

DYNAMICS OF POST-WAR SOCIAL IDENTITY CONSTRUCTION OF NORTHERN SRI LANKAN EX - LTTE COMBATANTS WITH DISABILITIES

Baskaran.N

ABSTRACT

In Sri Lanka, many thinkers believe that the three-decade of war indicted number of civilians, LTTE combatants and military soldiers with disabilities. During and after the war all the soldiers (government soldiers and LTTE combatants) including those with disabilities) were considered as war heroes in Sri Lanka. The ruling class, religious institution, civil society, and the local media of Sri Lanka played a crucial role in constructing a positive social identity for the ex-combatants. In this social context, the ex-LTTE combatants including those with disabilities were treated respectably in the society. However, lately, it became quite evident that the ex-LTTE combatants with disabilities are gradually being ignored in the discourses about the combatants and their war victories. Presently, the ruling class proclaims that the victory of the war is the effort of solely the ruling political party and its political leaders. Besides, INGOs try to propagate negatively about combatants' role in the war. Given this context, my attempt is to understand how the Sri Lankan Tamil ex-LTTE combatants with disabilities construct their social identities (masculine and warrior) amidst varying social responses in the post-war period. The literature review revealed that little work was done on this aspect. In order to understand the social identity construction of the ex-combatants with disabilities in the post war period, I conducted a qualitative research. In this study, I especially focus on two major components such as disability and social identity construction. Under these components, this study is designed to examine the effects of the following factors: Primary social groups, secondary groups including Sri Lankan nation state, politicians, and media, religious institution and public transport respond towards the ex-LTTE combatants with disabilities during and after the war period in northern Sri Lanka. Based on these sub-research questions, I used the purposeful sampling method; I selected 33 ex-combatants with disabilities, and 05 civilians. Using in-depth interviews and non-participation observation as the ways of collecting primary data, I have tried to understand the social identity and the identity construction of the combatants with disabilities in the post-war period in northern Sri Lanka.

Keywords: *Combatants with disabilities, Post-war, Disability, Social identity, Social identity construction*