

Post-Tension Relationship between Buddhists and Muslims in Sri Lanka

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Abstract

Sri Lanka is a multi religious, multi cultural, multi lingual and multi ethnic country and Buddhists are the predominant ethnic group, constitutes 70.19% of total population and the Muslims are second largest minority in this country. There are enormous records in the history to prove well the cordial relationship, longer than 1200 years, between the Buddhists and the Muslims since historical times onward. However, in recent past years, particularly, during the aftermath of civil war (1983-2009) it could be observable a tension on the relationship between these two societies. This is because of campaigns undertaken by a few Buddhist nationalist groups with the purpose of making a division between the respective societies. So these groups have been carrying protests against the Muslims' social, cultural and religious aspects such as issuing Halal certification, slaughtering animals for meals, worship places and prayer services and so on. Also, they have disseminated the misinterpretations about the Muslims and their religion-Islam with derogatory speeches among the Buddhist public. Based on the above backdrop, this paper attempts to find the post-tension Buddhists' relationship with the Muslims through the Buddhists' point of view with a measure social interaction. According to the result, there is not remarkable fluctuation on the relationship line between the Buddhists and the Muslims, and the Buddhists did not concern the number of social, cultural and religious practices of the Muslims as the barriers of maintaining a better interaction among them. However, almost all of the Buddhists have pointed out here that the animal slaughtering is a mere problematic factor from the Muslims side in maintaining a better interaction with them due to having prohibition according to Buddhism philosophy.

Keywords: Post-tension, relationship, Buddhists, Muslims, Sri Lanka.

1. Introduction

Sri Lanka is a diverse country that is home to many religions, ethnicities and languages. The Sinhalese are the main ethnic group in the country, constituting three quarters of the total population. Among them, the Sinhala-Buddhists are 70.19% (Department of Census and Statistics, 2012), and speak Sinhala, an Indo-Aryan language. The Tamils make up the second major ethnic group, constituting 15.37% of the population. This group consists of Sri Lankan Tamils and Indian Tamils, 12.61% of which are Hindus (Department of Census and Statistics, 2012). Tamils live predominantly in the north-eastern part of the island. The Muslims in Sri Lanka constitute 9.4% of the country's population (Department of Census and Statistics, 2012), and live in various parts of the country. In some regions, Muslims are more in number compared to Buddhists, and belong to three different ethno-social backgrounds: Sri Lankan Moors, Indian Moors and Malays. Others include the Memons and the Bohras (Imtiyaz, 2012). The Muslims are a multilingual ethnic and religious group, and speak Tamil, a Dravidian language.

There exists a historical record of ethnic harmony in Sri Lanka. The relationship between Buddhists and Muslims has been tightly linked both socially and culturally since the early period of the arrival of Muslims to the country. Arab-Muslim traders and local Muslims have immensely contributed to protect and expand their reigns during the regime of Buddhist leaders (Dewaraja, 1994). During the 19th and 20th centuries, Muslim

leaders and scholars toiled hard for Sri Lanka's independence from colonial rule. They protected the territorial integrity and sovereignty of the country, irrespective of ethnic, religious and lingual differences. Post-independence, the relationship between Buddhists and Muslims was strong, and they shared great mutual respect and understanding (Lebbe, 2010). The Muslim group has been identified as a peaceful one that has maintained societal and ethnic harmonious relations with its neighbours. Further, Muslims have also maintained a very good relationship with Buddhist rulers. This cordial relationship with Buddhists and their rulers made the Muslim community in the country among the privileged. In fact, it is worthy to note that, compared to other minorities who are living with majorities in other parts of the world; the Muslims in Sri Lanka have enjoyed a variety of fundamental rights, as well as socio-cultural and economic privileges.

However, recently, in the context of Sri Lanka, especially during the aftermath of the civil war (1983-2009), a series of tense situations have been observed in terms of the relationship between the Buddhist and the Muslim communities. This has started during which the Buddhist nationalist groups Bodu Bala Sena (BBS), Sinhala Rawaya and Rawana Balaya posed questions about ethnic and religious features of Muslim community. Muslims' rights pertaining to religious obligations have been immensely questioned through provocations by respective groups. These groups advocated the establishment of a pure Buddhist raj in Sri Lanka. During their rallies, the most prominent hard-liner groups have used coarse, derogatory language to undermine and question Muslims and their religion, and spread misunderstanding and misperception about them among the majority Buddhist community in Sri Lanka. There have been several incidents recorded attacking the Muslim's religious places of worship, which have consequently imposed challenges in practicing religio-cultural identity, customs and fundamentals. In this regard, in the recent past, the Muslims have faced a number of challenges in terms of anti-Halal (permitted to eat according to Islam) and anti-Hijab (head and face covers) agitations, as well as destroying and damaging places of worship, refusing to call for prayers using loudspeakers, disturbing prayer services, anti-slaughtering movements, anti-Shariah agitations and so on. Furthermore, these groups have propagated and advised Buddhists to reduce or avoid socio-cultural and economic interactions, as well as relations with the Muslim community.

These incidents have created a situation that is suspicious and tense, as well as a feeling of marginalization among the Muslims, especially those who live in Buddhist-populated areas throughout the country. Moreover, these incidents have contributed to the clashes in opinions and misunderstandings, thus further damaging the once healthy relationship between the Buddhists and the Muslims in Sri Lanka. Although Muslims are seen as having remained largely loyal to the state during the 30-year ethnic conflict and civil war, they are currently expressing the fear of religious marginalization, which has increased uncertainty of their co-existence and long-term cordial relationship with other major ethno-religious groups, especially Buddhists.

Based on the above backdrop, this study attempts to investigate the current nature of the post-tension relationship between Buddhists and Muslims in the context of Sri Lanka through a measure of their social interaction, especially with an analysis of Buddhists' perspectives. In order to achieve the objective of this research, a total of 14 items have been applied using a questionnaire. The items attempt to measure the relationship between Buddhists and Muslims, including befriending with Muslims, doing business with Muslims, participating in cultural events, and offering helps. This also identifies the barriers in terms of Muslims' behaviours at a social level, for further advancement of the relationship.

2. Conceptual Note on Social Interaction

Generally, in a plural society, a tension or discord is not established without reason. Nevertheless, it is created by particular intervening factors in united communities. In such a context, some social and cultural aspects are employed as measuring tools of relationships in a plural society. In this regard, social interaction is an important tool that is used to measure the nature of particular relationships. This tool was implemented in this study to examine the relationship between Buddhists and Muslims in Sri Lanka. The relationship among different groups within a plural society depends on the interaction, exchange and cooperation of various member groups within that society. Positive attributes of people will lead to positive outcomes, including societal harmony (peace), co-existence and unity within a society. Negative attributes of people, such as extremism, ethno-nationalism, fundamentalism, threatening others, prejudice and misinterpretation, will all lead to negative outcomes such as conflict, violence, discrimination and marginalization.

Interaction is the activity of talking to other people and attempting to understand them. It is a reciprocal action (Adamolekun, 2012), as well as a basic social process represented in a mutual relationship among two or more individuals or groups. It is the process by which we act and react to those around us. In a nutshell, social interaction includes those acts that people perform towards each other, and the responses they give in return (Goffman, 2010). The interaction in a religious perspective is generally a prominent role played by all religions in order to be kind to other fellow beings (Abdullah, 1978). All religions promote peace and harmonious life, and one way to achieve this is through the interaction among the believers and non-believers of their specific adherence. With regards to Buddhism and Islam, both have their own perspectives of social interaction and attitude towards other religions (Alwi and Rashid, 2011). Therefore, the major concept of this study is social interaction.

3. Methodology

A questionnaire Survey was conducted to measure the relationship between Buddhists and Muslims during the aftermath of the recent tensions in Sri Lanka. The survey includes the Buddhist population, which resides in 14 major districts in the country, namely: Colombo, Gampaha, Kandy, Matale, Kalutara, Matara, Anuradapura, Polonnaruwa, Ratnapura, Kegalle, Puttalam, Kurunegala, Badulla, and Moneragala. The selection of these districts is because there are a few districts that comprise of a Buddhist majority and a Muslim minority, both of which live together side by side. The participants of the survey are the general public, and a non-probability, convenience based sampling technique was used in respective districts. The participants were selected based on the percentage of the population in each district from the total population of Sri Lanka. In order to measure the relationship through social interaction, about 835 self-administered, closed-ended questionnaires were distributed among the participants in the 14 mentioned districts. The above sample has been selected for the population of 13 million people according to the table of Krejcie & Morgan (1970) (The table for determining sample size for a given population). The questions were organized into two main parts. Part One includes 14 questions, while Part Two includes six which are related to demographic details of the respondents. The data were analysed using the Statistical Package for Social Science (SPSS) software. Under this segment, the findings of the study on the views of Buddhists on the recent tension and the consequence of this on the relationship between Muslims and Buddhists in Sri Lanka are presented in detail. To measure the aforementioned findings, simple frequencies, percentages and the mean were all calculated from received 672 (80.4%) questionnaires out of 835 (100%). The discussion and interpretation starts with the 14 questions of measurement of the questionnaire as it is a descriptive research.

3.1 Analysis of Respondent's Demography

The questionnaire provides information regarding social and demographic variables such as age level, gender, marital status, educational background, occupation, and finally, residential district. For the purpose of the study, Age was divided into six categories; 20 years old and below (5%); 21 to 30 (14%); 31 to 40 (18%); 41 to 50 (30%); 51-64 (28%); and 65 years old and above (5%). Around 70% of the respondents were from the age category between 31-64, mainly because they had more recognition and maturity among the society in expressing opinions regarding social issues. As per the expectation of the researcher, about 76% of the respondents are from the age group 31 to 64. Also, the researcher attempted to acquire an equal amount of male participants as females. But 36.9% of the responses were from males, while 45.9% out of fifty percent were from females. The males who have responded were about 9 percent fewer than the females. So the males have not shown more interest compared to females in responding to the given questionnaires. This might be because the males were busy with other matters such as work. Meanwhile, in terms of marital status; married respondents made up 41.9%, while single (including single parent and widow) made up 40%. In fact, the main objective of the researcher here is to gather at least around 60% married respondents for this research, in order to prove the relationship between Buddhists and Muslims. The reason for this is that, as mentioned earlier, married people have more recognition and are given more preference in society in the case of Sri Lanka. It could be observed that there exists only a slight difference between both married and single respondents: 282 and 270 respectively.

In the questionnaire, Education Background was divided into five categories, namely; none (41%), primary (11%), secondary (14%), vocational (15%) and university level (19%), with the purpose of providing finer grained details, in order to expose more detailed results for this study. Almost half of the respondents in this research are non-educated. This is an advantage, since any misinterpretation about a particular argument or negative stereotype of another society would be believable from non-educated people, mainly due to lack of knowledge about respective arguments. Therefore, in this research, the objective is to examine the relationship

with the inclusion of non-educated participants. After that, the university-educated respondents have been allocated to 20% of the questionnaire, so that their views are also considered. About 41% of the responses were non-educated, while only 19% were university-educated. Similarly, occupations included; unemployed (19%), self-employed (42%), student (24%), private sector (6%), and governmental sector (9%). Since most of the people are self-employed and, this has given a sizable consideration on self-employed people, while giving the second larger concentration on the unemployed people and dependent on societies, in order to obtain perceptions on the recent tensions in Sri Lanka.

Finally, based on the questionnaire survey, the respondents were asked about their residential districts for the purpose of having opinions from the various districts in which Buddhists and Muslims lived together. A total of 14 districts were considered, with thick boxes distributed within the boundary of particular districts. The questionnaires were distributed based on the percentage living in particular districts. A total of 121 out of 140 distributed questionnaires to the Colombo District were sent back. A total of 36 out of 37 distributed questionnaires to the Monaragala District were sent back. It can be observed that the Monaragala respondents are more interested in responding to the questionnaires and reaching the researcher compared to respondents from other districts.

4. Relationship with the Muslims: Buddhists' Point of View

This section involves measuring Buddhists' relationship with Muslims separately using the 14 questions in the questionnaire. This title pays attention to verifying their usual relationship with the Muslims, with analysing their participation in Muslim cultural events, engaging in friendship with them, helping them, and maintaining business activities. Also, the respondents were requested to verify whether there were any fluctuations in the relationship with the Muslims, especially after the recent campaign carried out by the Buddhist nationalist groups. Besides that, some other items attempted to find remarkable barriers which were highlighted among the Buddhists by the Buddhist nationalist groups during recent campaigns such as slaughtering animals, head and face covers of Muslim women, prayer services and worship places, Halal aspects, Muslim own trade stations, Muslim settlements on Buddhists' sacred lands and the originality of the Muslims to Sri Lanka. In fact, the respondents were asked to verify whether the aforementioned items are seen as barriers in maintaining a better relationship with Muslims within the country.

Table 01: General Interaction

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Strongly Agree	368	54.8	54.8	54.8
Agree	85	12.6	12.6	67.4
Undecided	25	3.7	3.7	71.1
Disagree	194	28.9	28.9	100.0
Total	672	100.0	100.0	
Mean	2.0670			

In terms of Item One, the main aim is to find the extent to which the respondents have normally interacted with their fellow Muslims. There is a discourse among the society that, due to the recent campaigns, there might be a fluctuation in the relationship between the Buddhists and the Muslims in present-day Sri Lanka. Thus, this item attempts to measure the current nature of the current interaction that is generally maintained among them. The result shows that the majority (67.4%) of the respondents stress out that they still maintain a better interaction with the Muslims from an unknown time, to date. A total of 54.8% of the respondents strongly expressed their favour with the Muslims, and even explained that the Buddhist nationalist groups misinterpreted the Muslims. Only around 28.9% of the respondents disagree with statement, while the rest (3.7%) did not decide. Therefore, this result shows that the social interaction between the societies remains strong in the country.

Table 02: Participation of cultural events

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Strongly Agree	32	4.8	4.8	4.8
Agree	393	58.5	58.5	63.2
Undecided	19	2.8	2.8	66.1
Disagree	223	33.2	33.2	99.3
Strongly Disagree	5	.7	.7	100.0
Total	672	100.0	100.0	
Mean	2.6667			

Item two measures the extent to which the respondents' participations were held in cultural events of the Buddhist society. According to the literature, the Buddhists and the Muslims have been taking part in each other's cultural events such as wedding ceremonies, funerals and events held at worship places, etc. (Dewaraja, 1994). Hence, this item attempts to verify whether this habit remains in existence among the societies, especially among the Buddhists. The result shows that more than sixty percent (63.3%) of the respondents expressed that they have the habit of participating in cultural events of the Muslims, while around 1/3 of them (33.9%) do not participate in the respective events. Therefore, this result shows that the above societies still attempt to keep their relationship strong.

Table 03: Making friendship

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Strongly Agree	328	48.8	48.8	48.8
Agree	196	29.2	29.2	78.0
Undecided	98	14.6	14.6	92.6
Disagree	50	7.4	7.4	100.0
Total	672	100.0	100.0	
Mean	1.8065			

Item three attempts to verify the respondents and whether they have maintain friendship with the Muslim society members. Friendship here refers to an in-depth relationship, combining trust, support, communication, understanding, empathy and intimacy, and is a relaxed relationship (David B. Annis, 1987). Thus, this item analyses the extent to which the Buddhists are friends with fellow Muslims in social life. According to the result, almost all (78%) of the respondents expressed that they have were friends and maintained a good friendship with Muslims within their immediate surroundings and outstations. In fact, this might be because of historical intertwinement, which has remains to be preserved by the respective societies, especially in Sri Lanka.

Table 04: Helping the Muslims

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Strongly Agree	375	55.8	55.8	55.8
Agree	238	35.4	35.4	91.2
Undecided	18	2.7	2.7	93.9
Disagree	41	6.1	6.1	100.0
Total	672	100.0	100.0	
Mean	1.5908			

Item four attempts to verify the respondents and whether they are interested in helping their Muslim society members. Almost all (91.2%) of the respondents expressed that they were very interested in helping Muslims during social life. According to the literature, in the Middle Ages, especially during Kandyan times,

most of the Sinhala kings had helped the Muslims for their societal developments. Also, the people of the respective kingdom had welcomed the Muslims during hardships caused by the Portuguese and Dutch colonies, and had offered lands to them to settle down on (Dewaraja, 1994). Thus, here about 55.5% of the Buddhists expressed a strong interest in helping Muslims, while 35.4% of them expressed average interest in helping them in daily life.

Table 05: Business Links

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Strongly Agree	31	4.6	4.6	4.6
Agree	347	51.6	51.6	56.3
Undecided	33	4.9	4.9	61.2
Disagree	247	36.8	36.8	97.9
Strongly Disagree	14	2.1	2.1	100.0
Total	672	100.0	100.0	
Mean	2.8006			

Item five examines the percentage of the Buddhists who have a business (selling and buying) relationship with their fellow Muslim society members, within their residential towns and outstations. Specifically, 56.2% of the respondents have business integration with Muslims, while around 40% of them have no business integration within social life. Therefore, according to the result, around 60% of the Buddhists do not feel segregation in buying goods and services from Muslim-owned shops and trade stations. Around 5% of the Buddhists express that this is not a decidable matter, based on their point of view. There is a discourse prevailed among the societies that the Muslims feel segregation in the affairs of having food at Buddhist-owned restaurants or teashops. This is because Sri Lankan Muslims have always been well-bounded by their religion, and must therefore maintain Halal food. In the meantime, in the case of Buddhists in Sri Lanka, they generally consume pork. Moreover, most Buddhists select various types of dogs as pets, and develop close intimacy with them. Therefore, according to the religion of Islam, pork and dogs are prohibited, not only for meals, but also in terms of contact with them. This aspect cannot be seen as a barrier for living together, and is an understandable point, especially for the Buddhists, during their social life.

Table 06: Observing complexities on the relationship

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Agree	39	5.8	5.8	5.8
Undecided	54	8.0	8.0	13.8
Disagree	108	16.1	16.1	29.9
Strongly Disagree	471	70.1	70.1	100.0
Total	672	100.0	100.0	
Mean	4.5045			

Item six sought to determine whether the respondents felt that there exist complexities in the relationship between the Buddhists and the Muslims during the recent campaign carried out by the Buddhist nationalist groups. Here 86.2% of the Buddhist respondents stressed that there were no complexities in aforementioned relationship, while only 5.8% of the Buddhists expressed that there existed complexities in their relationship, according to their point of view. However, 39 (5.8%) of the Buddhist respondents who expressed the observation of complexities here are considered a small number of the total, and are labelled as rare cases; as opposed to the majority of 86.2%. Therefore, according to the above result, there is a lower probability that observed that there existed complexities in the relationship between the Buddhists and the Muslims.

Table 07: Social and cultural barriers

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Strongly Agree	21	3.1	3.1	3.1
Agree	234	34.8	34.8	37.9
Undecided	39	5.8	5.8	43.8
Disagree	168	25.0	25.0	68.8
Strongly Disagree	210	31.3	31.3	100.0
Total	672	100.0	100.0	
Mean	3.4643			

Item seven requested the respondents to verify whether they think that particular set of social and cultural practices of Muslims are barriers for advancing the cordial relationship with them within Sri Lanka. More than fifty percent (55.3%) of the Buddhist respondents noted that they did not think there might be social or cultural barriers in advancing the relationship with the Muslims. However, around forty percent (37.9%) of the respondents expressed that there existed some social and cultural barriers in maintaining the relationship with the Muslims. A few respondents have used additional spaces which were provided in the questionnaire to express their different opinions. One particular respondent from Anuradapura district mentioned that the Muslims do not participate and burn the oil lamp for inauguration of some meetings and events held with multi-religious people. Also, another respondent from Kegalle district mentioned that the Muslims never allowed their children to kneel to their teachers at schools, and they never showed their men's dead bodies to Buddhist ladies when kept at home. Therefore, it could be understandable that there are a few social or cultural barriers to relationships between Buddhists and Muslims. As mentioned earlier, these barriers are enforced by Islam. So they did not allow themselves to engage in these types of activities, as this was beyond their religion. Therefore, the Buddhist society here should attempt to understand the Muslim's religious limitations related to maintaining a relationship with them, if they wish to maintain a peaceful environment within the country. The Muslims must also attempt to understand Buddhists' religious boundaries related to maintaining a relationship with them.

Table 08: Slaughtering animals

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Strongly Agree	261	38.8	38.8	38.8
Agree	282	42.0	42.0	80.8
Undecided	21	3.1	3.1	83.9
Disagree	45	6.7	6.7	90.6
Strongly Disagree	63	9.4	9.4	100.0
Total	672	100.0	100.0	
Mean	2.0580			

In item eight, the respondents were asked whether they feel that the slaughtering of animals, especially bulls or cows, is a negative factor in undertaking a better relationship with the Muslims. Here, almost all 80.8% of the Buddhist respondents stress that animal slaughtering is a critical issue that needs to be addressed in order to maintain a relationship with the Muslims. The Buddhist society too is bounded with their religion in Sri Lanka, especially in relation to animal abuse, which mentioned in Buddhism. According to Buddhism, they all should refrain from destroying any living creatures. Further, around ten percent (9.4%) of the Buddhists disagree with the statement that they did not feel that this is a barrier in maintaining a better relationship with the Muslims in Sri Lanka.

Table 09: Head scarves (Farda) and face covers (Niqab)

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Strongly Agree	12	1.8	1.8	1.8
Agree	201	29.9	29.9	31.7
Undecided	18	2.7	2.7	34.4
Disagree	123	18.3	18.3	52.7
Strongly Disagree	318	47.3	47.3	100.0
Total	672	100.0	100.0	
Mean	3.7946			

After the Buddhist nationalist groups have eliminated the Halal stamps on consumer goods with a heavy struggle, the head scarf (Hijab) and face covering (Niqab) of Muslim women have also come into focus, with Sinhala newspapers running polls as to whether the Hijab and the Niqab should be banned, and with individual incidents being reported of Muslim girls with scarves being harassed during the course of the campaign (Farook, 2014), as a major component of their agenda. Thus, item nine requested the Buddhist respondents to verify whether they think that the veil, which worn by Muslim woman, is a barrier in maintaining a better relationship with the Muslims in the country. The result revealed that precisely 47.3% of the respondents strongly disagreed that this cannot be a barrier in undertaking relationship with the Muslims. Also another 18.3% of them normally disagreed with the statement. Therefore, in total, 65.6% of the Buddhists expressed that they did not think this was a barrier, with admiring the society's religion and culture within a multi-religious and multi-cultural environment. However, about 1/3 (31.7%) of the Buddhists believe that this should be a barrier to a relationship with them. According to the result, more than sixty percent of the Buddhists obviously have given the recognition to the Muslims to wear veils when they would be among the presence of Buddhists, with disrespecting the allegations of the Buddhist nationalist groups against the veils of Muslim women in Sri Lanka.

Table 10: Prayer services and mosques of Muslims

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Strongly Agree	3	.4	.4	.4
Agree	111	16.5	16.5	17.0
Undecided	27	4.0	4.0	21.0
Disagree	138	20.5	20.5	41.5
Strongly Disagree	393	58.5	58.5	100.0
Total	672	100.0	100.0	
Mean	4.2009			

During the course of the campaign undertaken by the Buddhist nationalist groups, there have been a number of incidents of violence, intimidation and hate speech against the Muslims. These include attacks on physical structures such as mosques, shrines and Islamic schools (Madrasas), which have been damaged and destroyed. Also, prayer services have been disrupted, protests have been held outside religious places, and people have been warned not to pray in some centres (Centre for Policy Alternatives, 2013). Hate speech has been disseminated through handbills, leaflets and websites (Farook, 2013). Thus, item ten aims to determine whether the respondents ever considered that the prayers of the Muslims and mosques are seen as disturbances for routines by Buddhists, as disseminated by the Buddhist nationalist groups through rallies and the Media. The result shows that nearly 79% of the Buddhist respondents did not feel that the mosques and prayer services were disturbing their routines, as has been disseminated by the respective groups among public. Only around 17% of them believe this caused disturbances in their routines. Therefore, according to the result, the majority of the Buddhists in Sri Lanka did not oppose the prayers of the Muslims, and they did not request to remove the mosques in some town areas.

Table 11: Halal labels on consumer goods

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Strongly Agree	3	.4	.4	.4
Agree	207	30.8	30.8	31.3
Undecided	36	5.4	5.4	36.6
Disagree	90	13.4	13.4	50.0
Strongly Disagree	336	50.0	50.0	100.0
Total	672	100.0	100.0	
Mean	3.8170			

The anti-Muslim campaign has been manifested in a variety of ways, with a number of Buddhist nationalist groups playing a largely public role. These groups openly called for a boycott of Halal consumer products, which are associated with the Muslims. BBS General Secretary Galagoda the Gnanasara Thero was quoted as saying that “if Muslim people want Halal goods they can buy it from their mosques” (Centre for Policy Alternatives, 2013), and have threatened an island wide campaign to force people to reject Halal products. This has a strong presence with Face book and other social media groups and pages. Thus, item eleven asks whether the respondents have ever been affected by the Halal labelled foods issued under Shariah code, when they purchase them at the market. Based on the result, about 63.4% of the Buddhists respondents feel that they were not affected by Halal products, even though they were Buddhist followers. Precisely 50% of them strongly disagreed with the statement. However, around 32% of the Buddhists mentioned that they have felt vulnerability by the Halal label, as the adherents of Buddhism. According to their point of view, they cannot obey the Shariah regulation owned by Muslims, and they cannot allow a Shariah-domination in a Buddhist predominant country.

Table 12: Muslims owned enterprises or trade stations

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Agree	69	10.3	10.3	10.3
Undecided	42	6.3	6.3	16.5
Disagree	129	19.2	19.2	35.7
Strongly Disagree	432	64.3	64.3	100.0
Total	672	100.0	100.0	
Mean	4.3750			

During the course of the campaign, the Buddhist nationalist groups and online groups have called for the boycott of Muslim-owned companies and trade stations such as No-Limit and Fashion Bug. There were reports that after early 2013 there has been an impact on Muslim-owned businesses, and that this economic boycott is spreading, which may cause multiple repercussions both in terms of the Muslim community, as well as for Muslim-Buddhist relations (Farook, 2014). In June 2014, a small number of people set a fire to No Limit, located in Panadura. Also, they disseminated rumours among the Buddhists that the Muslim-owned companies caused harm in terms of sexual harassment, especially to women workers in the area. Thus, item twelve sought to verify whether the Muslim owned companies have caused trouble to the Buddhist employees who worked there. Here, the majority (64.3%) of the Buddhist respondents strongly expressed that the above mentioned companies did not cause harm to the Buddhist workers. Also, another 19.2% of the respondents expressed disagreement with the above statement. However, 10.3% of the respondents mentioned that they have observed harm by those companies to the Buddhist workers. In summary, the majority of the Buddhists in Sri Lanka did not perceive Muslim-owned companies as causing a disturbance.

Table 13: settlements on sacred lands

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Agree	114	17.0	17.0	17.0
Undecided	33	4.9	4.9	21.9
Disagree	123	18.3	18.3	40.2
Strongly Disagree	402	59.8	59.8	100.0
Total	672	100.0	100.0	
Mean	4.2098			

In some areas, physical violence was accompanied by other measures to push out the Muslim presence in particular areas. There are efforts to declare both Dambulla and Anuradapura as ‘sacred areas’. The identification of these areas as sacred areas is also combined with Urban Development and Cultural Protection, hence, Muslim religious places and residents have faced both legal and extra-legal processes to evict them from these areas. For instance, in Dambulla, following the attack on the Msjidul Kairiyah Mosque, people in the area were issued eviction notices from the Urban Development Authority (UDA) to vacate the area by the end of October, 2012, on the basis of the area being sacred (Centre for Policy Alternatives, 2013). Thus, this item aims to examine whether the respondents felt unhappy with a few Muslim settlements in sacred lands which belong to Buddhist temples, or were identified as sacred areas by UDA. Here, precisely 59.8% of the Buddhist respondents expressed that they have never felt unhappy with the aforementioned settlements, and with the fact that these Muslims do not want to be evicted from those areas. In addition, another 18.3% of them normally disagree with this statement. Therefore, in total, 78.1% of the Buddhists have never felt unhappy with the Muslim settlements. Despite the legal processes of identifying areas as sacred, here, it is required to reconcile the societies to build up the relationship among Buddhists and Muslims. Therefore, according to the result, the Buddhists have given recognition, and have provided enough flexibility to build a better relationship with the Muslims in Sri Lanka, and thus moving beyond this recent effort of the Buddhist nationalist groups.

Table 14: Origin of the Muslims in Sri Lanka

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Strongly Agree	3	.4	.4	.4
Agree	99	14.7	14.7	15.2
Undecided	93	13.8	13.8	29.0
Disagree	117	17.4	17.4	46.4
Strongly Disagree	360	53.6	53.6	100.0
Total	672	100.0	100.0	
Mean	4.0893			

During the course of the campaign, the Jathika hela Urumaya (JHU) political party has supported the agenda of the Buddhist nationalist groups, and has openly advocated that Sri Lanka solely belongs to Sinhala Buddhists, and that Tamils should go to Tamilnadu, and Muslims to Saudi Arabia (Farook, 2014), mentioning that Muslims are aliens who have arrived from Arab countries. Thus, this item yielded an affirmative response from 53.6% of the respondents not suspecting the origin of the Muslims in this country. Another 17.4% of them have given support to confirm further the above result with selecting ‘disagreement’. Approximately 15% of the Buddhists have suspected the origin of the Muslims, and whether they are original citizens of the country. According to the result, the majority of the Buddhists perfectly understood the origin of the Muslims. They believe that their ancestors were Arabs who have espoused local Sinhalese women, and the current Muslims living in the country are their offspring.

5. Conclusion

In summary, this study has examined two main areas: the relationship between the Buddhists and the Muslims, and the barriers or negative factors which affect this relationship. A total of 14 items have been used to find the respective result. The first six items attempted to analyse the level of the existing relationship between the

Buddhists and the Muslims. According to the result, the Buddhists have maintained a better relationship with the Muslims in the current context of Sri Lanka. In order to further prove this, a sizable amount of Buddhists participate in cultural events of the Muslims, and a healthy friendship with them. Also, the Buddhists have shown a strong interest in helping the Muslims, and around 60% of the Buddhists have business relations with them. Therefore, according to Buddhists' point of views, there are no issues or problems in their relationship with the Muslims in the country.

Besides that, this topic also attempts to verify whether a number of factors negatively affect this relationship. The Buddhists feel that there exist a few negative behaviours carried out by Muslims. For example, slaughtering animals is the worse negative factor that questions their relationship, due to the prohibition of slaughtering animals in Buddhism, according to their point of view. The Buddhists here were not concerned with Farda and Niqab affairs, mosques and prayer services, Halal certification, Muslim owned companies, Muslim settlements on sacred lands, and the origin of the Muslims in Sri Lanka, as barriers of the relationship with them. Moreover, the Buddhists did not perceive these as inconveniences or disturbances for in their daily routines.

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