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THE POWER OF NAMES: EXAMINING NAME-BASED STEREOTYPES IN INDIA

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Abstract: The aim of this research was to understand the relationship between names and social cognition. This research is an attempt to investigate how a person's name influences social perception. To conduct this study, we randomly selected 52 participants. The study involved all ages and gender groups in India. The participants were asked to rate 9 names on 3 characteristics-Competence, Trustworthiness and Privilege. The rating scale consisted of 5 points, 1 being Most Unlikely and 5 being Most Likely. The data was collected through online mode. Scores were analysed using methods of descriptive statistics- Mean and Standard deviation, methods of inferential statistics- Confidence interval and MANOVA. The study established that there is a significant difference in how each name is perceived in relation to competence, trustworthiness and privilege.

Keywords-Indian Names, Name-Based Stereotypes, Social Cognition

I.INTRODUCTION

India is a culturally and geographically vast country located in Asia. It is one of the oldest civilizations in the world. The earliest religions to form here were Hinduism, followed by Buddhism and Jainism. After a few years, Christianity, Islam, Judaism and Zoroastrianism also found their way to the region. Eventually, Sikhism also emerged around the end of the 15th Century CE. All these years, when these religions were establishing themselves in the region, many sects and groups were also being formed within themselves. Name and religion are deeply intertwined throughout the world. When deciding on a particular name, many factors come into play. Factors such as- religion, class, parental expectations, to name a few, act as a deciding factor for one's name. Names are also seen as a reflection of one's family background in regard to how strong the western or eastern influence was in an individual's life while growing up. Moreover, most names have meaning in India which leads to associationism. For example, the name "Rajveer" means – "Brave Ruler, Hero". When a local person hears this name, attributes like "Masculinity", "Roughness", "Strong", "Brave", "Powerful" and "Influential" comes to their mind. These names can be gender-biased as well as "Rajveer" is associated with masculinity.

Having a particular name is not only about being associated with a particular group. Having a name is also important for effective communication. However, names can influence an individual's perception of another individual, thus, creating preconceived notions. These preconceived notions have the power to lead to discrimination and prejudice. Earlier, rules regarding the usage of names by different ethnic and cultural groups were extremely strict, but now changes have started to take place. Names like – "Aman, Pari, Mehak, Shabnam & Arya" are culturally neutral names. Gender-neutral names have started to become common. "Kavya" is used for both- a boy and a girl. Noah, Harshal, Deva are other examples.

Purpose of the research

The study aims to reveal the extent to which names influence perceptions of competence, trustworthiness, and privilege among individuals.

II. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Objective

Analyze the difference between the perceived characteristics of each name.

Hypotheses

- There will be a significant difference between the perceived level of competence of each name.
- There will be a significant difference between the perceived level of trustworthiness of each name.
- There will be a significant difference between the perceived level of privilege of each name.

Participants

To conduct these study 52 participants were randomly selected. Each participant voluntarily took part in the study upon being informed about the research's purpose. The study involved all ages and gender groups in India.

Material

The participants were asked to rate 9 names on 3 characteristics- Competence, Trustworthiness and Privilege. The rating scale consisted of 5 points, 1 being Most Unlikely and 5 being Most Likely.

Data Collection

The data was collected through an online questionnaire. All the participants were informed about the aim of the study and given proper instructions. The information given by the participants, along with their identities, was kept confidential.

Process of Analysis

After the data was collected, scores were analyzed using methods of descriptive statistics- Mean and Standard deviation, methods of inferential statistics- Confidence interval and MANOVA. The results are represented using graphs and tables.

III. RESULT & DISCUSSION

To analyze the data, we performed multivariate analysis of variance (MANOVA) in SPSS 16.0 software.

Name	N
Abhishek	52
Elizabeth	52
Jaishankar	52
Kamal	52
Pinky	52
Prakriti	52
Raju	52
Ranbir	52

www.ijcrt.org	© 2023 IJCRT Volume 11, Issue 8 August 2023 ISSN: 2320-288	82
Shanaya	52	

Table1: Between-Subjects Factors

Table 1. Between subject factor table shows 9 names Abhishek, Elizabeth, Jaishankar, Kamal, Pinky, Prakriti, Raju, Ranbir, Shanaya. And the number of observations is 52.

Name	Mean	Std. Deviation	N
Competence			
Abhishek	3.62	1.013	52
Elizabeth	2.98	1.180	52
Jaishankar	3.25	1.186	52
Kamal	2.94	1.018	52
Pinky	2.54	1.019	52
Prakriti	3.58	.936	52
Raju	2.48	1.075	52
Ranbir	3.00	1.010	52
Shanaya	2.79	1.091	52
Total	3.02	1.119	468
Trustworthiness			
Abhishek	3.52	.980	52
Elizabeth	2.13	1.172	52
Jaishankar	3.15	1.161	52
Kamal	2.65	1.046	52
Pinky	2.62	1.051	52
Prakriti	3.58	1.226	52
Raju	2.52	1.146	52
Ranbir	1.90	.869	52
Shanaya	1.85	.802	52
Total	2.66	1.215	468
Privilege			
Abhishek	3.06	.938	52
Elizabeth	4.35	.814	52
Jaishankar	3.73	.888	52
Kamal	2.40	.846	52
Pinky	1.92	1.118	52
Prakriti	3.04	1.009	52
Raju	1.77	1.022	52
Ranbir	4.04	.949	52
Shanaya	4.29	1.073	52
Total	3.18	1.338	468

Table2: Descriptive Statistics

Table 2 shows the mean and standard deviation of the names under three characteristics. Under the Competence the total mean and SD was 3.02 and 1.119 respectively. The highest mean was

3.62 (Abhishek), 3.58 (Prakriti), 3.25(Jaishankar). The lowest mean was 2.48(Raju), 2.54(Pinky).

Under the Trustworthiness the total mean and SD was 2.66 and 1.215. The highest mean was 3.58 (Prakriti), 3.52 (Abhishek), and 3.15 (Jaishankar). The lowest mean was 1.85 (Shanaya), 1.90 (Ranbir).

Under the Privilege the total mean and SD was 3.18 and 1.338. The highest mean was 4.35 (Elizabeth), 4.29 (Shanaya), 4.04(Ranbir). The lowest mean was 1.77 (Raju), 1.92 (Pinky)

							Partial Eta
Effect		Value	F	Hypothesis df	Error df	Sig.	Squared
Intercept	Pillai's Trace	.942	2.483E3 ^a	3.000	457.000	.000	.942
	Wilks' Lambda	.058	2.483E3 ^a	3.000	457.000	.000	.942
	Hotelling's Trace	16.301	2.483E3 ^a	3.000	457.000	.000	.942
	Roy's Largest Root	16.301	2.483E3ª	3.000	457.000	.000	.942
Name	Pillai's Trace	.758	19.390	24.000	1.377E3	.000	.253
	Wilks' Lambda	.364	23.063	24.000	1.326E3	.000	.286
	Hotelling's Trace	1.423	27.011	24.000	1.367E3	.000	.322
1	Roy's Largest Root	1.14 <mark>7</mark>	65.794 ^b	8.000	459.000	.000	.534

Table3: Multivariate Tests

Table multivariate tests show the results of Wilks' Lambda test. Under the categorical variable-Name, the value of f was 23.063, the p value was .000 at 0.05 alpha level

	F	df1	df2	Sig.
Competence	1.362	8	459	.211
Trustworthiness	2.768	8	459	.005
Privilege	1.470	8	459	.166

Table4: Levene's Test of Equality of Error Variances

Table 4 shows the results of Levene's Test of Equality of Error Variances. The F value and p value for competence was 1.362 and .211 at 0.05 alpha levels. The F value and p value for Trustworthy was 2.768 and .005 at 0.05 alpha levels. The F value and p value for Privilege was 1.470 and .166 at 0.05 alpha levels.

	Dependent	Type III Sum					Partial
Source	Variable	of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.	Et a
							Squared
Corrected Model	Competence	67.692ª	8	8.462	7.510	.000	.116
	Trustworthin ess	174.453 ^b	8	21.807	19.441	.000	.253
	Privilege	407.491°	8	50.936	54.525	.000	.487
Intercept	Competence	4266.173	1	4266.173	3.787E3	.000	.892
	Trustworthin ess	3306.701	1	3306.701	2.948E3	.000	.865
	Privilege	4724.720	1	4724.720	5.058E3	.000	.917
Name	Competence	67.692	8	8.462	7.510	.000	.116
	Trustworthin ess	174.453	8	21.807	19.441	.000	.253
	Privilege	407.491	8	50.936	54.525	.000	.487
Error	Competence	517.135	459	1.127			
100	Trustworthin ess	514.846	459	1.122			
	Privilege	428.788	459	.934		Ch	*
Total	Competence	4851.000	468		12		
	Trustworthin ess	<mark>3996.</mark> 000	468				
	Privilege	5561.000	468				
Corrected Total	Competence	584.827	467				
	Trustworthin ess	689.299	467				
	Privilege	836.280	467				

Table 5: Tests of Between-Subjects Effects

c. R Squared = .487 (Adjusted R Squared = .478)

a. R Squared = .116 (Adjusted R Squared = .100)

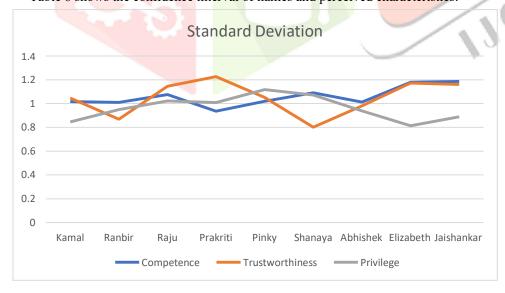
b. R Squared = .253 (Adjusted R Squared = .240)

Table 5 shows that name has a statistically significant effect on three characteristics Competence (F-7.50, p-.000), Trustworthy (F-19.441, p-.000), and Privilege (F-54.525, p-.000).

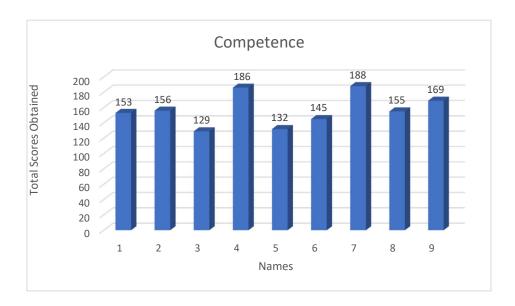
Names	Competence	Trustworthines	Privilege
		S	
Kamal	[2.659,3.2257]	[2.3627,2.945]	[2.1683,2.639
		4]	
Ranbir	[2.7189,3.281	[1.6619,2.145	[3.7743,4.302
	1]	8] 6]	
Raju	[2.1814,2.780	[2.2002,2.838	[1.4848,2.053
	2]	3] 7]	
Prakriti	[3.3163,3.837	[3.2355,3.918	[2.7576,3.319
	5]	3] 4]	
Pinky	[2.2549,2.822	[2.3229,2.907	[1.612,2.2342]
	1]	9]	
Shanaya	[2.4848,3.092	[1.623,2.0693]	[3.9899,4.587
	1]	1]	
Abhishek	[3.3334,3.897	[3.2464,3.792	[2.7967,3.318
	3]	1] 7]	
Elizabeth	[2.6523,3.309	[1.8083,2.460	[4.1196,4.572
	2]	9] 7]	
Jaishankar	[2.9198,3.580	[2.8306,3.477	[3.4835,3.978]
	2]	1]	
Total	[2.9176,3.120	[2.5478,2.768	[3.0558,3.298
	9]	5] 9]	

Table 6: Confidence Interval of names and perceived characteristics.

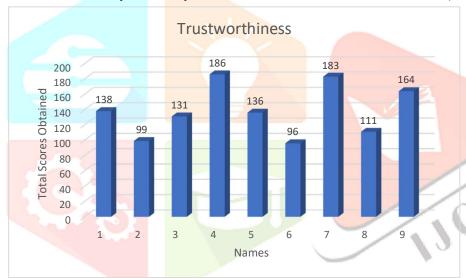
Table 6 shows the confidence interval of names and perceived characteristics.



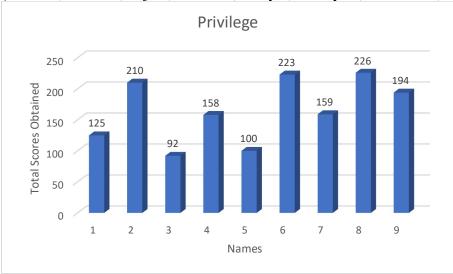
Graph 1: Represents the standard deviation for the names and perceived characteristics.



Graph 2: Represents the total scores obtained by each name on the characteristic-Competence. (Kamal-1, Ranbir-2, Raju-3, Prakriti-4, Pinky-5, Shanaya-6, Abhishek-7, Elizabeth-8, Jaishankar-9)



Graph 3: Represents the total scores obtained by each name on the characteristic-Trustworthiness. (Kamal-1, Ranbir-2, Raju-3, Prakriti-4, Pinky-5, Shanaya-6, Abhishek-7, Elizabeth-8, Jaishankar-9)



Graph 4: Represents the total scores obtained by each name on the characteristic- Privilege. (Kamal-1, Ranbir-2, Raju-3, Prakriti-4, Pinky-5, Shanaya-6, Abhishek-7, Elizabeth-8, Jaishankar-9)

Discussion

The findings of the current study reveal significant insights into the salience of name-based stereotypes within Indian society. Alongside serving as a labeling function, names carry cultural, social, and gendered meanings that significantly influence how one is perceived with regard to competence, trustworthiness, and privilege. The study is in step with the rest of the literature for confirming the perpetual stereotype as well as resulting marginalization brought about by names while pointing out new dimensions unique to the context of India.

Goh (2024) makes an argument that is rather compelling concerning the unintended identities that come with names-Indian names among those from previously marginalized racial groups. It shows that bias is inherent in a name-a cross-cultural phenomenon because of unfamiliarity. The present results mirror those found by Goh, whereby Indian names are in relation to gender identity, not fitting into traditional modes of thinking. While Goh's research details that Chinese and Indian female names are perceived to be less feminine, it is the results of this study that will suggest that Indian names also go against set gendered norms in India. Such contradictions arise as a call for the extended use of understanding how names work along with cultural dynamics of India and now in this fast-globalizing world.

To further support this discussion, Mann (2020) points out the significance of names in representing ethnic and cultural identities. The results of the current research are consistent with the arguments offered by Mann about the renaming practices in multicultural societies, where people are faced with societal pressure to adopt Western ideology. Such pressure is a reflection of societal and more profound implications through which names cause microaggression and low-level racist acts. The results of the present study therefore confirm that Indian names perceived from the perspective of cultural dominance may influence people into adopting names that are more aligned with the ideal of Western nomenclature, which threatens to erode these roots. This therefore means that the societal value placed on names is not just an individual matter but a social problem affecting the manifestation and identification of Indian cultures at large. Here, Critical Race Theory applies to show that a social vaccine to the insurgency has been created through societal perceptions of names, which dictate how one is treated based on what is racially or ethnically inferred from their names (Delgado & Stefancic, 2023).

The gender-race-social class nexus undergirding the logic of name-based stereotypes throws up the complexities involved in the construction of identity. Another relevant factor is the existing literature argues that biases related to names are not based on the phonetic or cultural characteristics of the names themselves, but they are ramifications of larger societal narratives. This aligns with the implicit bias theoretical framework, which puts forward how unconscious associations and attitudes shape judgments about others based on their names (Payne & Hannay, 2021). The implications of this framework have an impact on Indian society, where the name following a stereotype could lead on to hardships in social and professional arenas.

The importance of names in shaping trustworthiness and competence becomes an important issue in the professional arena. In fact, as our study indicates, the signifying function of names in first impressions demonstrates these often serve as proxies for measuring capabilities or qualifications. This brings to mind the theory of Social Constructivism: that social realities are, in effect, constructed through interaction and perception, making the importance of names even more cardinal for defining the professional identity of an individual (Rannikmäe et al., 2020). Such implications are gargantuan for recruitment, learning, or even social interaction, thus calling for awareness and intervention strategy against these biases.

Limitations and Critiques

- Societal shifts can render findings outdated as cultural norms evolve.
- Real-world complexity hampers isolating name impact.
- Limited longitudinal data for intervention effectiveness.
- Cultural specificity limits generalization.

Area of future research

Future research efforts could greatly extend the present study by including a larger and more varied sample reflecting the Indian multiculturalism. For instance, the influence of additional variables like the regional, linguistic, and cultural backgrounds on name-based stereotypes can be studied.

IV. CONCLUSION

To a significant extent, the research revealed the roles of names in determining perception regarding

competence, trustworthiness, and privilege. The research adopted a structured methodology and strong data analysis through which valuable insights into the biases that determine the formation of societal perceptions and interaction were provided. The findings of the study extend the academic conversation over the theory of name-based stereotypes and have broader practical applications-for instance, in dealing with discrimination and promoting inclusion in various social contexts. Further studies will be needed in the future to continue illuminating the intricacies of identity, biases in naming people, and these implications in terms of social justice within this growing diverse society. In conclusion, the current research serves as a precursor to even more heated debates with regard to the cultural implications of names and their impact on construct meanings and experiences within the Indian society.

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Compliance with Ethical Standards

- Informed Consent: The researchers ensured that all participants provided informed consent before participating in the interviews.
- **Anonymity and Confidentiality:** The participants were guaranteed the anonymity and confidentiality of their identities and responses to protect their privacy.
- Respect and Sensibility: The authors approached the topic with sensitivity while acknowledging the diversity of beliefs and ethical perspectives among different participants.

Conflict of Interest: The authors declare they have no conflict of interest.

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