A STUDY ON RACIAL STEREOTYPING AND PROSPECTS OF PEACEFUL COEXISTENCE IN INDIA: ACCOUNTS OF LIVED EXPERIENCES IN NAGA SOCIETY

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Abstract: The Nagas have been subjected to racial discrimination based on their physical and cultural attributes by the mainland Indians since long ago. Even though there were various uproars against racism by North-eastern communities but none has bore fruitful results. Especially after the waves of COVID-19 pandemic the Nagas and other North-Eastern communities has been slammed with to all sort racial slurs and violence. In spite of that we can see the actions of locals towards non-locals in Nagaland were no less, locals treat people coming from outside North East with all sorts of discrimination. It was evident from the viral video that was being circulated across social media of some few Naga people mishandling non-locals.

The global crisis i.e. COVID-19 pandemic acted as a catalyst towards increasing racial discrimination. Despite having laws and legislations for protection against discrimination, no actions were taken. Racism has many dimensions such as the cultural, socio-psychological, socio-political and socio-economic which should be studied on each level. Cutting through these different dimensions, discourse is central to such an investigation. Therefore, it is important to explore how stereotypes are formed and dispelled in order to intervene in the problem and essential to provide people with information that challenges stereotypes.

During the study it was identified that the main factors that lead of social discrimination (racism) on the basis of race, origin or sex was due to differences in physical, cultural & linguistic attributes. The findings proved that repeated discriminatory behaviour was mainly because of some preconceived notions and superiority complex about ones' own culture and identity.

Key words: Racism, Stereotypes, Discrimination, Peaceful coexistence

INTRODUCTION

Race refers to the inherited characteristics that is seen in a common gene pool or mating population. Race is conceived as a biological, genetically determined concept. However, this scientific concept has been increasingly challenged in many ways. The most prevailing challenge is the usage of the concept of race, as it is not a biological difference that leads to racism but its social construction. Racial stereotypes are constructed beliefs that all members of the same race share given characteristics. These attributed characteristics are usually negative (Jewell, 1993). Racism as any behavior or pattern of behavior that tends to systematically deny access to opportunities or privileges to members of one racial group while perpetuating access to opportunities and privileges (preferential treatment) to members of another racial group (Ridley, 1995)

The main focus and establishment of the topic in itself was based on the understanding and approaches taken in a community on the well-being of the people and also on promoting peace and harmony between communities within the society.
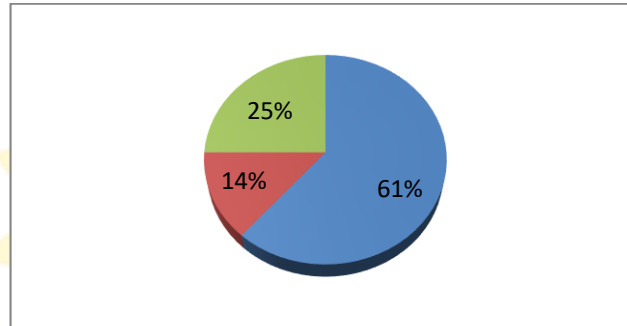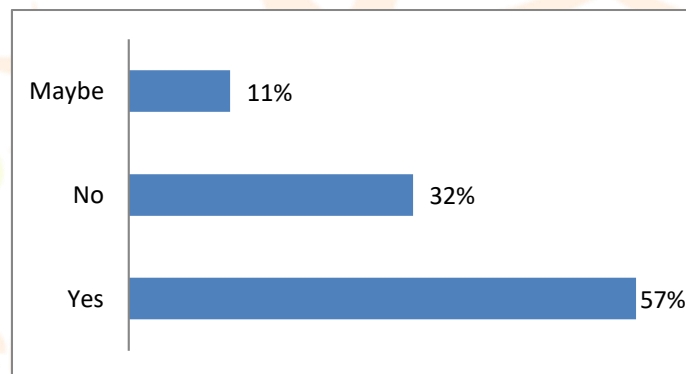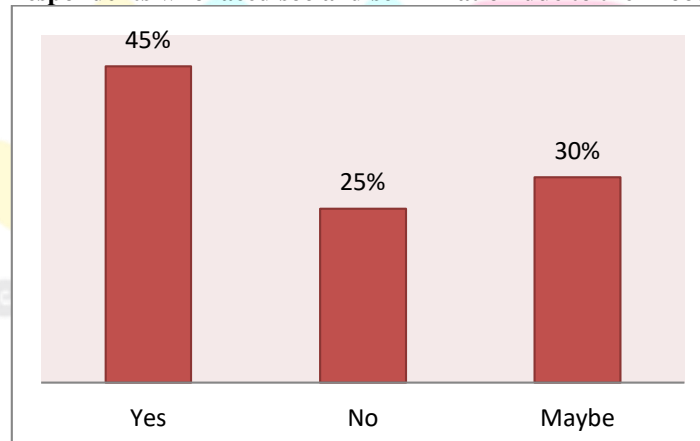
METHODOLOGY

Mixed research method was applied to produce systematic, credible data and richer results and had conducted techniques such as individual interview and personal observations. The study had followed a descriptive study design and non- probability, purposive sampling method. A total 44 respondents living in Dimapur were interviewed inclusive of youths and young adults within the age group of 18-37. Being mixed research, qualitative data was analyzed and interpreted based on Grounded theory. Collected data were systematically tabulated, analyzed by cleaning, coding and developing thematic framework for data interpretation and presentation using Microsoft Excel.

Objective of the Study:

- To ascertain the factors that lead to racial stereotypes towards the Nagas and Non Nagas
- To identify the possible social work interventions to reduce the negative racial stereotypes.

FINDINGS

1. Majority of the respondents (61%, n=27) stated that they have faced discrimination, about (25%, n=11) stated that they are unsure and about (14%, n=6) stated that they haven't faced any social discrimination.
2. More than half of the respondents (57%, n=25) felt they faced discrimination due to food habits, (32%, n=14) felt that they never faced discrimination due to food habits and (11%, n=5) are unsure.
3. Half of the respondents (45%, n=20) feels that there has been an increase in discrimination due to COVID-19 pandemic, while (30%, n=13) are unsure about it and about (25%, n=11) feels that it has been the same.
4. Majority of the respondents (75%, n=33) stated they were called names or been insulted because of their identity (16%, n=7) did not face such situation and about (9%, n=4) are unsure about it.
5. Majority of the respondents (84%, n=37) never were threatened or harassed physically or sexually because of his/her identity but (16%, n=7) respondents faced such situation.
6. Majority i.e. (93%, n=41) respondents felt that social discrimination based on identity, origins and sex is a big problem but very few i.e. (7%, n=3) does not think it is a big problem.
7. Majority i.e. (82%, n=36) felt that discrimination arises within a country due to lack of proper awareness about the laws and legislations for prevention and abolition of these issues, about (16%, n=7) does not agree to it while (2%, n=1) is unsure about it.

Fig. 1 Respondents who faced social discrimination

Fig. 2 Respondents who faced social discrimination due to their food habits

Fig. 3 Respondents' opinion on increase in discrimination due to COVID-19 pandemic
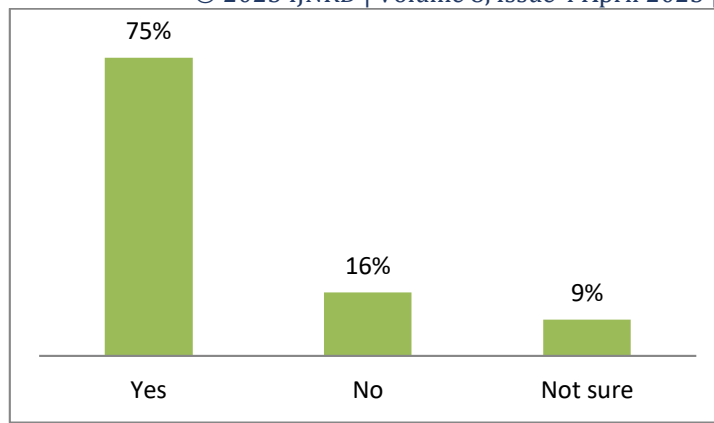
Fig. 4 Respondents' being called names or been insulted because of his/her identity
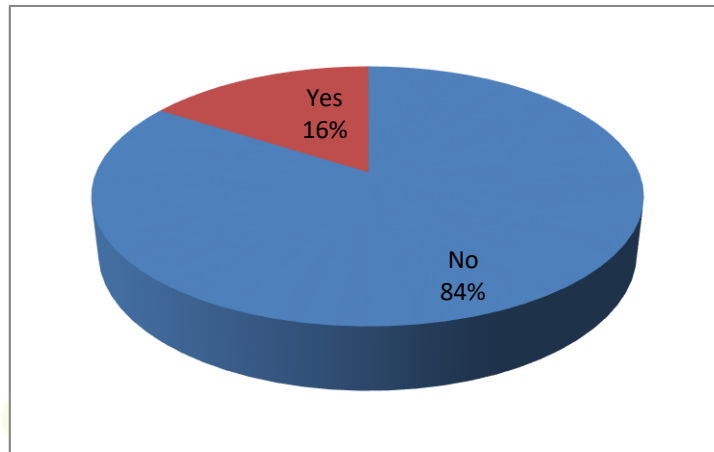

Fig. 5 Respondents were threatened or harassed physically or sexually because of his/her identity

Table 1: Respondents' view on social discrimination based on identity, origins and sex as a big problem

Respondents' view on social discrimination (racism) as a big problem	Respondent	Percentage
Yes	41	93%
No	3	7%
Total	44	100%

Table 2: Respondents view on discrimination arising within a country due to lack of proper awareness about the laws and legislations for prevention and abolition of these issues

Lack of proper awareness about the laws and legislations for prevention and abolition of these issues	Respondents	Percentage
Yes	36	82%
No	7	16%
Maybe	1	2%
Total	44	100%

SUGGESTIONS
1. TED talks on social discrimination can also be a powerful tool on internet.
2. Sensitizing the large masses through multiple Awareness programmes and campaigns on racism and its impact on individuals as well as community as a whole.
3. Retributive checks and balances for defaulters by the Government.
4. Introducing more stringent laws & legislations on this matter.
5. Building a sense of belongings, respect of ethnic diversity, human rights and value.

DISCUSSION

From the study, it was identified that most of the respondents were discriminated based on their differences in physical and cultural attributes. The study showed the respondents felt that stereotyping leads to conflict between states as victims tend to be mentally and emotionally hurt. From this study it could be concluded that there should be mass awareness campaign about this issue of social discrimination as well as imparting of value-based education about respecting and accepting the ethnic diversity of the country. It can be implied that at individual level, one need to be open minded and learn to accept and respect each other's origin and culture despite the differences.

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