within the context of ethnographic fictions. Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) is employed as the method of analysis in this paper since the language used in the two selected texts is analysed according to Fairclough's three-dimensional approach. This approach focuses on language as text, discursive practice and social practice (Statham, 2022, p.22). Statham posits that these three levels correspond with description, interpretation and explanation. Description refers to certain text level characteristics such as lexical choices, pronouns and metaphors and grammatical features. Interpretation specifies the way texts are produced, distributed and consumed. Explanation refers to the social context of the text and how the text interacts with ideologies and power relations in society (Statham, 2022, pp. 21-22). The theoretical perspectives on the nexus between neoliberalism and nationalism are taken from Nimanthi Perera-Rajasingham's seminal work *Assembling Ethnicities in Neoliberal Times: Ethnographic Fictions and Sri Lanka's War* (2022),

which argues that a new racial order or racial discrimination was triggered with the introduction of neoliberal economic policies in Sri Lanka. The selection of texts, *Chinaman* as a creative fiction and *My Innings* as a memoir, do not jeopardise the validity of CDA, traditionally and predominantly used to analyse authentic texts. Literary theories such as 'Russian Formalism' argue that discourse studies should not be limited exclusively to the analysis of authentic texts. For example, van Dijk argues that even though there are important differences in the methods used by scholars who study forms of language, literature, and discourse, a rich tradition originated around 1965 which challenged the classical boundaries between literary and non-literary genres of discourse (van Dijk, 1985, pp.2-3). Epistemologically, this study aligns with such an interdisciplinary CDA approach.

Neoliberalism

Sports and the 'spirit' of competition have been identified as a major carrier of neoliberal ideology (Maquesee cited in Westall, 2019, p.114). Researchers who have studied cricket from a sociological perspective argue that cricket has always had a commercial affiliation to it (Dunham and Jayasuriya, 2007, p.33). This must also be analysed against the functions of neoliberalism. For example, Harvey theorises that neoliberal economic policies aim to restore and reconstruct the power of economic elites (Harvey cited in Perea-Rajasingham, 2022, p.19). Neoliberal economic policies are reflected in the two texts with their references to the discourse on the popularisation of one-day cricket, specifically with the introduction of the 50 over format by the Australian media owner Kerry Packer in the late 1970s (Dunham and Jayasuriya, 2007, p.33). According to Dunham and Jayasuriya, what interested the

public, who later became ardent cricket fans, was its 'product marketability' (2007, p.33). This paper will demonstrate how this 'product marketability' is systematically constructed using nationalism (more pointedly, ethnonationalism) as a legitimising instrument. Similarly, Dunham and Jayasuriya argue that cricket became one of the best commodities that functioned as 'packaged mass entertainment' in a period when the world was looking for a huge boost in consumer demands (Dunham and Jayasuriya, 2007, p.33).Therefore, the two texts become iconic ethnographic fictions, each examining the introduction and consequences of Sri Lanka's 1977 neoliberal economic reforms through the lens of cricket. The transformation of cricket from an elite amateur activity into a neoliberal commodity also mirrors how the fabric of sociology, not just cricket, was reshaped under a new economic order. The two texts as social practice explain the saturation of the social fabric of cricket with neoliberal practices. As an ethnographic fiction, *Chinaman* exemplifies the intersection between illegal markets and cricket that took place on multiple occasions. One of the best illustrations in the text is the fictitious character called Innocent Emmanuel Kugarajah, the notorious prisoner who is represented as a mediator between the L.T.T.E. and the Sri Lankan government. Kugarajah is the best example of 'shadow activities' as exemplified by Perera-Rajasingham in her book. She cites Manuel Castells's argument on shadow economic activities in the article entitled 'Global Criminal Economy' in his book *End of Millennium* (2010). Castells argues that such shadow activities include the adaptation of 'IMF-inspired export-oriented, growth policies', and earning money through such illicit activities which is 'globalised through their laundering via global financial markets' (Castells cited in Perera-Rajasingham, 2022, p.90). Mahanama too endorses the saturation of neoliberalism within the social fabric of

cricket: He likens the International Cricket Council (ICC) to a corporate entity, arguing that the ICC's practices mirror the logic and imperatives of a neoliberal economy, reflecting such practices as prioritising market efficiency, engaging in commercial expansion and exercising centralised control. For example, Mahanama highlights how 'adjustments to remuneration too were based on one's performance rating' during ICC events (Mahanama, 2021, p.337), which underscores the fact that the ICC is characterised by corporate practices and principles. Biyanwila's perspectives (2007) in his article 'Cricket Mania, Men, and Politics' help the reader understand that 'professional cricket is about a money economy where the players are financially remunerated for their labour, legitimising and promoting corporate and capitalist interests' (2007, p.104). One other instance of neoliberal effects at play was Mahanama's resistance towards extending the boundary ropes further back, which he clearly identifies as a manipulation of the rules of the game in favour of the owners of the T10 tournament (held in the United Arab Emirates in 2019) in expectation of commercial gain (Mahanama, 2021, p.346). This is a perfect example of the modification of rules to transform the game for the benefit of mass audiences in order to provide a more spectacular view, and the choice of commercialisation over professionalism to please global television audiences. It is within this globalised project that one must locate *Chinaman'*s Innocent Emmanuel Kugarajah's involvement with cricket in the form of match fixing. Kugarajah admits that he fixed the First Test match in1992 between Australia and Sri Lanka: 'Was the 1992 Aussie Test fixed? *That, uncle, is a very long story'* (Karunatika, 2011, 316). Karunatilaka's use of italics coupled with the phrase 'long story' is a meronymy for all capitalistic references to Sri Lankan cricket. Mahanama exemplifies one such instance when he documents Aravinda de Silva's

obsession with American motor cars: 'Ari loved the big American motor cars, the Chevvies and Pontiacs. He is always buying and selling them back at home' (Mahanama, 2021, p.171). 'Home' carries negative connotations in *Chinaman,* since it is a space filled with ethnonational rhetoric which discriminates against minority communities. In addition, Aravinda de Silva's commercial trading of 'Chevvies and Pontiacs' also reflects 'capitalist desire' as theorised by Todd McGowan in his seminal work *Capitalism and Desire: The Psychic Cost of Free Markets* (2016). McGowan argues that "a commodity does not fulfil a natural need, but a desire distorted by the signifier — a desire that emerges through the signifier's distortion of animality" (2016, p.23). Aravinda de Silva has become a cultural metaphor due to his pivotal role in the nation's historic 1996 Cricket World Cup victory. This phenomenon has "enormous commercial mileage in the idea of minnows or underdogs winning" (Dunham and Jayasuriya, 2007, p.34). Therefore, Aravinda de Silva's trading of 'Chevvies and Pontiacs' is a foundational trope of neoliberal ideology which demonstrates how a 'national hero' becomes a 'branded commodity'. In *Chinaman*, it is the same Kugarajah who informs Pradeep Mathew that 'being Tamil, he needed to be ten times as good' (Karunatilaka, 2011, p.311) to be selected to the Sri Lankan national cricket team. Therefore, the match-fixing scene is represented in *Chinaman* as a vengeful response or resistance to the racial prejudices that are prevalent within the sports administration that selects the Sri Lankan cricket team. This is further consolidated by Karunatilaka when he hints that Kugarajah fixed the match through Pradeep Mathew. The reader should be aware of the cultural and sociological context of this phenomenon. Karunatilaka may have been inspired to fictionalise this scene after researching the sentiments of the diasporic Tamil community who cannot make themselves to support

the Sri Lankan national cricket team. One such well-known instance is a comment made by Lawrence Thilakar, a Paris-based spokesperson for the LTTE, as documented by Qadri Ismail.

> All Tamils in the North and East love cricket. It's part of their lives in school. All the school children love cricket and football… I cannot wish Australia to win. At the same time, it is difficult to wish Sri Lanka to win (Thilaka cited in Ismail, 2007, p.54).

This representation also becomes a political statement made by Karunatilaka on how hegemonic, Sinhalese narratives appropriate sports victories as part of their own propaganda. Karunatilaka's attempt, therefore, is not just to represent match fixing or spot fixing allegations in Sri Lankan cricket discourse, but also to throw light on the entanglement of ethnonationalism and neoliberalism.

The representation of nationalism and neoliberalism is also closely associated with party politics in both texts. Political support from political parties is freely given to cricket. Dunham and Jayasuriya identify that politicians use cricket as a tool by supplying a potent political opiate to exert control over a highly lucrative industry (Dunham and Jayasurya, 2007, p.35). One of the most prominent examples of political intervention in cricket is recorded in *My Innings* when Mahanama was dropped from the 1999 Cricket World Cup team. Mahanama notes that his exclusion from the team became a national issue since he was even summoned to the Sports Ministry.

> Sports Minister SB Dissanayake also asked me to see him and said I should be sent to England to join the National Squad, bringing an end to the public outcry. He said that he had no peace with letters and numerous phone calls coming into his office (Mahanama, 2021, p.222)

Chinaman is subtle and oblique when discussing acts of political intervention. The Minister who is represented in *Chinaman* is a stark contrast to one possessing the elitist, colonial values associated with cricket: 'The minister had done much for Sri Lankan cricket. He had built stadiums, brought in outstation players, and set up coaching clinics. He hoped to rise up party ranks on the wave of cricket. And he knew you couldn't rise to the top by being a gentleman' (Karunatilaka, 2011, p.416). *Chinaman's* representation of the minister resonates with the gentleman vs. player narrative which was quite popular in the political discourse of post-colonial Ceylon. However, this representation locates this particular minister within the 'lumpen proletariat' or the 'players' who were never accepted as equal members within the political fraternity of the UNP as a result of major class and caste differences (Dunham and Jayasuriya, 2007, p.38). This proves how cricket becomes one of the ideological state apparatuses (Althusser, 1971) and how it is used as an ideological tool in the process of interpellation in support of political regimes. It is interesting to see how emerging politicians are associated in the novel with entrepreneurial values in the form of benevolent patrons with wealth newly amassed through neoliberal means. Dunham and Jayasuriya identify this nouveau riche class as a 'confident, highly successful and extremely aggressive Sinhalese sensationalist entrepreneurial class with a strong lumpen base' (Dunham and Jayasuriya, 2007, p.38). Dunham and

Jayasuriya's comparison of cricket to an opiate becomes a perfect metaphor to illustrate the social fabric of cricket that intersects neoliberalism and ethnonationalism. Spectators as part of a larger national project need to be drugged constantly by the success stories associated with cricket; once this 'opiate' loses its effect, people start to act aggressively. Mahanama bears testimony to such violence, and he records them in *My Innings* with a heavy heart: 'Our so-called national flag bearer, Lionel, even threatened me after one such practice session' (Mahanama, 2021, p.109). Both examples in *Chinaman* and *My Innings* cement the nexus between nationalism and neoliberalism.

Nationalism and Ethnonationalism

Nationalism is a key concept explored by theorists and critics who have researched the sociological aspects of cricket extensively. Some researchers who have examined nationalism as a theme in Sri Lankan cricket are Janaka Biyanwila, Qadri Ismail, Michael Roberts, Suvendrini Perera, Harshana Rambukwella and Jayadeva Uyangoda. Intertextual links that revolve around the representation of nationalism and ethnonationalism (nationalism configured by ethnicity) in *Chinaman* and *My Innings* are largely connected with the assumption that cricket is a critical identity marker of South Asians. Appadurai points out that for an Indian male, viewing cricket is rooted in the bodily pleasure of playing or imagining playing cricket (Appadurai, 1995, p.20). School is represented in both texts as a vital identity marker that influences a cricketer's career and impacts the critical decisions that shape such a career: 'Another batsman upset by sledging was a pudgy little *Anandian* who was one day to become the *captain'* (Karunatilaka, 2011, p.377- emphasis ours). Karunatilaka subtly insinuates the connection between the school and the captaincy. Any study

on nationalism related to Sri Lankan cricket should consider the dominance of certain schools over larger cricketing hierarchies and selections. Roberts (2011) identifies allegiance to one's old school as one of the four lines of favouritism that bears on selections to cricket teams. Cricket was earlier played only in Colombo-based schools and was restricted to social elites. Mahanama identifies hierarchical distinctions even among schools in Colombo, claiming that players like Aravinda de Silva from D.S. Senanayake College were not as fortunate as Mahanama himself, since emerging schools were not assigned a full season's matches with other schools, whereas already established schools such as Ananda and Nalanda (Mahanama's school) were (Mahanama, 2021, p.18). Nationalist consciousness in schools is a topic with scope for another, separate research project, and yet, this reference, together with Mahanama's positive representation of Buddhist schools and their contribution to the development of cricket is an illustration of the transition of power from Westernised schools in Colombo to schools in the periphery such as those in Moratuwa, Kandy, Amabalangoda and Galle (Roberts, 2011, p.92). Michael Roberts argues that the power Westernised schools had on cricket was not a mere coincidence but was caused by the 'transmitting of good practices from one cohort of boys to those cohorts behind them as *Cricketing capital'* (Roberts, 2011, p.62). The power garnered by schools such as Ananda and Nalanda as cricketing centres replacing Western/Christian schools had resulted due to the political reversal of 1956 (Roberts, 2011, p.63). Michael Roberts posits that the transition of power from the elites to the proletariat class reaches its climax with Sanath Jayasuriya's (a player who emerged from the peripheral town of Matara) ascendance to captaincy.

In Analysing *Chinaman* and *My Innings* as discursive practice, the intertextual links mark a subtle and sometimes obscure line between truth and fantasy. The blurred lines between fact and fantasy are interesting and challenging facets of all ethnographic fictions, used in improvising to fill in gaps in knowledge regarding social interactions among members of society. These blurred lines also reflect the social ruptures that cannot be captured through discourses such as journalistic essays which are ideologically geared to protect the existing power hierarchies. Roberts argues that many journalistic essays are political acts (Roberts, 2011, p.1). Specifically, popular media platforms such as newspaper articles, documentaries, and TV programmes do not capture the fault lines caused by nationalism and neoliberalism.

At the textual level, there are differences between *Chinaman* and *My Innings* in terms of their representation of nationalism and ethnonationalism. The idiomatic expression 'Ado, Silva. As a Tamil I have to become ten times better than the Sinhala spinner' (Karunatilaka, 2011, 234) serves as the thematic bedrock of *Chinaman*. *My Innings* refrains from such overtly vitriolic condemnation of nationalism. The alienation of Tamils from the Sri Lankan national cricket team reflects the political gulf between Sri Lankan Tamils and mainstream Sinhalese in the political climate that existed in the country from the mid-1970s onwards, which prompted even young Tamils residing in the southern and western regions to lose interest in cricket (Roberts, 2005, p.135) However, Michael Roberts argues that allegations on racial prejudices within cricket are 'malicious lies' or due to 'colossal ignorance' of the changes that happened in the domestic cricket scene since the 1980s (Roberts, 2011, p.93). As an ethnographic fiction, *Chinaman's* representation of nationalism has strong links with neoliberalism: 'He told Kuga of how the Sinhalese mob had

nearly turned his father's *bakery* into cinders in '83' (Karunatilaka, 2011, p.293). Perera-Rajasingham argues that implementation of neoliberalism from 1977 has exacerbated, reignited and channeled the pathways of nationalism and violence (Perera-Rajasingham, 2022, p.18). Therefore, *Chinaman* provides strong literary reference for the fact that ethnic violence has close ties to neoliberalism. A critical reader is tempted to compare Mathew's story with that of Muttiah Muralitharan, a cricketer of Malaiyaha Tamil origin whose father ran a small factory and could afford to educate his sons at St Anthony's College, Kandy (Roberts, 2005, p.135). It is possible to draw parallels between this scene and Roberts' analysis (1994) of the 1915 riots between the Sinhalese and Muslims (which the historian identifies as a pogrom launched against the Moors) due largely to the 'hostility of the Sinhala villagers against the ubiquitous Moor traders' (Roberts, 1994, p.190). In both cases where violence was unleashed, it is, ironically, the capitalist symbols that were attacked by the 'Sinhalese mob'. Whether this is pure coincidence or intentional, we can read this literary example as a demonstration of the violent consequences of the strong nexus between nationalism and neoliberalism.

Even though *Chinaman* configures such racial discriminations with authority, *My Innings'*s treatment of such racial codifications can be read as an 'alleged atrocity'. An 'alleged atrocity' is a biased or fictionalised representation which can cause negative sociological relations such that people's lives are increasingly shaped by representations which are produced elsewhere (Fairclough, 2013, p.549). Roberts identifies the modality of dangerous and malicious stories about the 'alleged atrocity' perpetrated by the 'Enemy Other', a theory well documented by Kannangara, Roberts, Vittachi and Silva (Roberts, 2011, p.94). Such stories of 'alleged atrocity' transform ordinary individuals into assailants (Roberts,

2011, p.94). In *My Innings*, the violent consequences of the intertwining of nationalism and neoliberalism are attributed to 'rumours'. One such 'rumour' is well documented in *My Innings* after the Test defeat of Sri Lanka by Australia in 1992: 'A few within the earshot of our dressing rooms stated accusing us of taking money and losing the game purposely… Such rumours are malicious' (Mahanama, 2021, p.93). Mahanama connects the dots by exemplifying the magnitude of the effect of such 'rumours'; the reversal of the 'national hero' and 'branded commodity' into an 'Enemy Other'. He narrates the story of Asanka Gurusinha, whose house in Colombo was stoned during a series in Sharjah in 1994. It is also interesting to notice how Mahanama responds to Gurusingha's emigration:

> But I love Sri Lanka more. It is my home. It will always be. According to the Buddhist philosophy which I believe in high esteem, I believe that if your time is up, it does not matter where you are. You will have to go consistent with the Karmic forces. (Mahanama, 2021, p.52)

Ismail argues that as ideology, Sinhala nationalism acts often in the name of the country, and that that ideology tries to pass for Sri Lankan nationalism (Ismail, 2007, 49). Ismail's theorisation of Sinhala nationalism as ideology has roots in Partha Chatterjee's and Ranjit Guha's theoretical perspectives of the nation and nationalism. Ismail borrows Chatterjee's argument that the nation is an idea unthinkable without the notion of hegemony, and Guha's argument that hegemony acts as a relation of dominance. Ismail situates ideology in relation to hegemony to prove 'how the exploited get persuaded and coerced into feeling a comradeship with their exploiters' (Ismail, 2007, p.47). What subaltern classes or groups do

for the nation are, therefore, not done willingly, but done as an appropriation according to the larger hegemonic narratives. Ismail drives his argument home by theorising that nationalism as ideology is the dogma which represents this appropriation as consent. A thorough analysis of Mahanama's response to Gurusingha's idea that 'Melbourne is a better place for his kids to grow up and be educated' (Mahanama, 2021, p.52) through Ismail's perspectives sheds light on the significance of Sinhala ethnonationalism and Buddhist hegemonic narratives that dominate the discourse on Sri Lankan cricket. Apart from the fact that this quote demonstrates Mahanama's principles and personal religious beliefs, as a discursive practice, it demonstrates how he locates himself as part of the larger narrative of Sinhalese ethnonationalism which is the 'hegemonic discourse' that shapes narratives on cricket. It is interesting to analyse this quote against another political comment made by Mahanama in the book: but ours is a small country, slightly bigger than Tasmania, and having two separate states was out of the question from the Government's viewpoint and the majority of the people as well' (p.50). 'The government' and 'the majority of the people' in the above quote can be easily substituted with 'Sinhalese government' and 'Sinhalese majority,' which represent hegemony. *My Innings* is characterised by expressions such as 'our passion was to play and achieve glory for our country' (p.61), 'we were all proud to represent Sri Lanka' (p.93) 'I am absolutely privileged to have represented Sri Lanka (p.262). This clearly positions Mahanama as an institutional subject who participates wholeheartedly in the 'Sinhala nationalist project'. However, *Chinaman* adopts a rather vitriolic, sarcastic view of this very project: 'The world champions return the next day to be greeted by Buddhist priests chanting blessings and cash rewards from Kandy's sacred Temple of the Tooth' (Karunatilaka, 2011, p.123). At all

three levels, *Chinaman,* as a text, as discursive practice and as social practice, refuses to participate in the nationalist project. Karunatilaka ironically juxtaposes 'cash' with 'blessings' using the powerful additive conjunction 'and'. As a discursive practice, these images force the reader to confront an unsettling proximity of the discourses of Sinhala ethnonationalism (associated with Buddhism) and neoliberalism (associated with cash rewards for sporting victories). This helps to locate *Chinaman* within a social practice that criticises, most powerfully, the manner in which ethnonationalism is reinforced by neoliberalism.

Linguistic Capitalism

Cultural wealth in the form of linguistic capitalism is a key factor that builds intertextuality between the two texts, and an analysis of cultural wealth as represented in the two texts helps the reader understand these texts as discursive practice. The two protagonists in the books, Mahanama in *My Innings* and Pradeep Mathew in *Chinaman* can be seen to occupy two different ends on a continuum of linguistic capitalism. The first-person narration in *My Innings* helps the reader to understand that it is Mahanama's voice that dictates the use of Standard Sri Lankan English in the autobiography and Mathew, in *Chinaman,* represents the non-Standard Sri Lankan English speaker. Through a thorough analysis in his article entitled 'Standard English, Cricket, Nationalism and Tyrannies of Writing in Sri Lanka,' Harshana Rambukwella argues that Kumar Sangakkara is a Standard Sri Lankan English (SSLE) speaker and that Sanath Jayasuriya is a speaker of the non-Standard Sri Lankan English (NSSLE) variety (Rambukwella, 2018, p.113). The representation of Mahanama in *My Innings* can be mapped onto the way Sangakkara is represented in media discourses as a competent English speaker. Rambukwella analyses

extensively how Sangakkara is hailed as a gentleman worthy of delivering a Colin Cowdrey lecture and how Jayasuriya was frowned upon by Standard Sri Lankan English (SSLE) speakers when he used a Sinhalese term (*pas* for soil or earth) during a live cricket commentary in a Test match between Sri Lanka and Australia in 2011. In much the same way that Jayasuriya's 'Not pot English' (a term Professor Manique Gunesekera coined in her book *The Postcolonial Identity of Sri Lankan English* in 2005 to denote the derogatory, non-standard Sri Lankan English variety) is ridiculed, Pradeep Mathew is ridiculed multiple times in the novel for his lack of finesse in the use of the English language. This has been presented in an extremely comic way in the scene where Pradeep Mathew is presented the best catch award during a match between Australia and Sri Lanka. Ironically, this shows the ramifications of neoliberalism, since the best catch award (CrocDundee2^{TM} catch of the match) was a commercial project funded by 'some private investors that included sports baron Kerry Packer' (Karunatilaka, 2011, p.237). Mahanama is consistently represented as a gentleman with good linguistic skills whose power lies in the articulation of the Standard English variety. His communicative competence in the English language is demonstrated through the fact that he co-authored the first edition of the book in English with Ken Piesse, which is sound testimony to his command of the English language. As Harvey highlights, neoliberalism is another way of acquiring more power to the elites (Harvey cited in Perera-Rajasingham, 2022 p.19). Similarly, Standard Sri Lankan English is identified as an elitist weapon which demarcates the elites from the proletariat in Sri Lanka (Gunasekera, 2010). The references to Standard Sri Lankan English and Non-Standard Sri Lankan English in *My Innings* and *Chinaman* underlines how linguistic capital is used in cricket to cement the authority of the elites inside and

outside the cricket field, and how that linguistic capital is translated to cultural wealth, creating more opportunities for the elites and less for the less privileged.Masculinity is another analytical category through which the representation of the mutual intertwining of nationalism and neoliberalism is analysed in the two texts as discursive practice. Rambukwella argues that South Asian elite classes adopted cricket to emulate colonial masculinity through cricket (Rambukwella, 2018, p.119). As ethnographic accounts in both *Chinaman* and *My Innings* demonstrate, emulating masculinity through cricket has transformed into hero-worship in a neoliberal framework. Cricket is represented as a masculine sport in the two texts, where players must play hard and there is no space for 'non-masculine characters' who are represented as weaklings within the discourses of both narratives:

> Vince Wells walked past and said something like: "That's not the way you play cricket."
>
> "I know", I replied in the heat of the moment. "We have learnt the game from you guys. It's about time you learnt something from us now."
>
> Hick joined in something uncomplimentary about Sri Lankans which I do not wish to repeat even now. "You can't afford to talk. You are a traitor," I said. I was pretty worked up. (Mahanama, 2021, p.235)

> This is not Lords or the MCC. This is urchin cricket played on the streets of Mariyakade or de Saram Road. The Poms are finally playing it Lankan style (Karunatika, 2011, p.391)

In *Chinaman* and *My Innings*, violence is unleashed both in the form of physical and verbal abuse at multiple layers both within and outside the cricket field. Such occurrences may be attributed to new semantic values and are romanticised as depicted in the two quotes, given that the masculine spectacle of cricket is revealed as having a huge potential for mass participation as a popular cultural activity. It is this 'masculinity' that is also marketed as a 'mass product' through live media coverage. The masculinity depicted here becomes a local variant, much like the Sri Lankan English variety, 'impromptu, innovative and inflected by local rhythms' (Rambukwella, 2018, p.119). However, its romanticisation signals that 'Sri Lankan cricket', framed as a 'commodity', is now ready to be exported to international markets, highlighting a tension between the conflation of the local and the global. This also signifies the tension existing between Sri Lanka's colonial and de-colonial identity, specifically its transition from a closed-economic capitalist system to a neoliberalist system. Therefore, as is the case with the representation of linguistic capitalism and Standard Sri Lankan English, which we have discussed earlier in some detail, *Chinaman* and *My Innings* bear witness to the economic, sociological and political tensions between the colonial identity of Ceylon and the de-colonial identity of Sri Lanka.

The intersection between the two books as text, discursive practice and social practice is also reflected in the heteroglossia evident in the two books. Heteroglossia is a term introduced to literary criticism by Mikhail Bakhtin. Heteroglossia often functions as a key intertextual link in literary criticism. Wilfrid Jayasuriya defines heteroglossia as the existence of many voices in a text (Jayasuriya, 1994, p.97). According to Jayasuriya, the presence of heteroglossia reflects the presence of different social structures with different ways of speaking (Jayasuriya, 1994, p.97). Using Bakhtinian

ideas on discourse strategies, Jayasuriya argues that the discourses of different narrators are demarcated by various styles, which according to Bakhtin are related to the ideological differences among the speakers (Jayasuriya, 1994, p.97). According to Jayasuriya, the multiplicity of the voices present within a text is also a strong "cultural form of the nation," as via heteroglossia, the writer unites the members of the nation, providing them with a platform on which to talk to each other in textual space. Jayasuriya quotes Timothy Brennan to emphasise how the novel became a critical element in the formation of the nation state:

> It was the novel that historically accompanied the rise of nations by objectifying the "one yet many" of national life, and by mimicking the structure of the nation, a clearly bordered jungle of languages and styles. Socially, the novel joined the newspaper as the major vehicle of the national print media, helping to standardize language, encourage literacy, and remove mutual incomprehensibility (Brennan cited in Jayasuriya, 1994, p.98)

Heteroglossia in *Chinaman* deconstructs and questions the notion of the nation state and ethnonationalism. *My Innings*, on the other hand, utilises heteroglossia as a technique to form a sense of the nation state and cement its imagined boundaries. For example, heteroglossia in *My Innings* involves the nation state as a critical factor throughout the entire narrative. The dialogues that involve a multiplicity of voices revolve around Mahanama's sense of duty to the nation and his national consciousness which represents him as a warrior. *My Innings* contains fewer dialogues than *Chinaman*. The lengthy, descriptive passages with their temporal and

spatial descriptions bear witness to Mahanama's rigid sense of Sinhalese ethnonationalism.

Association between Nationalism and Neoliberalism

One of the key arguments raised by Perera-Rajasingham (2022) is that neoliberalism and ethnonationalism are mutually entangled. In this paper, we argue that the commercialisation of cricket is closely connected with nationalism since it is an activity of mass entertainment which mobilises the entire nation as spectators, one that has broadened the scope of commercialisation more than ever in the past. Perera-Rajasingham borrows Cedric Robinson's argument that racism was a central catalyst for capitalism, even predating the medieval societies of Europe (Robison cited in Perera-Rajasingham, 2022, p.14). This critical argument further suggests that capitalism is a restructuring of racism and not a fundamental break with feudalism as is generally supposed (Robison cited in Perera-Rajasingham, 2022, p.14). Perera-Rajasingham further highlights how Robinson critically evaluates racism in colonialism as an extension and expansion of a European sentiment that was well present even before the emergence of merchant and industrial capitalisms (Robinson cited in Perera-Rajasingham, 2022, p.15). Perera-Rajasingham also borrows Barbara Fields' and Karen Fields' argument that race as ideology is a system of lived beliefs that is not grounded on material reality but is brought into being to make sense of and organise life-worlds. (Perera-Rajasingham, 2022, p.15). These arguments explain why race is identified as a critical factor that determines the deprivation of liberty for some people while it is taken for granted by others:

> He tells us that racism exists everywhere. Once he had tried to put his daughter into a prominent Colombo convent and was told that the Rs. 15,000 entrance fee was only for Catholics. Buddhists had to pay 50,000, Muslims 100,000. He tells us that he once accepted a lakh from a man in a bar to break the stumps seven times during a Sharjah game (Karunatilaka, 2011, p.287).

'He' in *Chinaman* here refers to Uvais Amalean, a wicketkeeper batsman who can remember Pradeep Mathew's heroics in the cricket field quite vividly. Amalean boasts that he managed to keep well when Pradeep bowled through a secret code between Pradeep and himself using 'Hindu powder from the Kovil' (Karunatilaka, 2011, p.285). The application of 'Hindu powder' on Mathew's fingers would give a hint to Amalean the direction to which Mathew was going to spin the ball. He claims that 'The Silvas and the Alwises wouldn't put up with this hand signal nonsense' (Karunatilaka, 2011, p.285). This scene is full of racial codifications and gets even more complicated with the bribery allegations levelled against Amalean. Karunatilaka validates the claims of bribery in his narrative, but Mahanama refutes such claims as 'rumours,' as detailed earlier in this paper. Perera-Rajasingham argues that the configuration of a new racial order or racial discrimination in post-independent Sri Lanka, particularly after 1977, is one of the ways in which neoliberalism transforms its practices and ideologies in relation to the ground realities it encounters (Perera-Rajasingham, 2022, p.19). We argue that Amalean's acceptance of the bribe can be read as his resistance against the neoliberal, racial order existing in the country. This signals the sociological tensions that emerged as Sri Lanka transitioned from a closed, state-regulated economy to an open, neoliberal state. This has to be placed against Perera-Rajasingham's

central argument (2022) that this neoliberal shift in Sri Lanka has systematically 'othered' minority communities. This situation is quite unique to Sri Lanka as an Asian country since the Sri Lankan government was one of the first governments in the South Asian bloc to openly embrace finance capitalism both as an economic and political model (Perera-Rajasingam, 2021, p.18). It goes beyond the traditional classification of neoliberalism as characterised by a free market economy, private property and deregulation of the government. Neoliberalism is also used as "an epistemological structure of disavowal" (Perera-Rajasingham, 2022, p.21) to justify discrimination against minorities. In *Chinaman*, the neoliberalist entanglement with racism is dealt with using pungent criticism and black humor. Since Uvais Amalean is a Muslim wicketkeeper, he is offered Rs. 100,000 as a spot-fixing bribe, the precise amount he needed to 'put his daughter into a prominent convent college'. One the other hand, Mahanama documents the bribery allegations levelled against the Sri Lankan national cricket team as malicious and atrocious. He associates this rebuttal with his nationalist sentiments. Mahanama's ideological formation resembles Michael Roberts' theorisation of nationalist sentiment constructed in the sociological fabric of cricket. Roberts argues that the sense of nationalism exemplified inside and outside the cricket field was a key contributor to the discourse on nationalism and the revitalisation of nationalist consciousness in the late 19th and early 20th centuries in Sri Lanka where all ethnicities such as Tamils, Sinhalese, Moors, Burghers and Malays played in one category as Ceylonese (Roberts, 2011, p.411). It proves Benedict Anderson's thesis that the nation is both real (a site of inequality and exploitation) and imagined/conceived (represented as a fraternity) (Anderson cited in Ismail, 2007, p.46). Mahanama structures his narrative in a way that suggests that the imagined fraternity helps to form a strong

sense of 'nation' to which everyone belongs and that this pride in the nation or national consciousness prevents them from engaging in malpractices such as bribery. However, in the text, such a positive representation of the sociology of cricket is used to conceal the nuances of racial codification or racism. As explained earlier, *My Innings* is a celebration of Sri Lankan nationalist consciousness and adopts an ultra-critical stance against the West while deriding globalisation as a Western hegemonic narrative. However, *My Innings* fails to capture the nuances of the weaknesses inherent in the Sinhalese Buddhist hegemonic narrative, shortcomings which are censured satirically in *Chinaman*.

Conclusion

This paper looks critically at how neoliberalism and nationalism (and ethnonationalism) are mutually dependent in the representation of cricket in two ethnographic fictions, *Chinaman* and *My Innings*. A comparative reading of *My Innings* and *Chinaman* situates the two books as ethnographic fictions that blur the boundary between truth and fantasy. *My Innings* illustrates how ideological power can be represented as 'common sense' through the naturalisation of the nexus between nationalism and neoliberalism. *Chinaman* provides a critical space to interrogate this nexus between nationalism and liberalism. *My Innings* was written and produced in a context where the mutual entanglement of neoliberalism and nationalism is represented as a 'dream machine' (Perera-Rajasingham, 2022). Mahanama willingly participates as a subject who endorses the co-existence of nationalism and neoliberalism within the larger community in Sri Lankan cricket. However, his narration is a powerful politically discursive event given his own situated knowledge, not just as a cricketer, but also as an ethnographer. He bears witness to a pivotal

transformation of cricket from a bourgeois activity into a commodity. On the other hand, *Chinaman* critiques hegemonic 'common sense' by giving voice to the 'Other'. Karunatilaka's protagonist neither becomes a 'national hero' nor a 'commodity'. He is a manifestation of the rejection of nationalist and neoliberal projects. CDA enables the reader to see that identifying differences in textual, discursive and social references in the two texts with regard to the representation of neoliberalism and ethnonationalism is an ambiguous process. These ambiguities should be interpreted as the result of the intersections of fact, fiction and ethnography. Such intersections blur the rigid boundaries among literary genres and sociological frameworks. We argue that these ambiguities make the two ethnographic works of literature dialogic rather than closed systems of knowledge, which is a critical discursive benchmark with which to analyse the tensions existing within the postcolonial and postmodern Sri Lankan identity.

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Abstract

This study investigates the perceptions of Sri Lankan English as a Second Language (ESL) students regarding the pronunciation of English in various global contexts, based on Kachru's model of concentric circles. Kachru's model categorizes English usage into Inner Circle (native-speaking countries), Outer Circle (where English is a second language) and Expanding Circle (where English is a foreign language) regions. The research aims to gauge how Sri Lankan ESL students assess the pronunciation and accents of English speakers from these circles. The study employed listening tasks where students rated their preferences for accents and assessed their intelligibility. Results revealed that students favored the accent of Inner Circle speakers but found the accent of Outer Circle speakers to be the most intelligible. Semi-structured interviews added depth to these findings. These results highlight the importance of introducing ESL students to different varieties of English. This exposure helps them become aware of linguistic differences among non-native English speakers and facilitates the development of mutual intelligibility. It underscores the necessity for linguistic diversity in education to prepare students for effective communication in the globalized world, where English serves as a lingua franca across diverse regions. Ultimately, the study emphasizes the significance of embracing the diverse English accents and pronunciations that exist worldwide to foster successful international communication.

Keywords: accent, intelligibility, pronunciation, varieties of english

Introduction

The pioneering model of "World Englishes," proposed by Kachru in the mid-1980s, categorizes English speaking countries into three concentric circles: the Inner Circle, the Outer Circle, and the Expanding Circle. The Inner Circle comprises countries where English is spoken as a native language, such as the USA, the UK, Canada, Australia, and New Zealand. The Outer Circle includes countries with historical ties to British colonialism, where English functions as a second language in social and governmental contexts; these countries include Sri Lanka, India, Malaysia, Singapore, Ghana, and Kenya, among others. The Expanding Circle consists of countries where English is introduced as a foreign language in educational institutions, primarily for communication with the Inner and Outer Circles. Examples include Turkey, Saudi Arabia, the UAE, Japan, China, and Korea. While this categorization highlights distinct sociolinguistic environments, it has been critiqued for oversimplifying complex linguistic realities. Scholars like Thiru Kandiah (1989) have questioned the self-evident nature of these categories, emphasizing the need to critically engage with such problematization rather than presenting the model as uncontested. However, these varieties of English differ significantly in grammar, vocabulary, accent, and discourse, reflecting unique characteristics in pronunciation, tone, intonation, and spelling shaped by their sociocultural contexts. While English is the first language for only around 25% of the world's English speakers, its prominence as a global lingua franca is largely driven by non-native speakers who use it to communicate across cultural and linguistic boundaries (Choomthong & Manowong, 2020). As a result, the emergence and diversification of English varieties, both among native speakers and non-native speakers, have become a significant focus in contemporary sociolinguistics,

reflecting how English adapts to different cultural and linguistic contexts (Kortmann & Schneider, 2004). Therefore, English language learners need to identify the differences in language use in various parts of the world.

Statement of the problem

There are certain subdivisions/ dialects of a language which render intercommunication impossible or markedly difficult. Therefore, the question of which varieties should be learned by non-native learners of English has become a widely discussed area among English language teachers (Gnutzmann 2005). In most cases, the English language is a contact language between people who share neither a common native tongue nor a common national culture and for whom English is an additional language. Jenkins (2006) stresses the need for English language learners to be ready for communication with speakers of those diverse varieties of English. In the 21st century, globalization has positioned effective communication in English as a critical skill, equipping individuals to navigate the demands and challenges of contemporary life (McArthur, 2001).Thus, it is important for English language learners to observe the differences in its varieties. The present paper is an attempt to explore the characteristics of some commonly used varieties of the English Language and to study the degree of preference for and intelligibility of various English accents among first-year undergraduates studying at the Faculty of Humanities, University of Kelaniya.

Research questions

The study adapted suggestions from Sung (2015) and Galloway & Rose (2014) to select and prepare listening materials. Concerning the varieties of English provided to the selected ESL undergraduates as

supplementary listening materials, the researcher formulated the following research questions:

1) To what degree do ESL undergraduates understand and prefer the speech of different varieties of English?
2) What perceptions do ESL undergraduates have toward the pronunciation of different varieties of English?

Research objectives

With the establishment of "World Englishes", ESL and EFL learners from different parts of the world have to understand the pronunciation of varieties of the English language other than their own. However, it seems that Sri Lankan ESL students are most frequently exposed to native-speakers' speech, especially when they face listening tests in international examinations. According to Martin (2009), English films, television programs, and pop music also have an impact on many people, especially younger audiences who are likely to prefer either British or American English accents to their own accents. Therefore, the main objective of the current study is to explore students' perceptions of the pronunciation of different varieties of English. Thus, it is expected that students will develop an awareness of the varieties of English through listening activities focused on different varieties of English.

Review of Literature

English as a Lingua Franca

The term "English as a lingua franca" refers to the situation in which English is used as a contact language among speakers who come from different first language and cultural backgrounds (Jenkins, 2004). According to Jenkins (2012), the English language has functioned as the

means of communication among speakers of different languages for many centuries. Thus, Bieswanger (2007) suggests that 21st-century speakers and learners of English have to be linguistically, socio-linguistically, and pragmatically equipped in order to communicate with native and non-native speakers of English from various regional, social, and cultural backgrounds. Additionally, Kirkpatrick (2011) points out that English is used as a lingua franca in many Asian countries. He suggests possible methods for the English language teaching and learning process, where many different languages are used, calling it the "multilingual model." According to his study, in Asian communities, native-like competence and pronunciation is no longer the ultimate goal of English language learners. So, there is no need for a multilingual person to sound like a native speaker when using English in a lingua franca context. Similarly, Thiru Kandiah (1999) emphasizes the importance of recognizing the diverse linguistic realities of multilingual speakers, arguing that the emphasis on native-like standards marginalizes the unique communicative strategies of non-native speakers. Both Kandiah and Kirkpatrick advocate for a paradigm shift in English language education, prioritizing intelligibility and functionality over adherence to native-speaker norms.

In the Sri Lankan context, Chandra (2009) has explored how English in Sri Lanka functions as a hybridized variety influenced by local languages and cultural practices. He argues that Sri Lankan English (SLE) reflects a distinct identity that cannot be fully aligned with native-English norms. The use of SLE in both formal and informal settings demonstrates the growing acceptance of non-native varieties of English as valid means of communication. This aligns with Kirkpatrick's and Kandiah's views on prioritizing communication and cultural relevance over rigid adherence to

native-speaker standards, advocating for a more inclusive approach to English language teaching in multilingual societies.

Intelligibility

Kachru and Smith (2008) define the ability to understand a language as consisting of three elements: intelligibility, comprehensibility, and interpretability. According to them, intelligibility, which is focused on in the current study, is the ability to identify a word or another sentence-level element of an expression. Furthermore, Kenworthy (1987) perceives intelligibility as the quality of being understood by a listener at a given time in a given situation. In this regard, the process of intelligibility implies that the more words a listener can identify accurately when uttered by a particular speaker, the more intelligible that speaker is.

Varieties of English

According to sociolinguistics, language variety is a general term for any distinctive form of a language or linguistic expression (Nordquist, 2020). Linguists usually consider language variety as a cover term for any of the overlapping subcategories of a language, including dialect, register, jargon, and idiolect. The widespread use of the English language and its increasing role as a Lingua Franca have resulted in a drastic change in the sociolinguistic background of English (Galloway & Rose, 2014). Most importantly, since English is used for communicative purposes across borders, different varieties of English are widely used among speakers who share a different first language.

It is significant, then, to increase awareness among Sri Lankan ESL students about the pronunciation of different varieties of English as they live in a world where English crosses national boundaries. It brings people

together from different language backgrounds and cultures. Thus, it is necessary to identify the roles and functions of the different varieties of English. With reference to the "ownership" of English, Kachru (1992) has stated that English should be treated as a denationalized language in the sense that it belongs internationally. Furthermore, Widdowson (1994) also points out that English no longer belongs to native speakers of the language but to anyone who uses it. So, native speaker norms do not seem to apply to the world today.

Pronunciation of different varieties of English as perceived by Non-Native Speakers of English

Previous research has been conducted on learner attitudes towards varieties of English in non-native English-speaking countries. In some studies, it has been found that participants favour the English language used by native speakers of English who belong to the Inner Circle (IC) in Kachru's concentric circles model. Kanoksilapatham (2013) analysed 387 Thai university students' attitudes and aspirations regarding their pronunciation models. It was found that students held more favorable attitudes toward the model of native speakers, which differed from the expectations of the researcher. Additionally, it is suggested in her study that Thai EFL teachers strike a balance between promoting a high standard of English in the classroom and exposing learners to other varieties of English. In another, previous research study conducted in the Malaysian context, Pilus (2013) analysed 34 ESL students' opinions concerning British, American, and Malaysian English accents and found that these students, for the most part, preferred British English. However, the students rated the Malaysian English accent highly for pleasantness followed by the British and American accents. Malaysian English was also rated the highest

for familiarity compared to both British and American accents. Therefore, the high acknowledgment given to the Malaysian English accent in terms of pleasantness and familiarity is a sign that Malaysian ESL students are comfortable with their native accents.

Moreover, Pollard (2010) surveyed 10 South Korean learners of English to recognize which varieties of English are considered to be appropriate and explored the notion of perceived intelligibility. Even though his study was incomplete due to the relatively small sample size, the participants have mentioned, with a high degree of significance, that they prefer General American English, perceiving it as the most intelligible. Further, South Korean English was reported as intelligible in terms of familiarity because Korean learners of English received large degrees of exposure to Korean English.

Furthermore, Galloway and Rose (2014) conducted a study to raise awareness of 'world Englishes' among third-year and fourth-year EFL undergraduates at a Japanese university. The participants were given a list of listening materials and asked to listen to the EFL interactions provided and write a reflective journal about what they had heard. The findings of the study revealed that the participants were interested in listening to and communicating with speakers from different cultural-linguistic backgrounds. Significantly, they preferred American English, which is an inner circle variety, although they were also interested in the varieties of English used in the Outer Circle and Expanding Circle of Kachru's Concentric Circles of world Englishes. Moreover, it was found that listening journals could be a useful tool in exposing students to 'Englishes' and allowing them to distinguish the importance of mutual intelligibility.

Implementing the Pronunciation of Different Varieties of English in the Classroom

In order to familiarise English language learners with new varieties of English, more examples of the accents of non-native speakers can be employed in ESL or EFL classrooms. Sung (2015) brought different varieties of English into the language classroom by using listening tasks spoken by non-native English speakers. He interviewed students in his course titled Varieties of English, about the accents of non-native English speakers. As a major finding, he stated that participants seemed to appreciate different varieties of English and developed a deeper understanding of the sociolinguistic reality of English today. In his paper, he presented some advice to introduce Global English (GE) to students within the classroom in order to raise their awareness of it. According to that study, motivating listening materials must be selected by the teachers as the first step. Secondly, using "scripted" ELF conversations, which are recorded by speakers from different L1 backgrounds, alongside "authentic" materials, should be considered. Overall, Sung (2015) suggests that it is important to introduce students to the sociolinguistic backgrounds of English around the world and provide them with t some information concerning the varieties of English.

Galloway and Rose (2014) assembled Internet-based resources for their students to observe the use of listening journals in raising awareness of the diversity of English. In their methodology, they prepared digital audio and video recordings of speakers from different L1 backgrounds and countries as alternative resources to increase student exposure to the diversity of English. These ideas can be used by teachers who are planning to introduce different varieties of English in order to increase their students' exposure to the diversity of English

Significance of the study

The significance of this study lies in its potential to influence the pronunciation habits of ESL undergraduates at the Faculty of Humanities, University of Kelaniya. Since these students have limited exposure to the concept of *World Englishes*, their pronunciation habits are likely to be shaped by a narrow range of English varieties, often favoring either British or American English due to traditional teaching methods and media influence. However, the absence of prior studies examining their preferences for and intelligibility of different English accents means that there is little understanding of how these students perceive and adapt to global variations in English pronunciation.

By investigating their degree of preference for and intelligibility of different English varieties, this research study provides insights into how exposure, or the lack thereof, affects students' pronunciation habits. If students demonstrate a strong preference for certain accents while struggling to comprehend others, this suggests that their pronunciation development is limited by their familiarity with only a few dominant varieties. This drawback, in turn, may hinder their ability to communicate effectively in diverse international contexts, where multiple English accents coexist.

The study contributes toward changing this situation by raising awareness of *World Englishes* and encouraging a more inclusive approach to pronunciation learning. By exposing students to a wider range of English accents, it promotes the idea that intelligibility should be prioritized over strict adherence to a single "standard" accent. As a result, students may develop a more flexible and adaptable pronunciation style, enabling them to communicate more effectively in global settings. Additionally, the study's findings can inform curriculum development,

encouraging educators to integrate diverse varieties of English into pronunciation training and listening exercises. Ultimately, this research serves as a step toward broadening students' perspectives on English pronunciation, fostering greater linguistic acceptance, and equipping them with the skills needed to navigate the arena of globalized English communication.

Methodology

The participants of the study included 45 first-year undergraduates who had enrolled in the course; English for Humanities which is offered by the Department of English Language Teaching, University of Kelaniya. They were all Sri Lankans whose first language is Sinhala. A questionnaire was employed to gather quantitative data adapted from the survey developed by Pollard (2010). Participants were instructed to listen to each speech sample once and subsequently rate their perceptions of the accents, using a scale from 1 (worst) to 5 (best). Additionally, they were asked to evaluate the intelligibility of each speaker, with a scale ranging from 1 (hardest to understand) to 5 (easiest to understand).

The listening materials used for the study were weather forecast segments from news broadcasts in the UK, India, and Russia, representing the Inner Circle (IC), Outer Circle (OC), and Expanding Circle (EC) of Kachru's model, respectively. The content and context of all three segments were similar, as they each focused on weather forecasts, ensuring comparability. The primary distinction among the materials was the accent of the speakers, reflecting the variety of English associated with each of the three concentric circles. The content of the weather forecast segments included general weather updates such as temperature, precipitation, and other meteorological information which are commonly found in news

broadcasts. Regarding the accents, the British accent was similar to a standard Received Pronunciation (RP) accent, while the Indian and Russian accents represented a variety influenced by regional languages and English as spoken in India and Russia. It is important to note that these accents are not homogenous across each country, as there are significant regional variations in the UK, Russia and India. Additionally, the gender identities of the speakers varied, with one male and one female speaker from each country, ensuring a diverse representation of both gender and accent.

Each audio clip lasted 1–2 minutes and was compiled from online resources; in particular,they were unscripted to allow more exposure to real language use. They were played only once because, as Pollard (2010) argues, further exposure to any given sample may increase its perceived intelligibility level. The listening tasks were completed within the classroom once a week for a period of one month.

The participants' written responses to the listening tasks regarding their awareness of varieties of English pronunciation were recorded and to collect more accurate information, they were informed that they could write reflective notes relating to accent perception and perceived intelligibility while listening to each audio sample. Moreover, semi-structured interviews were also used to obtain qualitative data and these were conducted in Sinhala to allow the participants to expand on their ideas and opinions and to provide supportive evidence for the quantitative data.

Descriptive statistics were used to analyse the quantitative data (Likert scale data) for the mean and standard deviation which provided the summary of the findings. Furthermore, thematic analysis was used to analyse the qualitative data drawn from participants' written responses and interviews.

Findings

Findings from the Questionnaires

The results revealed that the variety of English that was perceived by the participants to possess the most favourable accent was the English spoken by the speaker from the IC, which was a British news reading. However, English spoken by the speaker from the OC, which was in the group of countries that the students themselves belonged to, was perceived as the most intelligible.

As indicated in Table 1 below, when participants were asked to rank their preference for each speech, going from the best accent to the worst accent, the British News reading which belongs to IC English was deemed to be the most preferable (M=3.32), followed by OC English which was represented by an Indian News reading (M=2.98) and thereafter, by EC English which was represented by a Russian News reading (M=2.74). The participants rated how easy it was to understand each speaker as they listened to each clip; the results are provided in Table 1 and indicate that OC English, which was represented by the Indian News reading, was thought to be the most understandable (M=2.84), followed by IC (M=2.74) and then EC (M=2.71) English, respectively.

The mean scores used to summarize the data from the Likert scale are interpreted as follows: Excellent was defined as 4.21–5.00, good as 3.4–4.20, middling as 2.6–1.30, poor as 1.8–2.60, and extremely poor as 1.00–1.80. The data from Table 1 below thus demonstrates that the participants preferred and understood different varieties of English used by speakers from the IC, OC, and EC, to a moderate extent.

Table 1: Participants' Perceptions of Preferences and Intelligibility

Variety	Perceptions	Mean	Std. Deviation	Meaning
IC	Preference Intelligibility	3.32 2.74	1.30 1.18	Moderate moderate
OC	Preference Intelligibility	2.98 2.84	1.30 1.31	Moderate moderate
EC	Preference Intelligibility	2.74 2.71	1.17 1.16	Moderate moderate

Findings from the Reflective Notes and the Interviews

The reflective notes and responses to the interviews were used to answer the second research question regarding the participants' perception of the varieties of English spoken by the three speakers from the IC, OC, and EC of Kachru's concentric model of world Englishes.

Accordingly, the data obtained from the participants' reflective notes revealed that they tended to prefer English spoken by the speaker from the IC, which is regarded as the prominent model among them. For instance, participant A had this to say: "Perfect. Though I can understand a bit, I like this accent…." and Participant B stated that "It is pleasant to hear and it sounds like a melody".

In addition to favouring the native English accent, most of the participants did not have any trouble understanding the variety of English from the OC. Some of them reported the following: : Participant C – "Indian English is similar to Sri Lankan English and I find it easy to understand", Participant D - "She speaks quite well and her talk is easy for me to understand and Participant E – "English with Indian accent is very clear for me and I can understand the NEWS very well".

According to the aforementioned comments, participants' perceptions of the variety of English were influenced by their acquaintance with certain dialects. However, the Russian News reading, which represented a reading from an EC country, was seen as containing unfavourable accents and being difficult to understand by most of the participants. Many of them had negative opinions on this variety of English. For example, Participant F – "I don't understand the Russian lady's words", Participant G – "It's hard to catch the meaning from such pronunciation", and Participant H – "It sounds like Greek which I understood nothing". This may be because Sri Lankan students were unfamiliar with other varieties of English, especially Russian English.

In addition, some respondents referred to the rate or speed of speaking when describing their difficulty in understanding the other varieties of English. Many of them spoke about how the speed of each News reading affected its intelligibility. Since the speakers of the other varieties of English spoke at a rapid pace, several participants found the clips particularly difficult to understand. They expressed their frustration in much the same manner as Participant C- "The Russian News reader speaks like a rapper. I don't understand her at all and I dislike this accent" and Participant E- "I don't understand much of British News because he speaks too fast". The News readings used in the study were unscripted and played back at regular speed. So, the rate of speech has accounted for the participants' unfavourable feedback about some varieties of English.

Furthermore, all participants of the study were invited to an interview in order to cross-check their attitudes and perspectives as well as their views on the intelligibility of different varieties of English, along with their written responses. Out of 45 participants, only 6 volunteered to take part in the interviews. Significantly, the data from the interviews correlate

with the conclusions drawn from the descriptive statistics. Thus, this data offer a potentially interesting and complementary perspective to the quantitative findings.

The participants in the interviews appeared to gain an awareness of English Language variations after completing the given listening tasks. According to them, no matter what the variety of English is, as long as verbal communication takes place, even when English is spoken in a range of accents, the communication is successful. Additionally, the majority of participants valued the listening materials of the non-native English speakers and urged the teacher to include additional non-native English speakers' audio clips to help them develop their listening skills. The inclusion of listening materials from three different varieties of English has made the participants aware that English is not just spoken by native speakers, and have realised that in order to communicate effectively, they need to have exposure to different varieties of the English language. The participants also expressed a greater sense of comfort with their Sri Lankan accent, as they perceived it to be less unfavourable compared to other accents within different varieties of English.

However, a "native-like" English accent, which refers to the variety of English spoken in nations like Britain and the United States, was the most preferred accent among the participants. They believed that speaking with a native-like accent, such as a British or American one, was prestigious and demonstrated a high level of education. One participant mentioned that "having native-like pronunciation can show that I am well-educated." On the other hand, the majority of participants associated the fact that they could understand the News reading of the Indian speaker and could not grasp the British and Russian News readings with the fact that

they were more exposed to Indian English, which is somewhat similar to Sri Lankan English, rather than to British English or Russian English.

Pedagogical Implications

In terms of the preference for English pronunciation, the findings of these studies: Pollard (2010), Kanoksilapatham (2013), Pilus (2013), Galloway and Rose (2014), and Manusya (2020) are consistent with the findings of the current study. In other words, it became apparent that many participants preferred the variety of English used in the inner circle of Kachru's concentric model of 'World Englishes'. Further, according to Nelson (2006), becoming comprehensible is made easier by prolonged exposure to a particular accent. Similarly, the participants of the present study also stated that mastering its English pronunciation is needed in order to comprehend a particular variety of English.

According to the results of the interviews, several participants seemed to value the listening materials provided by non-native English speakers since they stated that it would help them feel comfortable with other varieties of English, in addition to the variety they often use. Thus, the inclusion of non-native listening materials in an English lesson can help learners feel more comfortable with different varieties of the English language. Also, it is crucial for English language teachers to teach their students how to speak English well in order to ensure mutual intelligibility. As a result, non-native English teachers should be encouraged to teach in English classes or to offer extracurricular activities using modern technology like the Internet to give students opportunities to interact with speakers of English around the world.

This research further revealed that the participants were more accustomed to the listening recording of the British speaker, likely due to

their greater exposure to British English through social media, education, and global communication. As a result, the British accent was more familiar and easier for the participants to understand, contributing to their comfort with the recording. Therefore, it is quite understandable why many participants preferred to listen to native English speakers. Hence, it may be difficult for other varieties of English to gain ground if Sri Lankan youngsters are exposed often to American and British popular culture.

The findings of numerous studies, such as those by Pollard (2010), Kanoksilapatham (2013), Pilus (2013), Galloway and Rose (2014), Manusya (2020), and the current study, show that students have more positive attitudes towards native speakers' English pronunciation, a finding which mismatches with the expectations of teachers and academics. According to Kirkpatrick (2011), there is no need for a multilingual person who is using English in lingua franca contexts to sound like a native speaker of English. However, it could take some time and effort on the part of English language teachers to influence their students' perceptions of different varieties of the English language and inspire them to value all of them.

Ultimately, this study underscores the need for a balanced approach to pronunciation teaching—one that acknowledges students' existing preferences while gradually exposing them to the linguistic reality of World Englishes. While native-like pronunciation remains an aspiration for many learners, fostering a mindset that values intelligibility over conformity to native norms can better prepare students for global communication. This shift in perspective will not only empower learners to navigate diverse linguistic settings but also contribute to a more inclusive understanding of English as a truly international language.

Limitations

A notable limitation of this study is its heavy reliance on a small sample of listening materials, restricted to weather forecast segments from only three countries representing the Inner, Outer, and Expanding Circles of Kachru's model. This limited scope may not fully capture the diversity and complexity of the varieties of English within each circle. Furthermore, the study focuses solely on accents without considering other factors, such as speech rate, intonation, or cultural context, which could also influence participants' perceptions and comprehension. Additionally, while gender diversity was included among the speakers, the study did not explore whether participants' reactions were influenced by gender-specific perceptions. Finally, the participants' familiarity with British English through prior exposure may have biased their evaluations, limiting the generalizability of the findings to contexts where exposure to British English is less prevalent. Future research could address these limitations by including a broader range of speech samples, exploring additional linguistic features, and diversifying participant demographics.

Conclusion

This study examined the perception and intelligibility of varieties of English by Sri Lankan ESL students through News readings of speakers from Kachru's IC, OC, and EC countries. The results revealed that English spoken by the speaker from the OC was perceived as the most intelligible. However, the variety of English that was perceived to have the most favourable accent was English spoken by the speaker from the IC, which corresponds to the finding of Nazari (2014). Though this is a small-scale research study, its findings indicate that it is important for English teachers to introduce their students to varieties of English in order to make them

aware of linguistic differences in the way English is used by non-native English speakers, to help them develop a degree of mutual intelligibility as well as have them realize the broader roles and functions of English in today's society as a medium of global communication in multilingual contexts.

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Temple Hierarchy, Conflicts among Temples over Power and the Emerging Faith in Deities of Disadvantaged Devotees

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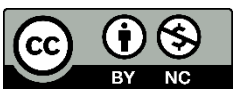

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Temple Hierarchy, Conflicts among Temples over Power and the Emerging Faith in Deities of Disadvantaged Devotees

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Abstract

This paper illustrates how contemporary Buddhist practices encounter power conflicts and the supremacy of prominent, upper-level temples over smaller, lower-level ones in Nelugama village in Sri Lanka. The conflict is not only between two temples of the two administrative Districts over the village temple ownership, but also conflicts between villagers and temples. This long-term ethnographic study reveals that there are multiple factors impacting temple hierarchy and supremacy of the prominent temple, other than the caste-based hierarchical temple structure. On the one hand, the government administration system and ethnic representation, which is unique to the proclaimed geographic demarcations and competition among temples for supremacy are the primary causes of the ownership dispute. On the other hand, this conflict has resulted from a tense situation among the original and resettled families of the village and created room for believing in supernatural gods and disconnecting the village temple. Eventually, the spiritual and religious vacuum created in the villagers' lives may have caused them to become emotionally attached to Pulleyar deity worship.

Keywords: buddhism, conflicts, power struggle, temple hierarchy

Introduction

Nelugama, is a traditional village located in the *Anuradhapura* district, organized around kinship ties and isolated for many years. It is a village located along the *Colombo Pulmude* road in the *Anuradhapura* district. It is a hot, dry village consisting of 202 families. *Nelugama* comprises 3 sub-villages named *Nelugama*, *Olukada*, and *Nawawewa.* The original inhabitants of the village claim that they arrived in 1950. This village, bordering the *Trincomalee* district, went through several upheavals during the war, namely, LTTE attacks, and displacement. Therefore, the village remained somewhat isolated and cut off from the rest of the district.

The inhabitants of the village experienced an influx of farmer families who had lost land due to the Yan Oya irrigation project. These families were resettled in Nelugama. The village temple is located outside of the 300-meter radius of the village and is administratively a part of the Tamil-majority Trincomalee district. After the construction of the village temple, a delineation was established between the two districts. This set the stage for rivalry and disputes between the two temples in the Trincomalee and Anuradhapura Districts over who the rightful proprietor of the temple at Nelugama was. While the temple in the Trincomalee district is referred to as the 6th milepost temple, the temple in the Anuradhapura district is known as the 8th milepost temple. These temples are positioned at the upper level of the temple hierarchy. The chief monks of the temple in the Trincomalee district made ownership claims over the *Nelugama* village temple. This competition among temples has become more visible and complex with the arrival of the resettled families in Nelugama. The chief monk of the Trincomalee temple made some attempts to persuade the original families of Nelugama to accept the administrative authority of the

Trincomalee temple. However, these original families were very cautious in maintaining their objectivity and neutrality.

The temple in the village and the other two temples belong to the *Siam Nikaya,* an order which is confined to the *Radala*[1] and *Govigama*[2] castes. In rural social systems, temple hierarchies are deeply ingrained and covert. The temple structure in Sri Lanka is hierarchal and divided into temples belonging to the three main *Nikayas,*[3] and these divisions are caste-based. The larger temples, which are more substantial in structure and more powerful, control smaller temples in villages within the same area, and the same *Nikaya* is positioned at an upper level of the hierarchy.

Since caste, class, and other forms of discrimination are rejected by doctrinal Buddhism, arguably, the existence of monastic orders is a deviation from what is prescribed in the Buddhist canon. However, caste factors in ordination are a longstanding practice that is rarely criticized; even Buddhist rituals are founded on theology. However, caste-based discrimination and influence remained at a minimum level in the study village in this power struggle, since all temples belonged to the same caste.

Though the majority of villagers followed Buddhism as a religion, they adopted other beliefs and practices related to locally revered and idolized deities to seek relief from mundane troubles. The original villagers believed in and worshiped a local deity called *Pulleyar.* This *Pulleyar* God is regarded by the Nelugama villagers as a "supernatural" deity with the

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[1] *Radala* refers to a small minority caste in the Kandyan Kingdom of Sri Lanka and positioned in the uppermost level of the social hierarchy. They were the Chiefs of the Kingdom of Kandy

[2] *Govigama* is a *Sinhalese* caste found in Sri Lanka, representing the majority of the *Sinhalese* population and are traditionally involved in agriculture.

[3] Buddhist monastic order. There are three main Sri Lankan orthodox Buddhist orders, named *Siam Nikaya, Amarapura Nikaya*, and *Ramanna Nikaya.*

ability to provide favors or safety if properly revered and propitiated. Observations and research on the customs of worshipping local deities while practicing Buddhism, which does not encourage belief in invisible deities, are used to support another argument. Even though the focus of many religions is on a god or gods, Buddhism as a philosophy has demonstrated how to lead a good life and achieve spiritual enlightenment by following the doctrine of the Buddha alone. On the other hand, lay Buddhist people in Sri Lanka request the blessings of certain deities on significant occasions (Iddagoda, 2017).

At the time of the study, the village temple was controlled by the 8th milepost[4] *Purana Raja Maha Viharaya* which belongs to the Anuradhapura district, even though the 6th milepost temple, which belongs to the Trincomalee, had also fought for supremacy. The temple in the village was known as the village temple, while the other temples were labelled by the number engraved on the mile posts located close to the temple. These posts are positioned alongside highways by the Road Development Authority to indicate the length of roads. The relationship between the chief monks of the 6th and 8th milepost temples and the villagers affects how the village temple functions, as none of the chief monks of the village temple have lived in the village temple for a long period. The objectives of this study are to study the dynamics of temple hierarchy and to understand how social changes and administrative boundaries in the village influence temple supremacy and its consequences and also how it impacts local beliefs and practices.

Buddhism, Caste, Hierarchy and Conflicts.

[4] The mile is a British imperial unit and United States customary unit of length.

Sri Lanka is a nation that places a high value on religion. Every village, as stated by Iddagoda (2017), has a religious shrine that represents the village's religious character. Along with roadside shrines, there are many other religious symbols, most notably Buddha statues. Likewise, there were several Buddha statues, ruins such as stone pillars, and stone flower tablets in *Nelugama* which symbolize the lengthy prevalence of Buddhism in the village, but the temple hierarchy is invisible and deep-rooted in this community.

Although Buddhism itself condemns caste-based prejudice and advocates equality, the Sri Lankan Buddhist order is known for having a caste system and a hierarchical temple structure based on caste. The caste system is typically thought of as a distinct, historically situated ideology (Yalman, 1989). Jayasooriya (2018) has studied attitudes and perceptions of monks and laypersons on prevailing caste-related practices compared to Buddha's doctrine. The results of this study revealed that the divisions of the *Nikaya* or monastic order/fraternity in Sri Lankan Buddhism are formed primarily due to and continue to exist based on caste differences. It has been observed by local scholars that many Buddhist monks have deviated from Buddhist doctrine by following caste-based practices. According to Malalgoda (1976), granting higher ordination was refused to those of non-*Govigama* social origins, a refusal legitimized by a royal decree attributed to King *Keerthi Sri Rajasinha* during the Kandyan period[5].

This demonstrates the complicated history of caste among the Buddhist clergy. Malalgoda (1976) noted that a distinct fraternity (monastic

[5] The kingdom of Kandy prevailed in Sri Lanka from the year 1597 to 1815, and that period was known as the Kandyan period.

order) was founded as a result of low-caste protests. The temple narrative in *Nelugama* demonstrates that the persistence of other external and internal factors and power struggles among monks are the other reasons, in addition to caste, for the existence of the temple hierarchy. Furthermore, in this study, the nature of conflicts between villagers and monks is discussed and the manner in which it impacted the religiosity of people is analyzed in depth. Although some academics have written about caste-based temple hierarchy in Buddhism, there is still a knowledge gap on the other factors influencing power struggles to maintain temple hierarchy and authority.

According to Malalgoda (1976), monks' original motivations and purposes are individual salvation from the world of suffering and bondage. Gomrich (1988) also made a similar claim that monks are people who have left society to look for salvation, and that their duties include preaching and preserving the Buddha's teachings. Buddhism is known for its prioritizing equality, harmony, the middle path (the noble eightfold path), and the four noble truths. The Buddha rejected discrimination based on caste, color, status, wealth, and other distinctions, and taught his followers to do the same.

As a result of the different interpretations of Buddha's teachings adopted by different cultural groups, social hierarchies also differ among different Buddhist cultural groups. According to Ledgerwood (2012), the social hierarchy in Buddhism is founded on the 'order of disciplines and referred to as the '*Sanghas*". "*Sanghas*" are collections of monks residing in monasteries, who play the role of instructors (Zhe, 2013) and are part of the Buddhist social hierarchy. They convey the message of the Buddha to their students, who then go out and spread this message all over the world. The Buddhist religious hierarchy also influenced the social hierarchy

prevalent in the societies where Buddhism was introduced. As highlighted above, Buddhism is founded on order, respect for hierarchy, and adherence to specific rules, with the individual tasked with seeking fulfillment from within in a way that would help them realize a "higher calling" and do so with other people in mind. Ledgerwood (2012) notes that in present-day Buddhist practice, as was in the past, the hierarchy in Buddhist belief is founded on seniority. The implication, in this case, is that the longer an individual has been a monk, the more senior they are. This element of Buddhism influences social hierarchy in Buddhist practice in that individuals who are older in society are more senior and are thus accorded more respect and consideration.

Freedom of action and controlling powers in Buddhism have been theoretically scrutinized by Rahula Thero in his book on "What the Buddha Taught". In the *Mahaparinibbana Sutta*, the Buddha has mentioned that he never thought of controlling the *Sangha* (Order of Monks) so that they would be dependent on him. He said that there was no esoteric doctrine in his teaching. The freedom of thought allowed by the Buddha is unheard of elsewhere in the history of religions. As mentioned by Rahula Thero (1959), this freedom is necessary because, according to the Buddha, man's emancipation depends on his realization of truth and not on the benevolent grace of God or any other external power as a reward for his good and obedient behavior. The term *thanha* has been described as thirst in Buddhism. It is this "thirst", desire, greed, craving, manifesting itself in various ways, that gives rise to all forms of suffering and continuity of beings (Walpola, 1959). Even though those principles have been philosophically crafted in Buddhism, many followers of the Buddha in the present day act in contradictory ways.

This paper wishes to explore how those current practices and trends lead to rebellion, power struggles and conflicts. As mentioned by Ombedt (2003), there is no single entity occupying the permanent position of power and this is evidenced by the symbiotic nature of the relationship between the laity and the *Sangha.* Further, according to Omvedt (2003), the *Sangha* in Buddhism is dependent on the laity for material support, while the laity depends on the *Sangha* for religious instruction. However, in practice, Buddhist religious symbols do impact and shape social hierarchies leading to the creation, reinforcement, or subversion of social relations of power.

Landscape, religion, and the monarchy

Yi et al (2022) have mentioned that since the Western Jin period, Buddhism has confronted bureaucratic power within the architectural landscape. Confucian officials proposed that Buddhist monks must bow their heads or kneel to emperors (Orbodoeva and Yangutov 2019). From these officials' perspectives, there were two reasons for this confrontation: to retain the current state administrative system characterized by the divine right to rule founded on the Mandate of Heaven and to accept a political system in parallel with Buddhism. As per the view of Yi et al (2022), in such contexts, temples may express both Buddhist spirit and monarchical ideas in their architecture and landscape forms. This reveals that monarchical power, embodied in the temple, can persist continuously in a specific historical period, geographical location, and environment. However, the relevance of the landscape where a temple is located to monarchical power has not been sufficiently explained.

The relationship between landscape, religion, and the monarchy was explored by Cosgrove (1998) in his study on the prominent role of the Italian monastic landscape in urban, state, and social formations (pp. 76–

77). 'The landscape is a vehicle for cultural production in social formations stretched between city and country, feudalism and capitalism, but the modalities of its use and the theoretical predilections that underlie it relate to the specific historical circumstances in which it was employed' (Cosgrove 1998, p. 222). This evidences that social formations, hierarchical arrangements of religious institutions, power, and landscape interact with each other, and that the nature of those interactions are dynamic and complicated.

Most writings on current Buddhist practices have explained concisely the different traditions and customs in Buddhism and Buddhist religious institutions. Caste-based practices in popular Buddhism have been discussed by many scholars (Gombrich, 1971; Malalgoda, 1976; Silva et al., 2009; Gombrich & Obeyesekere, 1988; Silva, 2017). However, local research has not examined non-cast-based factors that are important to temple hierarchy. Therefore, this study aimed to investigate the views of *Sinhala* Buddhist laypeople, as well as monks/nuns, about factors influencing power, authority and hierarchy in Buddhism in Sri Lanka. The study was undertaken because there is a severe lack of relevant local literature and evidence on power struggles among temples belonging to the same caste.

Richard Gombrich and Gananath Obeyesekere's book "Buddhism Transformed: Religious Change in Sri Lanka" explores how Buddhism has changed and evolved in response to the country's shifting social, political, and economic circumstances. Through a thorough examination of historical and modern practices, it identifies a number of variables impacting religious change, such as regional cultural dynamics and political influences. But other specific factors, such as the administration system, ethnic representation and competition among temples for supremacy have

not been examined in depth. Gombrich and Obeyesekere claim that there are some significant omissions in Buddhism-related local studies, such as critical discussions of the civil war between the Tamils and the Sinhalese and its impact on Buddhism. The writers contend that Buddhism, rather than being a static, is a dynamic tradition that has continuously changed to address societal demands and difficulties. The purpose of the current study, then, is to determine the elements that affect temple administration and hierarchy at the temple level and how they affect Buddhists who had close relations to the temples concerned.

Methodology

This paper utilizes data gathered through intensive ethnographic research conducted in *"Nelugama"* in the *Padaviya* Divisional Secretariat Area of the Anuradhapura District. The conflict between two temples in two administrative districts over the ownership of the village temple was influential in choosing this location. Hence, the study was carried out to understand the nature, dynamics, and root causes of power struggles among powerful temples for control over less powerful village temples, and how those conflicts impact the villagers. The two temples that competed for the ownership of the village temple were known as the 6th milepost temple and the 8th milepost temple. The village temple referred to in this paper is the temple in *Nelugama.* The 8th milepost temple belongs to the Anuradhapura district, while the 6th milepost temple belongs to the Trincomalee district. The sampling method for selecting informants was purposive, and the sample comprised a mixture of men and women belonging to both original and resettled families as well as Buddhist monks. Data collection tools used for the study were semi-structured interviews, mapping, focus group discussions (FGDs), observation, and transect walks..

Dispute over the ownership of the village temple

Social changes and administrative boundaries in the village influenced temple supremacy and its consequent impact on the disputes between monks in the 6th milepost temple and the 8th milepost temple. Social ties between the original village families and the resettled families are severely harmed by the conflict between the two temples over control of the village temple. Under the results section, factors other than caste which influenced these power dynamics and how they triggered the conflict between the two temples over the ownership of the village temple, are described.

Nelugama village has undergone socio-economic changes due to the sudden influx of migrant families from *Yan Oya* due to the resettlement process that took place in the *Yan Oya* mega irrigation project. Simultaneously, disputes between the two temples, the 6th milepost temple and the 8th milepost temple that belong to the two administrative districts of Trincomalee and Anuradhapura, over the ownership of the village temple is another social issue that has existed since the origin of the village. In addition to placing resettled families at the center of the conflict, this circumstance has given the resettled families an ideal opportunity to divide themselves into parties or groups according to their own biases and points of view.

The primary causes of conflict and discontent among the original families were the unclear administrative borders, the hierarchical structure of the village temple system, and rivalries between other temples for control of the village temple. The district borders between the *Anuradhapura* and *Trincomalee* districts are placed on a 300 m wide terrain that is isolated from the main road and goes through the village. The temple in the Trincomalee district is known as the 6th milepost temple while the

temple in Anuradhapura district is identified as the 8th milepost temple. A milepost is a small, roughly one-meter-tall cement pillar placed along a highway to signify distance in miles. To show distances, mileposts are placed on the opposite sides of major roadways. Two markers are separated by a mile, or roughly, 1.6 kilometers. Due to their physical proximity to the 8th and 6th-mileposts, these names were given to the aforementioned temples. In Sri Lanka, this is a typical and traditional method of nomenclature.

ost people residing in these two districts are members of two distinct ethnic and religious groups, which exacerbates the problems with administrative boundaries. Administratively, the village temple and the 6th milepost temple are part of the Trincomalee district, which is primarily populated by Tamil people. According to Cosgrove (1998), the landscape serves as a medium for the production of culture in social forms that are situated between capitalism and feudalism as well as between city and country. Moreover, cultural defense explains the problem of administrative boundaries[6] as well. Here, minorities turn to religion as a means of protection from the animosity of the majority population. The 8th milepost temple monks who live in the Anuradhapura district, where the majority of the population is Sinhala, felt that it was inappropriate to build a Buddhist temple in an area where people of other religions predominate, and the village temple needed to be positioned under their authority. This reveals how cultural defense can influence the thinking of majority and minority populations in a community.

[6] **https://www.tutor2u.net/sociology/reference/sociology-ethnicity-and-religious-belief**

This argument can be further strengthened by Sivén (n.d.), who examined selected "cultural conflicts" that can be said to exist in majority/minority relations within the context of Western liberal democratic societies. A central argument in her study is that acceptance of cultural variation is crucial in every society with the ambition to call itself liberal. It is also evident in the study that sometimes, when it comes to cultural dilemmas in the West, the concept of "Western values" has been inaccurately equated with the values of liberalism. She has conducted a normative analysis of when it is justified for a minority to claim certain rights concerning culture. The ban on religious symbols in public schools in France (the Muslim headscarf being the specific symbol discussed) is exemplified on this basis. Koopmans et al. (2005) highlighted that strict separation between the state and religion makes publicly visible association with religion to appear problematic because it is viewed as a challenge to the principle of laïcité[7]. Siven argued in her study that the principle of tolerance is as important in society as the principle of freedom, and that the two cannot exist separately. Thus, tolerance of cultural variation is crucial in liberal societies.

Connecting to the Resettled Families

The temple in *Nelugama* functioned at a very basic level since it did not have a functioning Sunday school [8] for the children of the village and

[7] Laïcité is the constitutional principle of secularism in France. Article 1 of the French Constitution is commonly interpreted as the separation of civil society and religious society. It discourages religious involvement in government affairs, especially in the determination of state policies as well as the recognition of a state religion.

[8] Sunday school is a teaching day assigned on Sundays every week by the government to the religious institutes and it is institutionalized and governed under the Ministry of the relevant religious affairs.

performed only regular religious events. However, throughout the Katina[9] Period, the *Dayaka Sabhawa* of the temple operated intermittently and occasionally performed a *Bodhi Pooja*. Since the offering of a Katina robe is believed to contribute to the accumulation of solid good karma, the word "katina" literally means "firm" or "solid." The Katina Ceremony dates back more than 2,500 years. Because it provides a unique opportunity to gain merit once a year, Buddhists worldwide have upheld this monastic ritual.

The *Dayaka Sabhawa* is a village committee made up of the village's devoted Buddhists. The committee is in charge of organizing village events on behalf of the temple and overseeing the welfare and development of the community. The temple in the village possesses certain basic features such as the *Bo* Tree[10], *Dhana Shalawa*[11], and *Vihara Gewal*[12]. *Vihara Gewal* are *s*mall huts, and monks live in these located in the forest area. Therefore the village temple was called a *vanavaci* temple, meaning a 'forest-dwelling' temple. While another category of monks lives in temples in close proximity to villages and maintain closer ties and interactions with people, the *vanavaci* is a category of monks that lives in caves in the jungle or in wooded regions, mostly for the purpose of meditation.

The chief monks of the 6th milepost and the 8th milepost temples in the Trincomalee and Anuradhapura districts, made ownership claims on the village temple and launched attempts to influence original and resettled

[9] Katina refers to the offering of the special robe (Katina civara) prepared and presented to monks who have completed the three months of retreat during the rainy season.

[10] The Bo tree, is large and scared and according to Buddhist tradition, the specific sacred tree, (Ficus religiosa) under which the Buddha sat when he attained Enlightenment at Bodh Gaya in Bihar, India

11A place where the meal was served to monks by devotees who prepare and bring it to the temple.

families to take their side. The original families, however, were very cautious in maintaining their neutrality throughout. In contrast, the resettled families who had migrated from *Yan Oya* were influenced by the chief monk of the 6th milepost temple. This monk had made some overtures to these families such as allowing their children to attend SundaySchool and providing *Danaya* slots to resettled families. The chief monk also attended cultural and traditional events organized by these resettled families. Due to such interactions, quite understandably, the resettled families maintained close relationships with the chief monk of the 6th milepost temple rather than with the monks of the village temple or the monks of the 8th milepost temple

Intermittently, the village temple was occupied by student monks sent by the chief monk of the 6th milepost temple. This was because both original and resettled villagers were not able to maintain solid, long-term relationships with the monks residing in the village temple due to their high turnover. Regardless of those challenges and certain unfavorable conditions, the original villagers maintained some links with the village temple and supported its development whenever needed. It was observed that the relationship between the village temple monks and the villagers was rather fragile and determined by the behaviours and attitudes of the monks sent by the chief monk of the 6th milepost temple, who occupied the temple from time to time.

According to Glazier et al. (2020), places of worship have significant responsibilities to play as anchor institutions that encourage community engagement. Moreover, the communities are frequently centered around important, permanent institutions where people congregate, interact, and form bonds. Given that it serves to unite people to strengthen social networks and interactions, the village temple might be

thought of as an anchor institution. Anchor institutions are seen as essential components of the community and are significant players in civic affairs. "Locally embedded institutions, typically nongovernmental public sector, cultural, or other civic organizations, that are of significant importance to the economy and wider community life of the cities in which they are located" is how Goddard et al. (2014) characterize these anchor institutions. The absence of community-sponsored religious activities in the village temple and the regular turnover of chief monks pose a threat to the *Nelugama* temple's social role as an anchor institution. Due to this circumstance, other religious organizations and groups with distinct subcultures are now able to exert influence over the ownership of the temple. The lack of an anchoring function in the village temple of *Nelugama* has allowed for tensions between the original and resettled families and other powerful temples over ownership. As Clopton & Finch (2011) explain, places of worship are "social anchors" in the community, fostering bonding and bridging social capital and acting as access points for connecting members across racial, economic, and gender lines. According to Blachard (2007), segregated churches are associated with segregated neighborhoods in every region of the United States. This segregation was visible to some extent in *Nelugama* as well due to the close bonds that had developed between the resettled families and the 8th milepost temple.

Disputes over ethnicity, majority vs. minority, and local administration

The majority of original villagers agreed that the temple should be owned by the 8th milepost *Purana Raja Maha Viharaya* in the *Anuradhapura* district, even though it belonged administratively to the

Trincomalee district. The majority of the population living in the Trincomalee district are Tamil, and during the ethnic civil war, the temples in the Trincomalee district were constantly under threat and frequently attacked. These reasons, together with the overbearing influence of the chief monk of the 6th milepost temple, have influenced the preferences and opinions of the original villagers. While the original villagers preferred to be governed by the 8th milepost *Purana Raja Maha Viharaya,* the resettled families continued to maintain close links with the 6th milepost temple, creating tensions between the two groups of villagers.

Since the existing *Nelugama* village temple is located in the *Trincomalee* district, where the majority of the population is Tamil, the resettled villagers are opposed to developing it. *Siripala ,* a resettled farmer, explained the reasons for his reluctance and maintained that a new temple should be constructed only for the resettled families.

The project has assigned this fund for the development in Anuradhpura District if we develop the village temple then that funds would be invested in Trincomalee district losing the objective of the project. Since we believe that this fund belongs to the resettled families and the project authorities need to build up a new temple for us in the new village consisting of the resettled families.

None of the resident monks of the *Nelugama* temple ever spent a long period of time living in the village temple, for a variety of reasons. One reason is that these monks had been transferred by the chief monk of the 6th post temple to other temples, even after they forged close ties with the local villagers and the temple had grown to a certain extent and begun organizing traditional ceremonies. The discussions with the monk living in the village temple revealed that a new monk needs time to establish relationships with the locals, which is based on his or her social and

communication abilities. The practice of transferring monks from the village temple at short intervals made the original settler families of *Nelugama* displeased with the chief monk of the 6th milepost temple. These circumstances led to increased suspicion and dissatisfaction over the actions of the chief monk of the 6th milepost temple.

It was observed through these incidents that when community empowerment and resistance are insufficient to offset poor decision-making, this decision-making is susceptible to manipulation. This left the entire community feeling let down and gave rise to spurious tales that monks were leaving the temple frequently due to ghosts in the village temple. Another incident that fed dissatisfaction was the looting of historical ruins located in the village temple. The chief monk of the 6th post temple appropriated the rocky tab used as a *Mal Asanaya*[13] (Flower Tab) without informing the villagers. It was a precious and historical property owned by the village temple. However, after vehement protests by the villagers, it was placed once more in the village temple premises.

Due to the actions of chief monk of the 6th milepost temple, the relationship between the villagers and temples has become strained. As a result, the original families of *Urawa* and *Omarakada* stopped going to the village temple.. Each sub-village shows a different level of support for the village temple and has different interactions with it. The *Urawa* sub-village worked closely with the temple and supported it in building the new *Budu Madura*[14] , *Vihara Geya*[15] and two *Kutira* [16]. However, there were

[13] The tab is made from natural rock and built in front of the Buddha Statue for offering flowers

[14] It is a room where Buddha Statues are placed and used for worshiping and offering flowers to those Buddha Statues

[15] *Vihara* is the Sanskrit and Pali term for a Buddhist monastery. *Vihara Geya* is a designated shrine place where monks live.

[16] Small cells built in the temple for meditation.

differences in how the temple hierarchy was regarded by the sub-villages, particularly by those in *Nawa Gammanaya*, where many families had been resettled.

The resettled families were highly influenced by the chief monk in the 6th post temple since they were unfamiliar with the village culture and lacked knowledge of the history and customs of the other temple. By allowing their children to attend the Sunday school or *Daham Pasala* , accepting *danaya* from them, and paying visits to the homes of the new villagers for various purposes, the 6th post-mile temple attempted to wrest control of the village temple, at least to a certain extent. While the community has a duty to look after the monks, the monks are required to take care of the community's spiritual requirements in exchange for food and other essentials. In this sense, possessing a reserved slot for *Danaya* is both a privilege and a duty for villagers.

Another contradictory incident was the plan to construct another new temple in *Nawa Gammanaya* (new village) where many resettled families lived. A distinct land allotment was designated for the new temple in the *Yan Oya* resettlement master plan, and the project contained a separate budget for its construction. The ownership of the new temple, according to the preexisting hierarchical structure of the temple system, is, of course, the main source of contention. Although the 8th milepost temple was in better circumstances to assume the administration of the new temple, the chief monk of the 6th milepost temple sought relentlessly to take this new temple under his wing as well.

his circumstance has given rise to a dispute between the two temples (6th milepost and 8th mile post) regarding ownership of the current temple in *Nelugama,* and the temple that is planned for in the master plan. The 8th milepost temple and 6th milepost temple were both placed above the temple

in *Nelugama* in the temple hierarchy but were at the same level as each other. Even though the temple hierarchy was created to make temple management easier, it has compounded several problems related to ethnicity, resource distribution, ownership, power, and leadership. Since the existing village temple in *Nelugama* is in the Trincomalee district, where the majority of the population is Tamil, the resettled families are opposed to developing it.

The actions of the chief monk of the 6th post temple were sometimes not accepted even by the resettled families due to excessive pressure and authoritarian decision-making. For example, the resettled families received a community centre as part of their resettlement plan. Even before the community centre was officially opened, the chief monk of the 6th milepost temple sent a young monk to live at the new facility. This was an unusual occurrence in a rural village, and the resettled families were upset by the chief monk's conduct. It was considered a forceful attempt to seize the new temple, with the chief monk occupying the center by proxy without being invited. . Everyone in the village holds the chief monk of the 6th milepost temple responsible for inciting disputes and becoming involved in unnecessary temple politics. Even a village-level election has been requested by this chief monk to demonstrate that most people prefer the 6th milepost temple.

The resettled families preferred to establish a new temple for the new village in order to rid themselves of the influence of the chief monk of the 6th milepost temple. The resettled families have expressed interest in the new temple and reported the details of the conflict to the Divisional Secretariat (DS), the most senior unit of administration in the region. The resettled families gradually stopped giving *Danaya* (main meals provided to monks), making gifts for development, and enrolling their children in

Sunday school as a result of the conflict with the 6th milepost temple. Villagers believed that the 8th milepost temple should have jurisdiction over the proposed new temple because it is located in the *Padaviya Pradeshiya Sabha* neighborhood.

Appuhami, a farmer in *Nelugama* who has close relations with the village temple had this to say:

‘ *Hamuduruwo is very greedy for power and is planning to take both temples under the jurisdiction of the 6th milepost temple. We heard that Hamuduruwo has written to a higher authority on this and has influenced local politicians to convince the higher authority to make those decisions.*

There is a well-known story of a chief monk attempting to steal the stone flower tab from the village, a property that has historical value. *Appuhami* mentioned,

‘Hamuduruwo stole the stone flower tab from the shrine area near the Ormarakada irrigation tank and that location is a preserved archeological site. Then, the villagers acted directly against Hamuduruwo, and took it back and located it at the original site’.

The actions and attitudes of the chief monk of the 6th milepost temple in these circumstances disappointed both the new and the original families. The primary requirement of both communities was for a fully operational temple that fosters spirituality, religious activities, traditions, culture, and values. This case demonstrated how, despite Buddhism's emphasis on the opposite, temple hierarchy has allowed chief monks to compete for control and power in order to achieve enhanced authority.

While the situation of the village temple was chaotic, the original families of *Nawagasgamuwa* used to attend the *Sandagiri Viharaya* and maintained good relations with that temple. This temple is located at the 8th milepost. Since the temple typically follows the *Sandagala* tradition

and *Rahatun (Wada Siti Nisa)* have lived there, it was thought that the name *Sandagiri* was given to the building.

The original families had dire need of a well-functioning village temple to establish a positive life culture and spirituality in their lives. When a monk of the village temple had had good relations with the original families, the villagers had contributed towards renovating the temple, building a new *Vihara Kuti* [17] and conducting *Bodhi Pooja* [18] held every Wednesday. *Theravada* Buddhist monks who have gone forth from 'home life' to 'homelessness practice collecting alms-food. However, rarely have *Aranyavaci* monks from the *Arasimale* temple come on *Pindapathaya* [19]to *Nelugama.*

In accordance with the community's conviction that they must look after their monks, the monks are required to take care of the community's spiritual requirements in exchange for food and other essentials. The issue of temple ownership clearly surfaced in *Nelugama* as a result of blurred administrative boundaries, the unstable and changing nature of the village's composition, and the effect of the power struggle of nearby temples related to its ownership. Other incidental problems arose as a result, including functional instability, strained interpersonal ties between the community and the temple, and a split in the community over ownership.

[17] Separate space designed and built for individual monks in the temple premises for the purposes of meditation.
[18] Chanting of stanza written with the purposes of relieving human being from suffering, where chanting is done normally opposite a Bo Tree.
[19] It is a practice of monks who live in the jungle to engage in meditation. . Occasionally they come to villages and go from house to house with a bowl and collect cooked food. Serving food to such monks is considered to be a rare opportunity imbued with much spiritual value.

Belief in Deities

Pulleyar is a locally idolized and worshipped deity. The villagers of *Nelugama* and *Orlukada* are devotees of the *Pulleyar* deity. They believe that *Pulleyar* lives in the *Bo* tree which is located near the *Ormarakada* tank. The villagers offer alms to *Pulleyar*, meaning that they prepare a meal with different kinds of curries and rice and keep the first portion of each type for *Pulleyar*. Then, after a day or even a few hours, the food is given to animals or dumped as waste. This food offered to the god is not considered fit for human consumption.

Earlier, people believed that the *Pulleyar* deity lived invisibly in the village, guarding villagers from all kinds of misfortunes, including the evil eye. Looters and criminals who cause damage to the ruins, especially the Buddha statue, to steal precious stones are some of the largest hazards to ancient archaeological sites. When temples were constructed and sculpted, it was thought that precious stones were stored hidden in statues, especially Buddha statues and other ancient ruins. But once those historically significant statues were damaged, in most cases, nothing was discovered.

In some situations, looters even stole the statues and sold them to antique collectors. Similarly, the Buddha statue in the village was desecrated during the period of civil conflict. It was believed that the crime was committed by looters and not by LTTE troops. These monuments and ruins were transferred securely, with safety measures in place, during resettlement in 2000. The villagers believed that the entire village was shielded by the divine force of the *Pulleyar*, who was worshipped in those ancient places. The archaeological site bordering the *Ormarakada* tank was considered to be the village's shrine, and some residents habitually lit oil lamps and presented flowers to the *Pulleyar* deity in the morning and

evening so that he will always watch constantly over the village community. Villagers perform *Baraweem* and *Oppukireem* there as well.

Some people perceive these deities as influencing occurrences in the world, including their personal experiences. Researchers have explored the beliefs and experiences related to God (or gods) from social, motivational, and cognitive perspectives. One such example is the research conducted by Joshua *et al.* (2023) on social, motivational, and cognitive frameworks used to predict beliefs and experiences involving supernatural entities. Their research on "Beliefs and Experiences Involving God, the Devil, Spirits, and Fate: Social, Motivational, and Cognitive Predictors", concluded that perceived interactions with supernatural beings were highly correlated with belief in them. With a focus on social, cognitive, and motivational variables, these findings describe the pattern of relationships between comparatively stable predictors of supernatural attributions and offer some logical explanations for how such experiences and beliefs might arise.

To comprehend how the lives of the original villagers were connected with the ideology of the *Pulleyar*, one must grasp what ideology is. Ideology is a person's or a group's doctrine, philosophy, body of views, or guiding principles. Many facets of the lives of the original villagers were tied to the idea of the *Pulleyar*, including prevention, religiosity, spirituality, and protection. The vacuum existing in the spiritual and religious aspects of the villagers' lives may have led them to become emotionally attached to the *Pulleyar* deity. This demonstrates how important it is for people to live a disciplined and organized life, full of meaning. Despite lacking a functioning temple in the village, the *Nelugama* villagers' strong inclination towards embracing a religiously

oriented lifestyle was clearly reflected in their behaviors, attitudes, and practices.

Conclusion

The ownership of the new temple in *Nawa Gammanaya,* according to the preexisting hierarchical structure of the temple system, is one of the main sources of contention that is under scrutiny in this paper. Multiple tensions have arisen as a result of numerous battles between two temples—the 8th milepost and 6th milepost temples - and between those temples and the village people, in attempting to increase the former's influence over the village temple. This power struggle has situated both the original and the resettled families in an awkward predicament. The *Yan Oya* resettlement plan included a new temple in *Nawa Gammanaya* (New Village). The desire for power and control over the hierarchical temple structure as well as the government administration system, which is based on proclaimed geographic demarcations, are the primary causes of the ownership dispute. The disagreement was exacerbated by the tensions and criticisms within the village communities regarding the conduct and attitudes of the chief monk of the 6th milepost temple. .

The interconnectedness of religion and culture has had a significant impact on how people live today as well as how they did so in the past. For the families in *Nelugama*, losing the opportunity to follow their own religion's traditional and cultural practices became a great loss because it forced them to adopt other beliefs and practices related to locally revered deities in order to find spiritual solace. These results underlined how crucial it is for most people to follow a religion and/or belief to have full and orderly lives. This research study examined how disputes among temples regarding temporalities and authority and tensions between temples and

local villagers heightened the dissatisfaction of villagers, causing them to engage in the worship of local deities for protection and material favors.

Villagers' worship of local deities while practicing Buddhism, which does not encourage belief in invisible deities, is used to support another argument. Lay Buddhists of Sri Lanka, in general, seek the blessings of various deities on significant occasions (Iddagoda, 2017). The rural villagers of *Nelugama* also regard gods as supernatural beings who can grant blessings like good health or riches, and, therefore, they believe in the existence of these gods. The Nelugama villagers believe that the *Pulleyar* deity is a "supernatural" being who, when properly propitiated, can grant protection or blessings. The findings emphasize that the spiritual void created by temple conflict reinforced the spiritual connections to and faith of villagers in their local, supernatural deities.

In observing rites and participating in religious and cultural events, the resettled villagers were more organized. In contrast to the original settlers, the relocated peasants did not practice any distinctive cultural celebrations or rituals. The farmers who were relocated were more devout Buddhists than the original inhabitants. They seem to be a group of people who have a modest level of religious belief. Since their level of religious activity was quite low, they were desirous of establishing new relationships with the operating temple (8th milepost temple) that they used to attend on days of religious significance.

While the original villagers were rather lethargic when it came to maintaining relationships with the 8th milepost temple, which was operating well compared to the village temple, they did send their children to the Sunday schools run by the 8th milepost temple and gave alms to that temple as well._Low religiosity has been defined by Iddagoda (2017) as having characteristics such as lower-level participation in religious

activities, sporadic trips to religious locations, and irregular attendance at religious ceremonies.

It has been possible to maintain temple hierarchies and so establish power and authority among temples thanks to the historical foundation laid for temple hierarchies. When devotees or followers of a religion do not receive the results they anticipate from religious authorities and institutional structures, they lose faith in these structures and authorities, and this atmosphere fosters tendencies to choose alternative routes or sources of worship.

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The Significance of Posters and Political Culture: An Analysis of the Practices of Two Mainstream Political Parties

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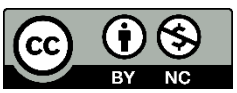

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The Significance of Posters and Political Culture: An Analysis of the Practices of Two Mainstream Political Parties

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Abstract

This paper discusses the importance of political posters in Bangladeshi politics and specifically how they are used to communicate with the masses, shape their minds and serve in other ways as tools of party politics. It highlights the increasing attention to visibility as a form of political communication, whereby politicians and activists enact a long-term performance of visibility by staging poster exhibitions in places where public density is high. The paper emphasizes the role of such posters as channels of relaying messages about and creating digital identities of party-political actors. In particular, it explores how image size and dress code are used by the Awami League, a mainstream political party in Bangladesh, where leaders use posters, among other things, to demonstrate obedience. Also, the paper examines the role of gender with respect to attire, as there is a difference between the controlled dressing of women and the relative freedom of dress afforded to men, particularly men who are attired in the Mujib Coat. Based on this discussion, the paper seeks to illuminate the changing role of politics at the local level by focusing on the complexity of the interactions among visuals, clothing, and gender in the context of party politics in Bangladesh.

Introduction

When exploring the political culture of Bangladesh, it is necessary to investigate the manner in which political leaders are represented. As a rule, political leaders can be directly elected or already occupy a public position. In Bangladesh, a country in which elections are regarded not as a political process, but rather as a cultural rite, visual expression becomes an essential element of sociopolitical discourse (Singer, 2020). A campaign poster transcends the narrow political usefulness of a poster per se, and reflects wider social identities and expectations, and expresses disparities in culture and gender (De Witte, 2021). This study is important because examining political posters contributes to an understanding of the political culture of leaders of the country, and scrutinizing the historical, social and structural representations of gender in posters and the ways in which some of these pejorative depictions can be overcome in the geospatial environment, is of definite value.

The broader research question that informs this article is as follows: *How do political posters in Bangladesh create and perform political identity by their style of clothing and image size, and what is the consequence of this creation and performance on the perception of gender and political culture in Bangladesh?* In doing so, the paper adds to the existing literature on political posters, visual political communication, and electoral politics, as well as provides a South Asian point of view in which symbolism, party identity, and cultural affiliation remain at the center of political representation (Singer, 2020; Ford, 2021). Given its robust party politics, and the particular political roles played by the two genders, the example of Bangladesh, in the comparative analysis of political posters, can offer an instance of the influence of localized traditions and cultural affiliations on the minds of the electorate.

Scholars around the world have stated that clothing and fashion are important visual expressions of social identity, transmitting information about culture, social status, and values (Cristina, 2020). This dynamic is particularly strong in political posters in South Asia, where clothing can be a significant indicator of political attachment, class, and culture. Analysis of images in Indian political posters indicate a predisposition towards using religious symbols, traditional dress, and provide a visual and symbolic link to the cultural, domestic, and political institutions of the candidates (Mathur, 2016). The portrayal of women in poster images in Pakistan has been associated with issues of religious identity, and the presence of women in the public space of the poster can be seen as a challenge of patriarchal ideals (Jamali & Mathew, 2015).

The two leading political parties of Bangladesh, the Awami League and the Bangladesh Nationalist Party (BNP) are characterized by some differences in the attire of the leaders depicted in the posters. The practice of wearing the national dress, primarily the "legendary Mujib coat," has become a way for many people to show their loyalty to Sheikh Mujibur Rahman, a former Awami League leader. On the other hand, the leaders of the BNP, influenced by the charismatic and powerful ex-leaders of the party, wear more modern attire, including formal Western suits, which symbolize their global orientation and professionalism. These differences in dress signify contrasting visions of political culture and identity, which posters communicate symbolically in public spaces (McLuhan, 2017). A poster is thus one medium, an outlet through which meaning is conveyed visually, communicating it to both literate and illiterate individuals symbolically through the clothes of the individuals depicted. (Hall, 1997).

Gender, of course, appears prominently in these kinds of articulations. Political posters usually show female figures in ethnic wear

as symbols of party allegiance, while the insignia on their clothes and the color schemes used are usually in line with party colors. Sometimes, head coverings such as the burqa or attire such as the shalwar kameez reflect the multidimensional convergence of religious and patriarchal standards that have continued to define women as political entities. Such gendered images of women in these cultures not only imply the image of an 'ideal' woman but also reflect sociocultural norms surrounding the modesty and overall appropriateness of women participating in politics. In Bangladesh, where Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina herself models sari-wearing as a form of national and political identity, poster representations of women wearing sari closely mirror these expectations.

This study intends to focus on the visual elements of political culture by concentrating on the elements of clothing, image sizes and the portrayal of different genders in political posters. It analyzes gender identity change through campaign communications and assesses how political culture is 'performed' through clothing and visual symbols. More broadly, the study situates Bangladesh within regional scholarship on South Asia, showing both similarities, such as the role of traditional attire, and stark contrasts in clothing, for example, unique features such as the Mujib coat's iconicity, between the Awami League and the BNP. At the very least, the case of Bangladesh contributes to global debates on the intersection of political communication, visual culture, and gender in electoral politics (Ford, 2021; Singer, 2020).

Theoretical Perspectives

Political posters in Bangladesh create meaning through a dense layering of cultural symbols, clothing choices, body placement, and visual structure. These posters rarely rely on text alone. Instead, they

communicate authority, morality, and belonging through images that ordinary viewers can read instantly because they draw on everyday Bangladeshi visual knowledge (Kuttig, 2020). This is why theories of meaning, symbolism, and identity matter here not as abstract ideas but as tools to understand how these posters work on the ground.

In Bangladesh, clothing is one of the strongest visual markers used in posters to shape how viewers understand a leader. It communicates social origin, piety, class, and political orientation without a single line of explanation. A Panjabi paired with a prayer cap positions a candidate within a moral and religious frame that many rural voters read as trustworthy and humble (Ahmed, 2020). A customized suit creates a different message, linking the candidate to modernity, higher education, and institutional authority, especially in urban settings. The Mujib coat and sari add values of loyalty to a certain political party. These visual choices build meaning because they connect to familiar cultural associations that people use to interpret political figures quickly in a crowded media environment. This process can be explained with the help of structuralist thinking: the visual elements of a poster do not act independently, but they are a system where meaning is created through their connection with each other (Lévi-Strauss, 1973).

Meaning is also constructed in the way in which posters organize bodies and symbols. Leaders who are at the top or at the visual center are perceived to be more powerful. This hierarchy is reinforced by their clothing. The Awami League posters, for example, tend to portray the leader in sharp Panjabi-waistcoat outfits that convey the sense of tradition and state power, whereas grass-roots organizers look smaller and wear simpler local clothes. This hierarchy provides the visual representation of the political framework: who rules, who obeys and who keeps the party

legacy. Even though Barthes (1977) elaborates on the reliance of images based on common cultural signs, in the case of Bangladesh, it is the grounding of these signs in the practical experiences of class, religion and political loyalty that is important. The identity formation of posters is also based on how Bangladeshi society interprets belonging. Clothing defines the difference between a rural and an urban leader, someone who seems friendly or prestigious and someone who seems to fit in a particular constituency. An image of a candidate captured on a relief mission in a cotton Panjabi, with a black coat, during flood relief efforts, provides a chance to demonstrate his connection to the poor and his readiness to interact directly with the party legacy. This attire is not only read by voters as a fashion statement, but also as a sign of character. This argument is in line with the concept proposed by Tajfel (1981) regarding group identity, except that it is formed here in local social categories like *Murubbi* (respected elder), *Neta* (leader) or *Bhai* (protector).

Hierarchy is observed even in small details like the quality of fabrics, color contrast, and the arrangement of the pictures. In posters that promote national leaders, local politicians are usually dressed less formally, in the background, or are depicted in smaller portraits. This visual distance is an indication of the party chain of command that generally exists in South Asian politics (Jahan, 2015). Simultaneously, such a poster also promises the voters that the local candidate will be loyal to the national figure. Clothing is the medium distinguishing these ranks, marking the connection and preserving authority.

The meaning of political posters in Bangladesh is formed with the help of culturally specific visual language in which clothes play the leading role. It defines the interpretation of leaders, forms group identification and even serves as a depiction of hierarchy. Such posters are successful because

they fit the visual expectations of Bangladeshi consumers who interpret clothing not only as fashion, but also as an expression of personality, authority and social status.

Research Methods

To examine, analyze, and interpret views of the social world, which are composed primarily of culturally and socially relevant concepts, this study focused on an interpretative approach employing qualitative research methodologies. The qualitative approach was adopted because the goal of the research is not to measure or predict in a numerical sense, but to understand how meanings are constructed and experienced in the everyday lives of people who produce and consume political posters. This approach makes it possible to follow the patterns and social contextual shifts that underlie and embody the phenomena and to capture nuance that, in its essence, is irreducible to quantitative data (Clark, Foster & Bryman,2019:16).

To achieve this, we employed in-depth interviews, content analysis, and semiotic analysis. Twenty-two interviews were conducted with political activists, student leaders, NGO operatives, members of the local civil society and citizens whose everyday routines involve political communication. Purposive sampling was used to select the participants, so that not only the people who are directly involved in the production and distribution of political posters, but also the general receivers of such messages, were represented (Shawkat, 2017).

The respondents were demographically diverse in terms of age (between 20 and 55 years), gender (male and female), and educational level (higher secondary to postgraduate level). Professionally, they consisted of students, small-scale entrepreneurs, political volunteers and grass-roots

organizers. This difference was essential when it came to contextualizing poster communication in wider social and cultural contexts (Geise, 2011a).

The interviews were conducted in an informal and conversational manner to ensure that the participants posted their perceptions, attitudes and lived experiences quite openly. Systematic content analysis and semiotic interpretation were used in the data analysis process. During transcription, data analysis and interpretation, the participants were referred to using pseudonyms. Thematic coding was done to transcribed interviews in order to determine recurring frameworks, which included perceptions of power, identity construction, poster networks, and symbolic meaning-making. Content analysis was used to trace verbal and visual patterns communicated through posters - keywords used repeatedly, design features, and color use (Desiree and Castro, 2022) - whereas semiotic analysis was used to decode the signs, body language and colors used to provide posters with cultural and political appeal (Martinec, 2001). Such a dual approach serves both the intentions of the researcher and the interpretations of the audience, placing the political posters in the socio-political and historical context in which they are circulated.

The Rationale for the Small and Large Images on the Posters

The portraits of senior leaders, including Sheikh Mujibur Rahman, Sheikh Hasina, and Sojib Wazed Joy, are usually crafted in a small size, whereas the size of the portrait of the local candidate or organizer appears very large in Bangladesh political posters. Such a layout reflects not only hierarchy but individual branding- the large image draws attention to and consolidates the presence of the candidate, and the smaller portraits provide an indication of party membership and loyalty (Hossain and Islam, 2019). Top party personalities tend to be reduced in size at the top of the poster as

a sign of respect, but on the other hand, the image of the local aspirant is magnified at the center to assert itself. Practically, this is in line with Hutchinson (1968), who states that the pictorial element of a poster should be visually appealing to draw attention to it, and a huge picture ensures that the image is seen by the observer even at a distance. Within the setting of Bangladesh, where political recognition is primarily based on publicity, an engaging image benefits a candidate and helps them gain familiarity among the voters (Chowdhury, N.S., 2020; Nair, 2017).

The political poster generally centers a large candidate profile that ensures that anybody who walks by the poster notices the person in the portrait and recalls their face. This is especially so in the mixed literacy areas, where individual recognition is paramount. The smaller images of national or regional leaders serve as visual indicators of party affiliation, which communicates that the candidate is supported by or connected to higher-ranking representatives (Ullah, 2018; Zavos, 2018). The mini-leader images do not compete for attention with the primary photo, but they represent the network and support of the candidate. Posters are therefore not just election adverts but a means of negotiating and holding onto party hierarchies as well as indicators of the larger South Asian visual politics of hierarchy, prominence, and image symbolism (Chopra, 2019; Kuttig, 2020). Likewise, political posters used in such countries as India, Pakistan, or Nepal often include large photos of local or regional leaders and smaller photos of national figures in order to indicate loyalty, power, and party affiliation, which proves that visual hierarchy is an effective tactic within the region (Nair, 2017; Zavos, 2018). One interlocutor[1] explained, *"Large images on posters tend to be more eye-catching and attention-grabbing, making them effective at conveying the central message. Those who want*

[1] **The interview conducted on 17th December 2022. The Interlocutor's name is Namus Sadiq (32)**

to be familiar with their images remain large" (personal communication, 2022). The hierarchical nature of the party is solidified in the layout of the images, revealing who is "above" and "below" in the organizational hierarchy.

Authority is also conveyed in image size. By making their own portrait larger than that of the senior leaders, the local aspirants manifest confidence and prove their leadership qualities, whereas the presence of revered senior faces, even in a smaller size, gives the poster the air of legitimacy. This dual strategy reflects how posters function as pervasive visual expressions of politics in Bangladesh, simultaneously highlighting personal prominence and party affiliation (Hossain & Islam, 2019). Another respondent[2] noted, *"It has become a culture, or a custom to attach images of senior leaders, and those who want to build their identity have their images enlarged so that there is more focus on them in the public eye."* These practices developed as posters became widespread in public spaces, creating a ritualized design pattern where senior leaders' images signal loyalty, while enlarging one's own image strengthens public identity, echoing visual political cultures across South Asia (Nair, 2017; Zavos, 2018).

[2] 2 The interview conducted on 25th January 2023. The interlocutor's name is Asad Mahmud (29)

Figure 1: General Secretary, Awami Shecchasebok League is showing his political connections by using large and small images. (Photo taken by the author on 11th March 2022).

On the poster, the General Secretary of the Awami Shecchasebok League[3] has enlarged his own image. The poster also contains images of party leaders in a smaller size so that the Secretary could focus more on his

identity while keeping the party image intact and pleasing the leaders. For candidates, the rationale for expanding their image is the creation of an identity that will be remembered by viewers. This pattern of identity creation against the backdrop of party allegiance is evident from the grass-roots level to the top or national level in Bangladesh. Both the Awami League and the BNP use the same approach when it comes to placing public images and keeping their legacy alive. Party posters are "essential to the composition, maintenance, and assemblage of inter- and intra-party politics," suggesting that image placement serves internal power dynamics as much as public persuasion (Kutting, 2020). The size and imagery of posters influence the character of political campaigning to the point where posters become a display of personality instead of a place where rational

[3] **Sub-group of Awami Political Party**

debate can be conducted.

Image size is a strategic tool of Bangladeshi political posters, and it is extensively discussed in the research on visual politics and the political culture of South Asia. It is the conscious use of contrast between large and small images in visual politics that grasps attention, expresses power and conveys power relationships (Kuttig, 2020; Hossain & Islam, 2019; Chowdhury, 2020). Images are as crucial as textual messages in political discourse, especially in low-literacy or image-based electorates (Ullah, 2018; Hutchinson, 1968). In South Asian political culture, the practice places greater focus on the cultural and ritualized aspects of political representation, wherein a preference for imagery is not only a feature of functional selection but also an indication of social norms, party hierarchies and historical continuity (Nair, 2017; Zavos, 2018). The visual similarity of posters in South Asian nations, including Bangladesh, India, Pakistan, and Nepal, demonstrates that the logic behind the balanced sizes of images, visibility, power, and party affiliation is not a localized phenomenon, but an entire regional norm, and that these visual hierarchies function as both symbolic and practical uses of politics. This study contributes to the larger debates on iconography, symbolism, and performance in South Asian politics by examining the use of visual indicators by political actors of Bangladesh and other nations in the region to negotiate authority, loyalty and voter recognition. (Chopra, 2019).

Clothing Worn by Politicians on Posters

In Bangladesh, politicians tend to wear dress codes that are identified with senior party leaders like Sheikh Mujibur Rahman and Ziaur Rahman. The leaders and MPs, ministers and activists of the two dominant political parties, the Awami League and the Bangladesh Nationalist Party

(BNP), all reproduce these party-distinctive clothing codes on posters, often with some form of logo-tag, or party logo alongside them. The practice is widespread not only in city centers but also at the upazila level where local activists on posters resemble district and central leaders. Top activists in the various districts are given commands by the Dhaka headquarters, and they pass them down to lower-level activists, building a hierarchy of sartorial loyalty that finds its way down to poster culture in the various localities. Clothing, therefore, reflects the continuation of partisanship, and is a marker of political commitment, as well as ideological conformity (Barnard, 2002; Calefato, 2004).

Clothing is of particular importance in this analysis since political posters display the images of activists as identity performances. The way in which leaders wear certain clothes symbolizes them to the people, thus building visual political legitimacy (Barthes, 1983; Hebdige, 1981). The particularity of clothing renders these images unique manifestations of political culture, a top-down approach in the context of local politics. A good example of this is the "Deepjal phenomenon" where a negative character in the relevant film impacted images of politicians in political posters, causing a change in dress to a Western style in order to convey a cleaner and more respectable image (Chowdhury, 2008). Thus, clothing has symbolic power, pointing to authority, modernity or tradition.

The Bangladeshi political dress mode exists squarely within a broader South Asian political culture, where the various types of garments worn, including the Nehru jacket, khadi kurta, sari, sherwani, and Western suit, have long been employed to indicate ideological commitments, moral power and nationalism. The Mujib coat, based on the Nehru jacket, has a similar symbolic charge because it conveys sacrifice, simplicity, and the nationalist heritage of Sheikh Mujibur Rahman in much the same way that

the Nehru jacket has come to represent postcolonial leadership in India (Roy, 2007; Srivastava, 2015). Likewise, the sari, worn by Sheikh Hasina and earlier worn by Indira Gandhi, grounds women leaders in maternal nationalism and cultural authenticity, as well as represents a kind of gendered political respectability (Tarlo, 1996). The Western fashion of suits, such as those worn by Ziaur Rahman, indicates cosmopolitan competence reflecting political aesthetics in Pakistan, India, and Sri Lanka, where customized suits are associated with discipline, bureaucratic power and internationalized modernity (Weiss, 2001; De Mel, 2021). In South Asia, political clothing serves both as a symbol of personal identity and a pedagogical system, teaching followers how to identify themselves visually with party standards and expectations.

In the two leading parties in Bangladesh, the Awami League and the BNP, leaders at every level of the party, ministers, MPs, district officials and grassroots activists replicate these party-based styles. The central party office provides visual guidelines to district leaders, which are further reproduced on posters at upazila and union levels. This establishes a sartorial hierarchy of loyalty where clothing is used as a form of ideological obedience and discipline among the population (Barnard, 2002; Calefato, 2004). The proliferation of these types of clothing in posters guarantees that the political hierarchies are not just written but are also practiced through the visuals, and therefore, dress becomes a ritual with which it is possible to perform political pedagogy. During my fieldwork, one activist[4] explained: *"As a politically devoted person, I know that from the central part of the party leaders wear the Mujib coat for showing love and obedience. That's why when I circulate my posters, I try to wear the*

[4] The interview conducted on 11th April 2022 in person when I was in Bangladesh. The interlocutor's name is Nazia Khatun (40)

clothes. Even our Member of Parliament, Zillur Rahman, wears it to show respect to the founder of our nation." This statement is a perfect illustration of how dress practices reflect the discipline of the party, and thus, social identity becomes visible and intelligible to the community (Demirtaş, 2003; Akmemir, 2018). The same trend occurs in other countries in South Asia, like in India where BJP workers copy the kurtas worn by Modi, and Congress activists copy the Nehru jacket, while Nepali leaders don the Topi and followers of Sri Lankan parties replicate the dress codes of party dynasties (Spencer, 2007; Vaishnav, 2017; Shrestha, 2013). Thus, clothing becomes a visual pedagogy that teaches followers how to present themselves as loyal subjects of the political hierarchy, blending respect for tradition with aspirational modernity. In Baliakandi Upazila, district MPs and grassroots activists alike follow these sartorial patterns, wearing Mujib coats or Western attire depending on affiliation, thereby linking dress with party loyalty, legitimacy, and continuity (Barnard, 2002; Calhoun, 1994).

In addition, clothing on posters is deeply gendered. The sari, consistently used by Sheikh Hasina, maps onto long-standing South Asian expectations that women leaders embody maternal authority and cultural stewardship. Such representations echo regional patterns in which female politicians—Indira Gandhi, Sirimavo Bandaranaike, Benazir Bhutto adopted traditional dress to reconcile public authority with gendered expectations of modesty and virtue (Tarlo, 1996; De Mel, 2021). For male politicians, the Mujib coat and Western suit index contrasting masculine performances, nationalist sacrifice versus modern managerial competence. Islamist candidates use beards, caps, and Panjabi-pajama sets to align themselves with piety and moral leadership. These gendered and ideological differences construct an accessible "visual vocabulary" that

citizens can quickly decode, while simultaneously reinforcing party legitimacy and historical continuity (Hebdige, 1981).

Fashion, as cultural theorists argue, is a non-verbal system of communication that encodes both individual and group belonging (Barnard, 2002; Lurie, 2000; Saucier, 2011). A Union Chairman[5] who is an Awami League politician[6] said: *"Dressing like party leaders means being loyal to the party officials. The following path is shown by the party's high officials. For a long time, there has been a practice in the field of politics that whoever joins the party should follow the dress of the high leader of the party to portray the party spirit and present himself as a loyal worker of the party."* Hence, politics is always tied to party legacy, which is also reflected in party-centric loyalty through clothing choices.

Figure 2: The posters in the images reflect a party hierarchy expressed through clothing. Senior leaders are depicted in black and white attire, while junior leaders wear the Mujib coat to demonstrate loyalty and respect toward the party (Image taken by the author on April 5, 2022).

[5] This interview conducted on 4th December 2022. The interlocutor's name is Mahbub Arafat (61)
[6] This interview conducted on 24th March 2022. The interlocutor's name is Lamia Begum (32).

In the Rajbari district, posters reveal MPs, district secretaries, and grassroots activists wearing coordinated clothing - Mujib coats, Panjabi's, and shirts that visually articulate loyalty to the party hierarchy. This consistency highlights the fact that style implies subcultural power, as Hebdige (1981) says, but, in this case, is reformulated as political loyalty. The use of clothing as a symbol on posters is another indication of the connection between individual branding and group identity: bending the dress code will in all probability lead to the loss of credibility and perceived loyalty to the party (Marchetti, 2020; Calefato, 2004).

At the same time, hybrid clothing trends have also emerged. Activists, especially younger BNP and Awami League members, often combine Western and traditional attire (e.g., suits or dress shirts with Mujib coats), producing hybridized identities that appeal, simultaneously, to both tradition and modernity.

Figure 3: A BCL leader displays his western dress teamed with a Mujib coat. (Image taken by the author on 5th April 2022).

The poster above, of a Baharpur Union Chatra League[7] activist, was circulated in the locality on March 7, 2022. As one BCL leader[8] explained, *"As a student leader, it's not possible to make posters from the shop, and I am good at mobile photo editing; that's why I create posters by using my previous image. Even if it is a Western shirt, when I add a Mujib coat digitally, it shows respect to the party founder."* Thus, technology allows younger political activists to reach the masses easily and promote a more 'formal' style of representation. This digitally produced hybridity mirrors trends across South Asian youth politics, where activists mix traditional clothing with global styles to signal both modernity and rootedness (Udupa, 2015).

In student politics, posters containing photographic images are especially common. One reason is the limited financial capacity of young activists, who often rely on personal photos taken with their phones. With the help of digital technology, they create and distribute a new form of poster independently. This artistic fusion emphasizes, according to Calhoun (1994), the constructed character of self-knowledge, which is generated by the agency of a person, as well as fulfilling the expectations of a group. These practices are in line with Cristina (2020), who points out that fashion is a symbolic representation of power: by blending Western trends with party-accepted clothes, activists shape hybrid political selves, which, while implying loyalty, express modernity in the process as well.

Aesthetics of posters are also influenced by economic inequalities. Higher level leaders, using their wealth to hire professional photographing services and designer clothes, make sure that their posters correctly portray the required sartorial codes, while student and grass-roots activists use self-

[7] Student Political Party of Awami Political Party
[8] 7 The interview conducted on 12th January 2023. The interlocutor's name is Bikash kumar (21)

made photos that are digitally edited. However, clothing invariably expresses loyalty, authority and legitimacy, and in this regard, sartorial politics has proven to be a semiotic system which cuts across classes and economic boundaries (Castells, 2010; Marchetti, 2020; Barthes, 1983).

This discussion revealed the function of clothing in Bangladeshi political posters at the intersection of visual politics, gendered representation, and South Asian political culture. Dressing is an artificially and culturally intelligible act of performance, which forms political identity, communicates allegiance, and supports hierarchical organizations. Comparisons among political practices in India, Nepal, Pakistan and Sri Lanka reveal that clothing serves as a common visual language throughout South Asia, where clothing such as the Nehru jacket, sari, kurta, and Western suit all have political connotations. By analyzing these trends, it becomes clear that clothing is not merely a form of decoration but is a vital means by which political power is exercised, and gender morality and party continuity are brought into existence and displayed.

The Difference in Clothing between Male and Female Politicians Depicted in Posters

Both men and women across the political spectrum of Baliakandi Upazila in the Rajbari District are attempting to assert themselves in the political arena. However, in a patriarchal society, men wield power and hold positions in many institutions, whereas women are still excluded, often lacking access to important posts and titles. Women can be found in politics but are seldom given priority and acceptance in places of visible power. This hierarchy is visible in posters as well, which are one of the primary media of political self-representation. Men are free to circulate posters of themselves in a bid to build their identity, but most women are

confined due to the rigid principles of religion, patriarchy, and culture (Cristina, 2020; Chowdhury, N.S., 2020).

Fashion is closely tied to social stratification, with clothing marking symbolic boundaries and creating distinctions between individuals and groups (Cristina, 2020). In South Asia, this process of stratification is gendered. Women politicians usually circulate posters of themselves during elections or national festivals by presenting themselves in sarees and with their heads covered, creating impressions of the "traditional Bengali woman." This is done strategically to secure a positive reception from the predominantly Muslim electorate, where conservative values remain powerful (Akdemir, 2018; Castells, 2010).

Figure 4: A female politician's poster in which she attempts to convey religious sentiment and maintain patriarchal norms. (Image was taken by the authors on 6th May, 2022).

In the printed poster (Figure 4), the female politician distributed campaign images as a candidate for the Union Parishad election. On the poster, she is wearing a saree with her head covered in the manner of a

traditional "Bengali woman."-Such attire helps women align themselves with the former ruling party iconography (for example, Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina typically wears saris) and appeals to conservative Muslim-majority voters. As Eisenstein (1984) notes, men hold greater privilege in politics, while women's gender roles are shaped and constrained by the dominant patriarchal system. One local female[9] politician explained, *"Our area is very conservative; whenever I think about making posters, I always keep in mind the sentiments that are grounded in our society. Most of the people are religious; that's why I wear a saree and cover my head. Otherwise, the public would not vote for me. Even a saree is a symbol of Bengali women, and our Prime Minister also wears it, so when I wear it, people welcome me without criticism."* In other words, she dresses not for personal style but to signal conformity with Islamic modesty and the ruling party's patriarchal image. Scholars of South Asian politics and gender roles observe similar trends: women leaders are frequently cast as dutiful daughters or mothers in public symbolism rather than as independent architects of policy (Bullough, A., Kroeck, K. G., Newburry, W., Kundu, S. K., & Lowe, K. B. 2012). In one Sri Lankan study, even a Member of Parliament bluntly stated: "You can't wear trousers and do a speech on a stage. You have to wear a saree." (Vijeyarasa, R., Vanniasinkam, N., & Gunasekera, V., 2021). This remark – from a neighboring South Asian country – echoes the same pressure on women everywhere in the region to adopt traditional attire if they wish to be taken seriously.

The historical use of women's bodies in political imagery also plays a role here. Chowdhury (2020) argues that women's images in Bangladeshi posters have long oscillated between empowerment and objectification, depending on the political context. Importantly, these women's posters

[9] The interview conducted on 30th May 2022. The Interlocutor name is Farhana Azim (42)

send a dual message. By emphasizing piety and modesty, a candidate conveys both personal virtue and loyalty to party ideals. As feminist theorists note, such imagery reduces women to symbolic roles (e.g. "pious mother" or "loyal daughter") rather than political agents. One regional analysis explains that female politicians' public faces are controlled by "gendered symbolism" – roles that invoke emotional connection but strip away claims to real agency (Bullough, A., Kroeck, K. G., Newburry, W., Kundu, S. K., & Lowe, K. B. 2012). As a university student[10] noted, *"No matter what clothes women wear, they must face criticism. If you wear a burqa, you are called a good girl; if you wear a hijab, you are considered polite. But women will never be spared from judgment."* This demonstrates how the female body is constructed and structured in a social way through the intersection of gender, religion and respectability (Shapiro, 1999).

In comparison, men are much freer in terms of clothing. Their clothing rarely draws the undue critical attention of people unlike in the case of women, since men can be seen as effective representatives of themselves without fear of moralizing due to their dominance in the political arena (Eisenstein, 1984). As Johnson (2022) reminds us, female politicians all over the globe are regularly subjected to increased scrutiny on being "too formal", "too colorful", or "too feminine", and yet, the attire of men usually goes relatively unnoticed. Visual politics in South Asia assign men their dress as either being modern or as being sufficiently traditional but never assign the dress of women as having any moral content. As an illustration, Indian women politicians tend to dress up with a "power dress" by conforming to male attire (suits or jackets) or donning a bright sari, just to prove that they are not out of place in a male dominated

[10] The interview conducted on 27th April in person when I was in Bangladesh. The interlocutor's name is Nazmun Sharmin (24)

field (Mukherjee, T., 2024). However, even this tactic is based on delicate proportions: according to one fashion pundit, on an occasion when female Indian minister Sushma Swaraj wore a Western jacket, it was accompanied by an enormous bindi and Sindhoor to indicate that she was still a "traditional Hindu woman". Male leaders are allowed to exercise authority or cosmopolitanism with a minimum amount of criticism, yet women who dress in modern attire are continually required to encode extra signs of traditional femininity to secure their legitimacy (Eisenstein, 1984).

Meanwhile, such dressing limitations are not only cultural but also political. Women leaders are obliged to negotiate between competing pressures: religious conservatism, patriarchal standards and the symbolic power of party leaders such as Sheikh Hasina or Khaleda Zia. By recreating the outfits of these elders, women place a visual claim to their authority in the wider party traditions. Fashion, in this respect, is not only aestheticism but also about justifying women who are challenged by political systems (Barnard, 2002; Calefato, 2004; Lurie, 2000).

Moreover, posters are also indicators of larger conflicts on behalf of rights and recognition. Amnesty International (2011) underlines that freedom of expression and belief involves freedom of choice in terms of attire as a part of cultural or religious identity. However, in the real-life scenario, women in Bangladesh do not enjoy such freedom; they are expected to dress according to community expectations to be electable. Some of these barriers can only be overcome by individuals belonging to politically and economically powerful families, like Farhana Azim who found it relatively easy to enter politics. Posters, as Kutting (2020) indicates, not only demonstrate the gendered disparities in clothing, but also show the structural disparities of political involvement in rural Bangladeshi society.

The gendered double standard in clothing demonstrates how the reinforcement of norms is achieved through representation. The posters of Baliakandi upazila reveal that gender is a potent force that hinders female representation and influence in South Asian politics. The social construction of acceptability in women's clothing on these posters is thus clearly demonstrated, and it is evident that only when women dress in a conservative, traditional way can they be accepted. Men, on the other hand, do not hesitate to use clothing to indicate status or modernity. This double standard is to be understood in the context of broader systems of visual politics, gendered representation, and traditional South Asian values, all of which collude to restrict the role of women in politics. Such images are a reminder that campaign fashion here is much more than a mechanism of aesthetics; it is a major tool of social control and a symbol of underlying inequalities.

Discussion and Conclusion

This paper adds to the body of research on visual politics by illustrating that political posters in Bangladesh are structured visual practices as opposed to being merely campaign tools. The analysis demonstrates how political identity and authority are made and regulated by emphasizing the size of images, clothing, and gendered representation. The everyday practices of politics in public spaces are culturally intelligible through these visual practices.

The results contribute to the existing body of research on political posters and visual communication by demonstrating that image size is a symbolic process through which hierarchy is negotiated in party politics. Although previous research focuses on visibility and attention in political images, this paper lays emphasis on the manner in which juxtaposition of

enlarged local portraits with smaller images of national leaders allows for personal political identification and simultaneously reflects obedience to party leadership. Posters in this context are visual concessions involving personal ambition and organizational discipline by promoting party organization instead of subverting it.

Another way in which this study expands on existing knowledge on political dress is its illustration of the how clothing on posters is ideologically complicit and educative. The paper uses South Asian research on sartorial symbolism to demonstrate how party-related dress codes like the Mujib coat, sari, or Western suit are replicated at the grassroots level to express legitimacy, historical continuity, and ideological obedience. Clothing is therefore a form of visual language in which we learn, express and normalize political culture.

Notably, the research paper adds to the corpus of gender-specific studies on political representation by showing how the visibility of women in politics is conditioned by limiting sartorial standards. In contrast to male politicians, whose dress codes indicate positions of power or advanced civilization, women must publicly demonstrate humility and cultural decency to achieve the political status of primary actors. These stereotyped expectations, which are visually displayed in posters, strengthen patriarchal power relations and diminish female agency, despite the incorporation of women in social-political spaces. This highlights gender inequality within the political arena, where it is institutionalized even in the most mundane visual practices.

Taken as a whole, the analysis places Bangladesh within general South Asian discussions of visual politics, and points to context-specific processes in the country that are influenced by party history and cultural representations. Political posters become prominent places where

hierarchy, gender expectations and political loyalty are represented and normalized. In conclusion, this study has shown that political posters in Bangladesh are actively involved in creating a political culture. Posters create authority, govern political membership, and perpetuate already existing power relations using controlled visual strategies. The study contributes to the existing body of knowledge in the field of political communication, visual culture, and gender by analyzing these daily practices of visuality to reveal how politics is performed, taught, and normalized via images displayed in public spaces.

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Resource allocation in healthcare: Perceptions of the General Public

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Abstract

Sri Lanka provides healthcare free of charge to its citizens. Therefore, prioritizing resource allocation is especially important. The objective of this study was to determine public opinion on how scarce healthcare resources should be allocated. A questionnaire consisting of a scenario where the allocation of life-saving medical resources was required, was administered randomly in both Sinhala and English to 263 members of the general public, all of whom were over 18 years of age and residing in Sri Lanka (excluding health care workers, medical students and students of allied health-related subjects). The questionnaire was administered electronically and in paper format. The public was provided with 10 resource allocation criteria and requested to rank them in order of importance in relation to this scenario. Data were analyzed using Microsoft Excel and Jamovi software. Results revealed that fifty four percent of the respondents were of the opinion that doctors should make resource allocation decisions while 39% preferred hospital administrators to make decisions. The majority prioritized providing resources to those who were most ill, followed by those most likely to survive, with no significant differences in responses with respect to gender, educational level, and age. The study concluded that the majority of citizens were of the opinion that doctors should make resource allocation decisions as opposed to administrators, with life-saving resources being allocated to the individuals who were most severely ill, followed by those most likely to survive. The least preferred methods were random allocation and volunteer-based allocation. Therefore, the study summarizes popular opinion on the basis on which health care workers are expected to assign limited health care resources.

Keywords: demographic trends, equitable access, healthcare resource allocation, prioritization, public perceptions

Introduction

Although a developing country, Sri Lanka provides health care and education free of charge to its citizens. Vital statistical parameters indicate the success achieved by the Sri Lankan health sector in executing this task (Abeyesundere, 2001). The health care system in Sri Lanka is under the administration of the Ministry of Health, which functions under the central government. National health policies are implemented with the objectives of improving the health status of the public and reducing inequalities (Ministry of Health, 2016). However, due to many social and economic factors and limited resources it has become challenging to ensure that the public gets an equal chance of utilizing health services (Abeyesundere, 2001; Withanachchi et al., 2007)

Even though prioritization of resource allocation is a key challenge faced by any health system in any country, it is especially challenging in developing countries where there is a greater disparity between health care needs and available resources (Schwappach, 2002).

Prioritization is defined as making a choice based on a ranking process. Prioritizing takes place in all areas of the health care system where demand exceeds the available resources. Although decisions on priority setting and resource allocation are made at the National/ Provincial/ Regional/ Institutional and Individual levels (Arvidsson et al., 2010), it is a fact that resources should be fairly allocated guided by well-established, broadly applicable, ethical principles, acceptable to those who help sustain it; the tax payers (the general public). Population characteristics such as ethnicity, race or creed should play no role at all in this process, but allocation should meet public health needs (*Coronavirus Disease (COVID-19)*, n.d.)

Under certain circumstances such as pandemics, wars and natural disasters, medical resources can become severely scarce, causing numerous challenges with regard to prioritization and resource allocation (Emanuel et al., 2020). The COVID-19 pandemic, which spread across the world including to Sri Lanka, highlighted the need for making critical medical decisions with regard to prioritizing resource allocation (Emanuel et al., 2020). In a pandemic situation, the prioritizing criteria may differ from what is practiced under normal circumstances. For example, although ordinary health systems give priority to the sickest, in a pandemic it may be justified to give priority to saving the most lives, when scarce resources like ventilators, ICU beds and vaccines are allocated (Daniels, 2016).

In a democracy, involvement of citizens in the process of making key decisions is an important part of governance. Furthermore, ethically sensible recommendations do not always reflect the views of citizens. Therefore, researchers have developed various methods for soliciting public preferences to support policy makers in the process of decision making related to priority setting and resource allocation in health care (Núñez & Chi, 2021). Countries like Sweden, Norway, England, and Israel have developed procedures to engage the public in priority setting (Farmakas et al., 2017). However, in many other countries, the rationale behind allocation of health care resources is usually not explained to the public, and thus, little is understood and discussed (Broqvist & Garpenby, 2014). As a result, people tend to question whether the bases for allocation are well grounded. Therefore, there are discrepancies between public preferences and existing priority setting criteria. To enhance legitimacy and to ensure that these resource allocation decisions are acceptable, public opinion and preference need to be considered in the allocation process (Broqvist & Garpenby, 2014; Lim et al., 2012). Such information would be

very helpful and can serve to guide decision makers (Huseynov et al., 2020).

Many factors affect perceptions of the general public with regard to rationing and resource allocation in health care. They include the awareness that health care resources are limited and knowledge and acceptance of the principles guiding rationing. However, there is little transparency in the mechanisms used in priority setting, and the public is often unaware of the principles adopted for the purpose. Previous studies have revealed that the majority of the general public has a high level of awareness about resource limitations, but they do not accept rationing. In addition, it has been revealed that most people are only aware of two levels of rationing: macro (National) and micro (Clinical). This is understandable, as people gather information mainly from media about national/macro level rationing and via personal experience about clinical/micro level rationing. On the other hand, the public receives very little information about guidelines and criteria set at the meso (policy makers') level. Openness about the mechanisms of and principles for rationing would enable citizens to gain insights into the process. However, whether this will lead to unequivocal acceptance of results is, of course, debatable (Broqvist & Garpenby, 2014).

Preferences of the general public

Eliciting public preferences and values with regard to priority setting and resource allocation can provide policy makers with valuable information for decision making and would help to establish a more equitable healthcare system with better community participation (Núñez & Chi, 2021).

A study done in Cyprus to elicit public preferences in health care priority setting identified severity of the disease, age, type of disease, health

improvement after treatment, cost of treatment, and a healthy lifestyle as criteria that the public considers when setting priorities. Severity of the disease, age and type of disease were identified as the most important concerns. Participants had given priority to people with greater need for health care treatment based on the principle of necessity. According to this principle, health care services should be offered to the public according to the need/ urgency of the situation. Thus, those with severe disease should be prioritized. However, these choices do not favor sustainability of health care or value maximization (Farmakas et al., 2017)

A study conducted to assess the views of older people regarding priority setting and resource allocation revealed that a majority did not consider age as a priority. They preferred to let the doctor decide on priorities. Considering older people's views is important since people are living longer now, and therefore form a much larger share of the population than they did before. In addition, many of them have experiences of their own from using health care services and were found to have important views on priority setting. In contrast, younger people considered well-being, lifestyle and family situation as important factors during prioritization (Werntoft et al., 2007).

Allocation of limited medical resources during a pandemic is more challenging. The literature identified four main governing principles in decision making during such situations; treating patients equally, prioritizing the worst-off, maximizing social benefits and maximizing individual benefits. Treating people equally means giving equal chances to all patients at receiving scarce resources. Prioritizing the worst-off involves allocating scarce resources to patients in order of the seriousness of their illness or susceptibility to disease. Maximizing social benefits favors patients who provide direct benefits to communities, such as health

care workers. Maximizing individual benefits involves allocating scarce resources to save the greatest number of lives or to preserve the largest number of life years among treated patients, which generally favors younger patients (Buckwalter & Peterson, 2020a; Huseynov et al., 2020). Several other principles are also identified. They include the principle of social worth, the life cycle principle, and the principle of instrumental value, justice and equity (Farmakas et al., 2017; Núñez & Chi, 2021)

A study conducted in the United States to assess public attitudes towards priority setting and allocation of scarce medical resources during the COVID-19 pandemic revealed that a majority of participants agreed with the principle of favoring patients with the best chances of survival and also with the principle that prioritized patients who were worst-off. In addition, evidence supported the fact that allocation principles are affected by allocation stage. During initial allocation, when resources are allocated to newly diagnosed individuals, participants agreed with the principles of maximizing benefit and prioritizing the worst-off. However, in subsequent allocation stages, where resources are allocated to already hospitalized patients, participants supported the principle of treating all patients equally (Buckwalter & Peterson, 2020a).

Existing medical literature supports giving priority to younger patients when limited resources were allocated during COVID-19. A study done to assess public preferences for allocation of ventilators also found that the majority favored younger individuals. In this instance, the majority of respondents had preferred allocation of ventilators to those under the age of 40 years (Huseynov et al., 2020).

A study done in the United States with the objective of eliciting public preferences for priority setting when vaccinating against COVID-19 revealed that the majority had “high” willingness to allocate the vaccine to

front-line health care workers, followed by high-risk children and high-risk older adults (Gollust et al., 2020)

An online survey was conducted in Jordan to investigate potential differences in perceptions regarding the allocation of limited medical resources among different participant groups within the same society. The study aimed to compare these findings to those found in international literature. The survey included three hypothetical scenarios representing medical resource scarcity, including organ donation, hospital beds during flu epidemics, and novel therapeutics for lung cancer patients. Participants were asked to prioritize allocation criteria by ranking them from most important (score-1) to least important (score-9). At the end of the survey, respondents were given the option of leaving a free text-comment. The findings unequivocally revealed that the "sickest first" prioritization principle emerged as the most important consideration in all three scarcity scenarios (Yousef et al., 2021).

In many countries, health care workers had to apply strict rationing and ethical principles to utilize limited medical resources efficiently. The number of studies documenting the general public's views on this decision-making process is scant. It is accepted that the general public's preferences may vary geographically, racially, and socioeconomically, and understanding these attitudes can provide valuable insights into how healthcare systems can better serve the public (Buckwalter & Peterson, 2020b; Huseynov et al., 2020).

It is crucial to engage with the public to develop policies that meet the needs of all members of society. By considering public (tax payer) preferences, we not only obtain the views of the public to ensure that resource allocation strategies are acceptable to them but also ensure that their opinion is considered in the decision-making process.

Objective

To assess perceptions of the general public on prioritization and resource allocation in health care.

Methods

A questionnaire was constructed to assess the perceptions of the general public regarding priority setting and resource allocation in healthcare settings. The questionnaire was made available in Sinhala and English and consisted of a scenario where the allocation of life-saving medical resources such as ICU beds, HDU beds, and essential medicines had to be considered. The questionnaire was piloted on a convenience sample to determine its length and to resolve areas of ambiguity. We adopted a random sampling technique. The questionnaire was administered electronically and in paper formats to 263 members of the general public over 18 years of age and residing in Sri Lanka (excluding health care workers, medical students and students of allied health-related subjects). Participants were asked to rank their perceptions on the basis that should be adopted in allocating a limited resource, on a scale of 1-10 (most deserving- least deserving).

They were requested to consider the following bases;

1. The sickest individuals
2. Those who have been ill the longest
3. Those who are most likely to survive if given the resource
4. Those who have essential roles to play in keeping society operational (e.g.: forces)
5. Health care workers
6. Younger persons
7. Randomly e.g., via a lottery

8. Those who had contributed in the past to the common good
9. Volunteers
10. Those who can have a good quality of life due to the resource

Data analysis was performed using Microsoft Excel and Jamovi (version 2.3) software to determine the majority views on resource allocation in the healthcare setting. The mean and mode values were calculated for each criterion. The mean value was considered in determining the rank while the mode was considered when the same mean value was observed for two criteria.

The data were further analyzed based on age, educational levels, occupation, and marital status.

Results

The majority of the sample was female (56%) and between the ages of 26-55 years (71%). Eight percent was above the age of 56 years.

Fifty percent of those who responded have had tertiary or postgraduate education. Seventy five percent was in employment while 24% was not employed and 1% had retired. Sixty six percent was married.

Fifty-three percent had been admitted to a hospital at one time or another within five years prior to completing the questionnaire.

Fifty-four percent stated that doctors should make decisions about prioritization of healthcare resources for patients. However, 39% thought that hospital administrators should decide.

Table 1: Public perceptions on the allocation of limited life – saving medical resources.

Priority Order	Ranking criteria
1	The sickest individuals
2	Those who are most likely to survive if given the resource.
3	Younger persons
4	Those who have essential roles to play in keeping society operational (e.g.: forces)
5	Health care workers
6	Those who have been ill the longest.
7	Those who can have a good quality of life due to the resource.
8	Those who had contributed in the past to the common good.
9	Volunteers
10	Randomly e.g., via a lottery

Inference: The majority thought that limited life-saving resources should be given to the sickest individuals followed by those who are most likely to survive if given the resource. They did not consider random allocation or providing resources to volunteers as viable options.

Table 2: Public perceptions on the allocation of limited life – saving medical resources: Gender based analysis.

Ranking Options	Ranking	
	Male	Female
The sickest individuals	1	1
Those who have been ill the longest.	4	6
Those who are most likely to survive if given the resource.	2	2

Those who have essential roles to play in keeping society operational (e.g.: forces)	3	4
Health care workers	5	5
Younger persons	6	3
Randomly e.g., via a lottery	10	10
Those who had contributed in the past to the common good.	9	8
Volunteers	7	9
Those who can have a good quality of life due to the resource.	8	7

Inference: Both males and females prioritized the sickest individuals and those who are most likely to survive given the resource. Both genders considered that health care workers should get moderate priority while both males and females believed that the random method was the least appropriate, followed by allocating resources to those who had contributed in the past to the common good, to volunteers and to those who can have a good quality of life due to the resource.

Table 3: Public perceptions on the allocation of limited life – saving medical resources: based on educational level.

Ranking options	**Ranking**			
	Postgraduate	**Tertiary**	**Secondary**	**Primary**
The sickest individuals	1	1	1	1
Those who are most likely to survive if given the resource.	2	2	2	3
Younger persons	3	3	6	6
Those who have essential roles to play in keeping society operational (e.g.: forces)	4	4	5	5
Health care workers	5	5	4	4

Those who can have a good quality of life due to the resource.	6	6	9	8
Those who have been ill the longest.	7	7	3	2
Those who had contributed in the past to the common good.	8	9	7	9
Volunteers	9	8	8	7
Randomly e.g., via a lottery	10	10	10	10

Inference: The public, irrespective of their educational level, share a common point of view: the highest priority should be given to allocating resources to the sickest individuals with the least priority given to random allocation. Those with postgraduate and tertiary level education have nearly identical ranking systems for allocating limited life-saving resources. Those who have only primary or secondary education have given higher priority to those who have been ill the longest with low priority to those who can have a good quality of life due to the resource, as opposed to the group with a higher educational level.

Table 04: Public perceptions on the allocation of limited life – saving medical resources: based on marital status.

Ranking options	**Ranking**	
	Married	**Single**
The sickest individuals	1	1
Those who are most likely to survive if given the resource.	2	2
Those who have essential roles to play in keeping society operational (e.g.: forces)	3	6
Younger persons	4	4
Health care workers	5	5
Those who have been ill the longest.	6	3

Those who can have a good quality of life due to the resource.	7	7
Volunteers	8	9
Those who had contributed in the past to the common good.	9	8
Randomly e.g., via a lottery	10	10

Inference: Both married and single groups prioritized allocating life-saving resources to the sickest individuals, and to those likely to survive if given the resource.

Both groups did not consider random allocation, allocation to those who had contributed in the past to the common good, allocation to volunteers or to those who have the ability to have a good quality of life, as suitable criteria in distributing limited resources.

There was no consensus among the married and unmarried groups on the level of priority that should be given to those who have essential roles to play in keeping society operational (e.g.: forces) and those who have been ill the longest.

Public perceptions on the allocation of limited life – saving medical resources: based on recent hospital admission.

Those who had been admitted to a hospital during the last five years and those who had not, shared a similar perspective on the priority groups in allocating limited life-saving resources. They prioritize the sickest individuals, followed by those most likely to survive if resources are allocated. They assigned the least priority to those who had contributed in the past to the common good, to volunteers and to the random allocation method.

However, there was no agreement on prioritizing between those who have had recent hospital admissions and those who had not, when it came to decisions on allocating resources to those who have been ill the longest as well as to health care workers.

Table 05: Preference of the general public on the allocation of limited life – saving medical resources based on age.

Ranking options	**Ranking**				
	18 - 25	**26 - 35**	**36 - 45**	**46 - 55**	**56 and above**
The sickest individuals	1	1	1	1	1
Those who are most likely to survive if given the resource.	2	2	2	2	3
Those who have been ill the longest.	3	6	4	6	6
Health care workers	4	5	3	5	5
Younger persons	5	3	6	4	4
Those who have essential roles to play in keeping society operational (e.g.: forces)	6	4	5	3	2
Those who can have a good quality of life due to the resource.	7	7	7	7	7
Those who had contributed in the past to the common good.	8	8	9	9	9
Volunteers	9	9	8	8	8
Randomly e.g., via a lottery	10	10	10	10	10

Inference: Individuals in all age groups prioritized allocating limited life-saving medical resources to the sickest individuals and considered the random allocation method as the least suitable alternative.

Although persons younger than 55 years of age gave second priority to those who are more likely to survive if given the resource, the age group of 56 and above gave second priority to those with essential roles to play

in keeping society operational over those most likely to survive if given the resource (Edussuriya et al., n.d.).

Discussion

Although public perceptions about healthcare resource allocation are particularly important in developing countries with limited resources, such dilemmas are faced by medical practitioners world-wide and were particularly relevant during the COVID 19 pandemic. Public perceptions reflect societal values and expectations for fairness, equity, and access to healthcare, all of which are amplified during times of crisis. Understanding these perceptions is critical for policymakers to develop effective and socially acceptable resource allocation policies. By incorporating public perceptions into decision-making, policymakers can improve transparency, accountability, and, ultimately, trust in the healthcare system. Thus, this study not only sheds light on public sentiments, but it also provides invaluable insights for ethically sound, socially acceptable, and sustainable healthcare policymaking (Daniels, 2016).

The majority of respondents thought that limited life-saving resources should be given to the sickest individuals followed by those who are most likely to survive if given the resource (Yousef et al., 2021). Although there appears to be some contradiction in these priorities, it is seen that the general public recognized the need to address immediate medical needs, irrespective of prognosis. This may be due to the fact that they view this as the most morally justifiable course of action, as it aligns with the fundamental goal of healthcare – to alleviate suffering and preserve life (Emanuel & Persad, 2023). While there are minor variations based on gender, educational level, marital status, hospital experience, and age, the overarching consensus is to prioritize those in the most urgent need

of medical care. However, the fact that the respondents next prioritized those who are more likely to survive if given the resource contradicts with the first priority of providing the resource to the sickest individuals, and may provide evidence of the morality and spiritual leanings of the general public who thought that a very sick patient might deserve a resource even though they may not benefit fully from it. However, they did not consider random allocation or providing volunteers with scarce resources as suitable options.

When considering the priorities of the public based on age groups, individuals of all ages prioritized allocating limited life-saving medical resources to the sickest individuals and considered random allocation as the least suitable method. Although persons younger than 55 years of age gave second priority to those who are more likely to survive if given the resource, the age group of 56 and above gave second priority to those with essential roles to play in keeping society operational over those most likely to survive if given the resource.

Both males and females prioritized the sickest individuals and those who are most likely to survive if given the resource. Both genders considered that health care workers should get moderate priority and that the random method was the least appropriate. In the case of prioritizing younger persons, it appeared that more females prioritized younger persons as opposed to males (Davies, n.d.).

The public, irrespective of their educational level, shares common priorities: allocating resources to the sickest individuals with least priority given to random allocation. Those with postgraduate and tertiary level education have nearly identical ranking systems for allocating limited life-saving resources. However, those who have only primary or secondary education have given higher priority to those who have been ill the longest

and low priority to those who can have a good quality of life due to the resource, as opposed to the group with a higher educational level (Hadiyan et al., 2021).

Both married and single groups prioritized allocating life-saving resources to the sickest individuals, and to those likely to survive if allocated the resource. Both groups did not consider random allocation, allocation to those who have contributed in the past to the common good, to volunteers or to those with an ability to have a good quality of life, as suitable criteria for distributing limited resources. However, there was no consensus among the married and unmarried groups on the level of priority that should be given to those who play essential roles in keeping society operational (e.g.: forces), and to those who have been ill the longest.

Based on the last five years of hospital admission experiences, both groups, those with hospital experience and those without, shared a similar perspective on prioritizing limited life-saving resources. They first prioritized the sickest individuals, followed by those most likely to survive if resources are allocated, while they assigned the least priority to those who had contributed in the past to the common good, to volunteers and to random allocation methods (Khalife et al., 2023). However, there was no agreement on priorities between those who have had recent hospital admissions and others when it came to ranking those who have been ill the longest and health care workers.

Individuals in all age groups prioritized allocating limited life-saving medical resources to the sickest individuals and considered the random allocation method as the least suitable option. . Although persons younger than 55 years gave second priority to those who are more likely to survive if given the resource, the age group of 56 years and above gave second priority to those with essential roles to play in keeping society

operational over those most likely to survive if given the resource (Kolasa & Lewandowski, 2015).

Therefore, the study finds remarkable consistency in the prioritization of limited life-saving resources across demographic groups, such as gender, educational level, marital status, hospital experience, and age. Regardless of demographic factors, the majority of participants preferred allocating resources to the sickest people first, followed by those who were most likely to survive if given the opportunity. There may be a conflict between perceptions of the public and the perceptions of medical professionals, since a principle that is commonly used in these situations by medical professionals is utilitatrianism which supports doing the greatest good to the greatest number of people. Implementation of this principle would give less priority to the sickest (who may not be able to benefit fully from the resource) and more priority to those who are actually able to benefit from the resource.

These results have significant effects on healthcare policy development and implementation. Understanding public perceptions toward healthcare resource allocation would help in developing policies that are not only effective, but also socially acceptable and ethical. Policymakers can use these findings to inform the development of policies that prioritize those in desperate need of medical care, maximizing the potential for saving lives and minimizing suffering. Furthermore, incorporating public perceptions into resource allocation decision-making processes is critical to increasing transparency and public trust in the healthcare system.

While the general public can provide useful insights, it is important to recognize that this perspective may not fully capture the complexities of resource allocation decision-making, especially from the perspective of

medical professionals and administrators. As a result, future research efforts could include conducting comparative studies to obtain the perspectives of healthcare practitioners and healthcare workers as well (Santos & Gonçalves, 2021). Policymakers can gain a better understanding of resource allocation dynamics by contrasting the perspectives of the general public with those with specialized knowledge and experience in healthcare delivery.

Conclusion

The majority of the public indicated that doctors should make resource allocation decisions, as opposed to administrators. They also indicated that life-saving resources should be allocated to the sickest individuals, followed by allocation to those most likely to survive if given the resource. The least preferred methods were random allocation and volunteer-based allocation.

Further studies need to be conducted regarding doctors' and other healthcare professionals' perceptions on resource allocation in order to determine whether a discrepancy exists between their perceptions and those of the general public.

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Contents

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