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**Attitudes of the villagers in the post armed conflict with special
reference to Mannar District**

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Abstract

In thirty years conflict caused effects in socio economic and political backgrounds. The harms directly affected to the development. North region was the most conflict affected region. Besides, this research is based on the study of the attitudes of people whom had gone through the painful war happened in Sri Lanka. Hence, the main objective of this research is to identify the attitudes of the villagers and the improvements in attitudes of the people within the context of post conflict in North, Sri Lanka. The study problem is to assess how be the attitudes and the views they hold in the post war context. The data collected from the selected sample from Illuppaikadavai, Mannar district, Sri Lanka. Primary data were randomly collected through questionnaires from 35 data contributors and through interviews. Quantitative data were presented through the summary of the results through charts and graphs where necessary. The research found that the mental attitudes of people lack educational knowledge and also knowledge of social background. Therefore the attitudes of the public needs revamped and to fulfill this task, mass media will have to play a major role. Affected people have reminiscences of the war situation. Government, Non-governmental organizations and the civil society need to develop educational sectors, at the same educational values and moral values should be given priority. Concluding that, the government should take necessary action to change the attitudes of people and make them realize that all are Sri Lankans and of that one family.

Key words: *Attitudes, Villagers, Post conflict, North, Mannar*

Introduction

With the protracted terrorist conflict coming to an end in May 2009 Sri Lanka is now one of the peaceful countries in the world. The Sri Lankan security forces conducted the largest humanitarian operations in the modern history of the world to rescue the country and its people from terrorism which had brought in a reign of death, destruction and unspeakable misery. The country is at last breathing a sigh of relief and enjoying the dividends of peace after going through three decades of death, destruction and disorder. After saving the nation from terrorism now the tri forces and Sri Lankan Police and Civil security forces are involved in another humanitarian operation, to assist in the

development of the country. Not only it set an example to the world in successfully defeating terrorism but also in post conflict recovery and development. Post conflict challenges were many. In order to overcome these challenges a national frame work was drawn up for that and constituted the 5R (Reconstruction, Resettlement, Rehabilitation, Reintegration and Reconciliation) concept. Once again the security forces played a pivotal role in this national endeavor. Therefore the research is basically studies the attitudes and the perceptions of people among this 5R'S. Being both a post-conflict and post-disaster setting, research in the Mannar area, as opposed to a different context or setting, added an additional layer of complexity to the research. After the initial literature review carried out the field visit, there are some sorts of categories which lead into the specific research questions:

- i. What are the main attitudes towards the conciliation with Sinhalese of this period of time?
- ii. What are the grievances they are having?

Aftermath of the conflict, the government of Sri Lanka had to carry out diverse tasks as an immediate humanitarian assistance. However the government was successful in establishing immediate camps for the internally displaced people and the ex- LTTE cadres. The government also benefited the people with the basic needs such as food, shelter and medical facilities and other sanitation facilitations as well. In addition, when referring to the Government sources and the UNHCR reports it is visible that the Government has also facilitated the entire children to keep continuing with their studies foremost with giving helping hand for education. The psychological aspects of these processes are considered central in this research. The attitudes of villagers, their reminiscences of post conflict era are been researched in order to find the improvement areas of their attitudes.

An attitude is "a relatively enduring organization of beliefs, feelings, and behavioral tendencies towards socially significant objects, groups, events or symbols" (Mc Leod, 2009). Attitudes can be defined as evaluations of ideas, events, objects, or people. Attitudes are generally positive or negative, but they can also be uncertain at times. For example, sometimes we have mixed feelings about a particular issue or person. Regardless, attitudes are an important topic of study for social psychologists because they help determine what we do - what we eat, how we vote, what we do with our free time, and so on. Every attitude has three components that are represented in what is called

the ABC model of attitudes: A for affective, B for behavioral, and C for cognitive. Although every attitude has these three components, any particular attitude can be based on one component more than another. In other words, each component can also be the answer to the question: where does an attitude come from? There are affectively-based attitudes, behaviorally-based attitudes, and cognitively-based attitudes.

Affective component refers to the emotional reaction one has toward an attitude object. This type of attitude is used to express and validate our moral belief or value systems. The next component of an attitude is the behavioral component, and it refers to the way one behaves when exposed to an attitude object. As for attitudes that are rooted in behavior, think again about the question: where does an attitude come from? The third and final component of an attitude is the cognitive component, and it refers to the thoughts and beliefs one has about an attitude object (Long-Crowell, 2002).

Methodology

The purpose of this research is to present the philosophical assumptions underpinning this research, as well as to introduce the research strategy and the empirical techniques applied. This section defines the scope and sample, design, material, and procedure. The data collected from the sample in the area of Iluppaikkadavai, Mannar District, where the conflict affected people lives. This area is purposively selected as the study area where the general civilians who has the dreadful experience of conflict. Mannar district is situated in the Western side of the Northern Province. It covers 20025 Sq Km, approximately 3% of the total land area of the country. This District consists of two parts. One is island and other one is land. Capital of the district is situated in the island. Administratively this district divided into five divisional secretary divisions. Households who live in Iluppaikkadavai were selected for the study adopting simple random method. Sri Lanka army has declared Iluppaikkadavai town liberated ending 21 years of terror rule of LTTE. Iluppaikkadavai in the North Western District of Mannar became the site of another atrocity in this continuing pattern. It is a small village along the Mannar-Pooneryn Road and comes under the Manthai West AGA Division. The village is about 25 kilometers to the north of Mannar town which the years with more than 4,000 displaced people from other parts of the north seeking refuge there. The village falls within areas in Mannar District controlled by the LTTE.

The place along the sea shore where fisher folk beach and launch their boats and rafts is generally known as Padaguthurai. Household heads were taken as the respondents. In this way, there are 120 families who spend their lives in Iluppaikkadavai and among them, 35 respondents were randomly selected from the sample household's area. Sample was mainly selected within the village of people both male and female above 18 years of age. The sample information was gathered from the housewives, laborers and people who holds various positions and also from educated and non-educated people.

The secondary data was used in this research such as research reports, articles, interview reports, field notes, and books/magazines and internet. And mostly the information taken from newspaper articles included for this project.

Results And Data Analysis

The aim of this study is to present a comprehensive review of the field study visit to Iluppaikkadavai in November 2013. The brief was to reflect one's understanding and critique regarding the attitudes of the recovery process in Sri Lanka, and the site selected for the study the district of Mannar. Questionnaires are basically 5 Likert scale oriented and results are been analyzed based on the responds given by the civilians.

Statement 1- "The armed conflict has never been between Sinhala and Tamil communities, but aroused with politics"

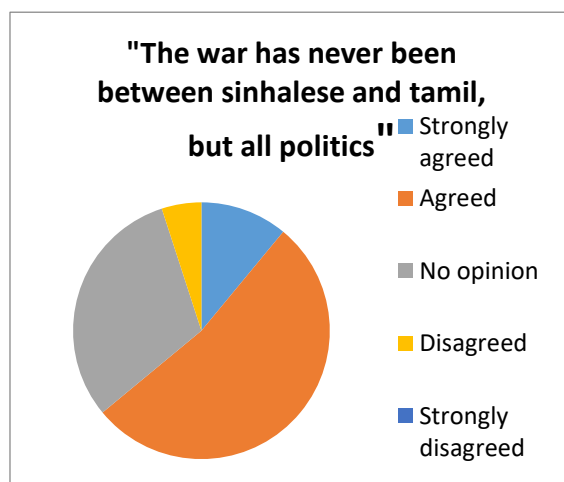


Figure 1.1- The armed conflict has never been between Sinhala and Tamil communities, but aroused with politics

The majority of people emphasized their agreement to this statement as most of the people are thinking that all discriminative political systems and politicians are responsible for

the emergence of ethnic conflict in Sri Lanka. 31% of the interviewers were not been able to give a certain idea in this regard. Anyhow there are some few people have the willingness to say that it was a war between Sinhalese and Tamil not merely because of the political effects. But that percentage is in a less degree as the disagreement rate is only 5% in this regard.

Statement 2- “I still think about the conflict everyday”

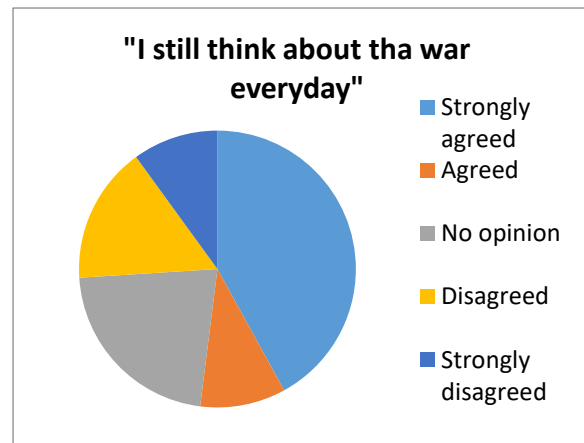


Figure 1.2- I still think about the war everyday

In this regard, it was visible that people are still thinking of the armed conflict. More people possibly towards a high degree of agreement, overall percentage of 52%. In addition to that 22% of people are found in the category of no opinion. On the other and 16% of people are disagreed and the rest of the 10% are strongly disagreed upon this. Therefore there are total 26% of people have forgotten their past and are not tend to memorize the conflict in their new lives after war.

Statement 3- “I do believe conflict will happen again”

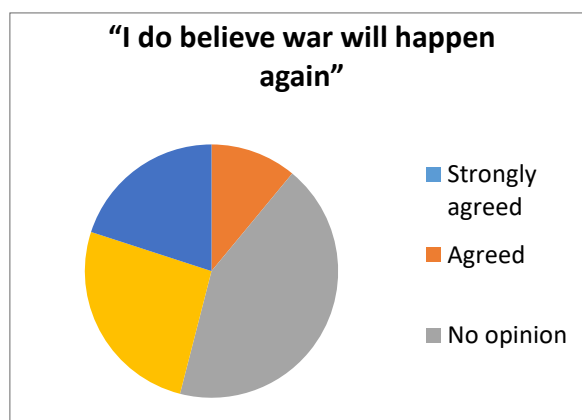


Figure 1.3- I do believe war will happen again

According to the attitudes of people, they never wanted an armed conflict again and they hesitate to speak about it. They were strictly opponent to this statement as its 46% people proved that so. Also 43% are having no certain opinion in this regard. On the other hand, there are 11% of people whom had attitudes that they believe conflict will happen in near future.

Statement 4- "I feel/ have felt discriminated or badly treated by Sinhalese"

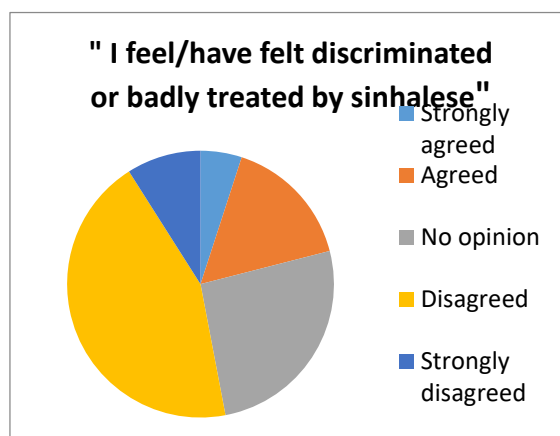


Figure 1.4- I feel/ have felt discriminated or badly treated by Sinhalese

5% of people strongly are in an attitude that they are discriminated by others. This statement was meant to question the villagers whether they were treated badly or discriminated by Sinhalese people. In total number of 21% found in agreed base and 26% are in the base of a no opinion. However 53% people agree that they never had a situation where they were discriminated or badly treated by Sinhalese people. Therefore the villagers hold a favorable attitude towards Sinhalese.

Statement 5- "The current government should be replaced by a new one"

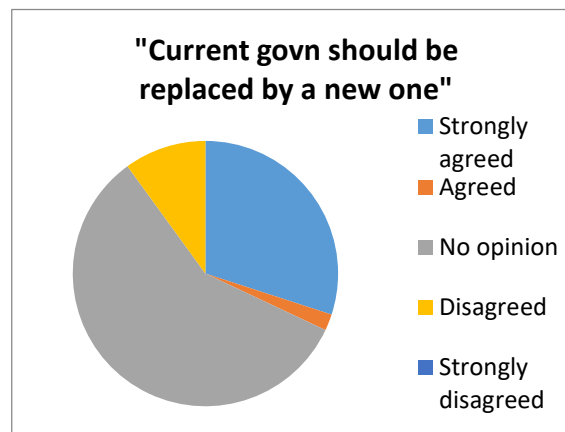


Figure 1.5- The current government should be replaced by a new one

In fact, according to the interviewees, they are not much concern of any kind the government it has. This was truly visible in their answers, 32% of them gave their feedback opposed to the government and 58% people didn't seem to have any opinion in this regard. On the other end 10%, the rest of the people show their will to remain the current government without a change.

Statement 6- "Currently security forces have lessened/limited"

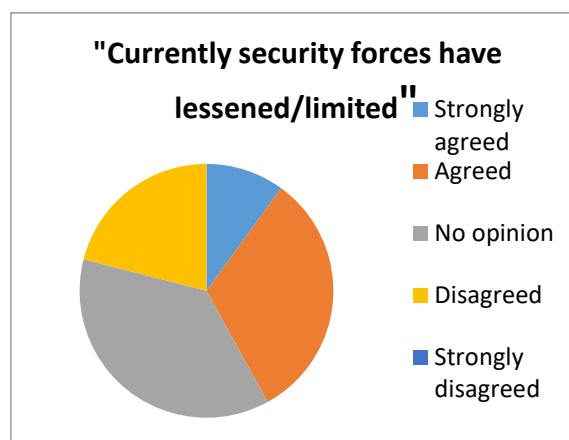


Figure 1.6- Currently security forces have lessened/limited

In this regard people seemed to have completely a neutral feeling towards the above statement. In overall 42% of the people are agreed upon that the security forces are limited since the war. 37% of people are not having such concern about it. However the rest of the people disagreed for this and its rate is approximately 21%.

Discussion

Livelihood is concerned by two aspects such as psychological and physical. When considering the attitudes of that the conflict was never been between Sinhalese and Tamil communities but aroused with politics, views indicated, the conflict was never between Sinhala and Tamil communities but the politics prior to the conflict was instrumented for this mess and tragedian situation. Before the conflict people did not have any fear for the Sinhalese, but only the presence of Armed forces frightened them. Further this research enlightened that these people did not possess any knowledge about political aspects. According to the research, people have reminiscences of the conflict yet, although there is no conflict now. The version of a lady in this area is that still the shadows of the conflict linger in her mind. Further she stated that she had to undergo a surgery due to injuries caused by a shell bullet during the armed conflict. According to the versions of many others, their children's disappearances had caused immense pain to them and that feeling of distress keep on lingering in their minds. The loss of their children which still haunt them could not be erased from their minds. Therefore, the conflicts still existing their minds.

Attitude based on the condition of these people as they think every day about the armed conflict that has happened before, their views focused to the point that these would never be a conflict for any time. A young damsel informed that still she is frightened to think or speak of the war. The village folk in this area were victims of brutalities and harassments. But still they have an apprehension of the occurrence of another armed conflict. Another stated that although he had been deprived of his belongings he felt sad of it and further stated that there would be no war any longer. Their general feeling is that they had no willing temperament for an armed conflict despite having minor incidents.

Those whom I interviewed have travelled several times to Colombo and suburbs. In there they have interacted with Sinhalese in a friendly and cordial atmosphere. Therefore they never show any animosity or displeasure towards the Sinhala counterparts. Both communities have interacted peacefully irrespective of ethnic differences. The common amenities of travelling by bus or go anywhere to a Sinhalese area they have never been ill-treated or discriminated by Sinhalese people. In addition, they expressed the view that they were never harassed by the Sinhala counterparts in all dealings everywhere within the country.

When a question was posed as to whether the present government should be changed, a clear answer was not responded. They are ignorant of any political knowledge. But the general response was that they were not worried over any political regime and emphasized the need to live peacefully minding their matters. Some are pro TNA supporters and some are anti- Sri Lankan government supporters. On the whole, many have no clear attitudes based on this statement. Some say that they are not concerned with regime label, but they emphasize the fact that action should be taken to trace their missing children. Although numerous appeals were made to the president and relevant authorities on this matter of the disappearance of children, up to now no effective action had been taken. Their ultimate request is to get their deprived belongings during the war period.

On the question of reduction of armed forces deployed in the north, the people agreed in the positive. A lady was of opinion that she and others could openly speak to army personnel without any fear of reprisal. But many are of excessive army personnel creates an apprehension. The view of the cross section of the people has plaudits for the army personnel and their presence is no more a threat to them.

Conclusion

When considering the mental attitudes of the villages, people lack not only an educational knowledge but also knowledge of social background. The knowledge of the people regarding development projects and humanitarian services initiated and carried out by the state is below zero. Therefore the mental attitudes of the public needs revamped and to fulfill this task, mass media will have to play a major role. As notes, most of the people do not have television facilities. So they and those who have such, cling on to the Indian channels. As such they are not aware of the day to day occurrences in Sri Lanka. Children in this village desire to learn. But they lack educational facilities. They must be provided with a sound academic education as well as they should be imparted with a spiritual education. On the other hand parents possess extreme views. It is not an easy task to reform them regarding their mentality. Thus, the attention should be paid to the children in this village regarding the development of their positive attitudes towards reconciliation.

It is also a fact, as stated earlier too; the standard of political knowledge is rather low. They were stooges of the LTTE and had got mesmerized by the extremist band wagon. Even the children had fallen prey to this heinous dogma. All these shortcomings caused the government to get defeated in the Northern Provincial elections despite their pompous

development work. People have lost confidence on all political parties. This applies to T.N.A too. But according to the people's views, they have voted for the T.N.A as they propagated to the saviors of the Tamils. They did not feel the pulse of the government in its achievements.

What the affected Tamil's require is to get their lost children folded in to their families. It is not development work, but change of attitude is the only panacea. This is a village with less facilities and remote in distance. In Iluppaikkadavai has a high incident of poverty and lacking physical infrastructure needs and need of the psychological therapy. As indicated in Literature review, these people should be provided with rehabilitation medical facilities such as more physiatrists, mental and physical aids with medical and psychological therapy. In my interviews and interactions with required individuals and others, I gathered sufficient that in all spheres. As observed the development work will not suffice. Educational values and moral values should be given priority. The government should enhance the educational system and provide them with resources. Government and the Non- governmental organizations should take steps to change their attitudes to a positive attitude through counselling. At the same time they must be made to realize that all are Sri Lankans and of that one family.

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