東京在住少数民族ミャンマー人の民族文化的同一性

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Ethnocultural Group Identification of Ethnic Minority Myanmar Residents in Tokyo

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Purpose

Myanmar population in Japan is composed of multi-ethnic, multilingual, and multicultural groups. The diversity of ethnic groups is a complex and politically sensitive issue in Myanmar. For this reason, ethnic minorities usually prefer to announce their ethnicity to identify themselves. Moreover, the Burman majority discriminate against ethnic minorities. For these reasons, the Myanmar population in Japan is unique and different from other migrant groups. All studies about Myanmar people in Japan were from the social perspective, and give no psychological insight about the Myanmar community but do (e.g. Kajimura, 2014) provide interesting ground for further investigation from the psychological perspective. Thus, the current study explored the ethnic identity and related issues of Myanmar residents in Japan and their attitudes toward ethnocultural groups from the social psychological perspective.

Method

Participants: Participants were 20 Myanmar residents who are currently working and/or studying in Tokyo, Japan. They were interviewed between August to October 2016. All participants were from different ethnic groups of Burma; precisely, five Burman, seven Kachin, five Karen and three Chin ethnic individuals with different religions. Among this convenience sample, five were male, and 15 were female participants who ranged in age from 17 to 57 years with an average age of $M = 32.3$, $SD = 12.39$ years.

Materials and Procedure: The interviews were done in a semi-structured format along with a questionnaire which was developed based on Phinney (1990)'s different concepts of ethnic identity. In the first section, 13 questions were asked to capture self-identification information via their personal information. In the second section, five questions related to language proficiency skills were asked. The third section included interview questions about the strength of ethnic identity; whether they are proud to be a certain ethnic group member or not, how often they engage in their cultural events, and how they perceived their ethnic group. These questions were asked to expose their attitudes towards ethnic identity. The length of interview ranged from approximately 45 to 60 minutes. Interviews were audio-recorded and transcribed.

Data Analysis: The results of the interviews were analyzed qualitatively by the KJ (Kawakita Jiro) method to generate relevant themes related to ethnicity. First, the transcripts were carefully reviewed to gain a general idea of each participant's response. Then, similar expressions of interviewees were generated from segmented text data and grouped together to develop connections between categories. The related categories were extracted from participants' responses.

Result

The extracted ethnic identity related key terms and concepts are

religion, politics, discrimination, war, and future orientation. This study revealed that positive morality traits such as honesty, trustworthiness, and straightforwardness are reserved for the positive in-group evaluation of ethnic minorities. Religious orientation, perceived similarities, and shared historical experience are important criteria to define in-group categorization. For Myanmar people, the authenticity of ethnicity depends on the religious identity. Although ethnic minorities differ in their ethnicities, most of them have the same religious belief (i.e., Christian) and belong to minor groups. Due to these intergroup similarities, they perceived themselves allies. Besides, most of the Burman ethnic are Buddhist, and they belong to a dominant group. These dissimilarities accentuate intergroup differentiation between the majority and minorities and place them at opposite poles. Ethnic minority Buddhists and bi-racial people who have a moderate view regarding the ethnic issue are in between these two groups. Middle-aged adults of ethnic minorities associate politics and ethnicity while young adults relate religion and ethnicity. Terms such as politics, war, and religion are glued together with ethnic origin, especially for ethnic minorities who suffered the atrocity of revolutionary war. Regarding future orientation, young adults of minorities want to contribute to the welfare of their groups. Moreover, lists of positive and negative traits of minorities' and majority's inter-group attitudes were revealed in the results of the interview. Almost all the respondents exhibited systematic differential positive evaluation of the in-group. The responses of ethnic minorities regarding the achievement and status related characteristics of in-group were objective and realistic.

Discussion

Brewer's "optimal distinctiveness theory" (1991, 2007) is used to discuss the results of this study. The current study is one piece of evidence that gave security motives a primary role that underlies in-group favoritism. Needs for inclusion and needs for discrimination from others govern the relationship between the self-concept and membership in social groups. Thus, attributions of positive moral traits are seen to reserve for the in-group ethnic minorities even they perceived their group having a low social-economic status. Finally, the obtained lists of characteristics for inter-group attitudes from this study had context-specific nature and will be used to examine further research on the inter-group bias of Myanmar population in Japan and other countries.

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