

Rejection and Alienation Experienced by Anglo-Indians: A Psycho-Social Study

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ABSTRACT

Anglo-Indian community came into existence as a result of the intermarriages between the British East India Company employees and native women, is said to have experienced both, a preferential treatment over the Indians and being the target of marginalization and discrimination for generations. With India attaining its Independence, Anglo-Indians not only lost their stand on their reasons for living in India, but also faced socio-economic threats. The paradigm changes and sudden downfall in the socio-economic status of the community impacted the Anglo-Indians not only at the social level but also at the psychological levels. The Anglo-Indian community thus experienced instances of neglect, marginalization, rejection, social alienation. This experience of social alienation in the recent decades has turned into political neglect and constitutional exclusions, continually contributing to the psycho-social issues being faced by the Anglo-Indian community. The present study titled, 'Rejection and Alienation Experienced by Anglo-Indians: A Psycho-Social Study', is aimed at studying the instances of rejection and alienation experienced by Anglo-Indians, from a psycho-social dimension. The participants of the study include 22 young adults and 28 middle-aged Anglo-Indians, recruited using snow-ball sampling method. The Semi-Structured Interview Schedule on rejection and alienation experienced by Anglo-Indians, developed by the researcher (2018) was used as a tool for data collection. A thematic analysis of the obtained data resulted in the emergence of various themes such as withdrawal/avoidance, feeling humiliation and disheartened or standing up assertively for their family and community and other such, as a psycho-social response to the instances of rejection and alienation experienced by the Anglo-Indian Community.

Keywords: Anglo-Indians, Rejection, Alienation, Cross-cultural origin, Psycho-social study

INTRODUCTION

The British East India Company during its colonial rule on India encouraged the inter-marriages between the employees of the East India Company and the native Indian women, between 1600-1750. In fact, it was done to an extent that the Company even offered a stipend to Indian mothers upon the baptism of any offspring from an East India Company employee [1]. This was seen as an effort towards creating the 'English-speaking native workforce' for the British and as a result 'Anglo-Indian community' came into existence.

The Anglo-Indian community, in the early years, enjoyed a superior social status of being a bridge between the European and the Indian cultures. Economically, they were privileged with preferential treatment at work. The British Raj ensured that the East India Company provided Anglo-Indians with encouragement and ready employment. They were treated on par with that of the British, thus ensuring that the community was nurtured to flourish. This socio-

economic status of theirs, more evidently led to the development of a psychologically superior sense of self and identity among the members of the community.

But, with India waking up to its independence, the world of the Anglo-Indians came breaking down. Almost every aspect of their life, including their identity was put at stake. The community was left with no apparent purpose to continue their stay in the Indian sub-continent.

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Unfortunately, most of their efforts to relocate to the land of Europe and identify themselves with their European roots were also futile. They were not just 'not welcomed' in the European land but were also looked down upon for even making such an effort. In India, socially they felt dethroned as they had no two cultures to bridge between anymore. Economically, not just the preferential treatment at work was lost, but to most who worked for the Raj, their work and careers too saw an end. The next blow came to their identity when Hindi was declared as the national language in India. The Anglo-Indians who had considered their English-speaking abilities as their greatest and most unique strength, now were no more benefited from that in the social and professional spheres. As a result, majority of the Anglo-Indians migrated to other European lands such as Canada, Australia and such, leading to the decline to the Anglo-Indian population in the country from nearly 3,00,000 to 1,50,000 [2]. This experience of rejection from the Europeans, social dethronement and withdrawal of economic privileges, resulted in the loss of their superior sense of self, affected them psychologically, despite the Indian constitution offering them civilian and democratic rights with assured representation at the centre and the state.

The paradigm changes and sudden downfall in the socio-economic status of the community impacted the Anglo-Indians not only at the social level but also at the psychological levels. The Anglo-Indian community thus experienced instances of neglect, marginalization, rejection, social alienation and such is not the case of yesterday or yester years. This experience of social alienation in the recent decades has turned into political neglect and constitutional exclusions. The Anglo-Indian community, despite the constitutional provisions for political representation both at the centre and the state, there have been instance of lapse in nomination of Anglo-Indian representative such as for the Raj Sabha in 2018. This has further deprived the community of a political provision that is designed to address the interests of the community and its members. As Castellás [3] writes, the Anglo-Indians has continued to remain a marginal community with questions such as "Who will listen to us?" and "What power do we have?" and in this age of identity politics and ethnic upsurge, the Anglo-Indians feel a sense of deprivation, frustration and alienation, which has not only distanced them from the mainstream of governance but also haunts their socio-economic life and ethnic identity greatly.

These experiences differ in nature and intensity as faced by the young and middle-adults owing to the changing trends in the social-interaction and seemingly liberalized approach of the society. But, the instances of rejection and alienation continue to exist in its varied forms. The ways in which these instances are received, further differs from young adults to middle-adults, as the expectations from a social structure and reactions to it differ among these generations [4].

The review of relevant literature reveals that, even though there have been studies on the marginality issues of the Anglo-Indians, the study of these issues from a psycho-social perspective are not extensive enough. Also, the study of rejection and alienation experienced by Anglo-Indians and its influence on the interpersonal relationships, in particular becomes relevant in the present-day context as these issues continues to persist and affect individuals and the community, both psychologically and socially. The study of rejection and alienation experienced by Anglo-Indians not only gives the psychological dimension to the problem, but doing it in comparison between nearly two different generations will help us understand the pattern of change better and also come up with ideas to tackle these issues in ways specific and most effective to each generation specifically.

The present study is aimed at studying the rejection and alienation experienced by Anglo-Indians, owing to their cross-cultural identity from a psycho-social dimension. It is an effort to capture their socio-cultural experiences in their own words [5].

METHODS

Objective

- To achieve deeper insights into the psycho-social issues of Anglo-Indians.
- To explore and study the experiences of rejection and alienation among young adult and middle-aged Anglo-Indians.

Operational definition

Anglo-Indian: A person whose father or any of whose other male progenitors in the male line is or was of European descent but who is domiciled within the territory of India at least for the past two generations, aged between 20-35 years or 45-60 years.

Psycho-social study: The study of psychological and social challenges faced by the Anglo-Indian population, owing to their cross-cultural origins, which has directly or indirectly proven to be an impediment or the cause for distress during the process of their life.

Experiences of rejection and alienation: Experiences of un-acceptance, refusal, isolation and estrangement, by non-Anglo-Indians, caused due to the Anglo-Indian origin of an individual.

Sample

Snowball sampling method was adopted for the study. The sample consisted of 50 participants, both male and female, belonging to the Anglo-Indian community and was collected from the cities of Bangalore, Kolkata, Hyderabad, Chennai and Mumbai. The participants hailing from various localities of Bangalore were met in person, individually, whereas

participants from other cities were contacted through telephone and mail (**Table 1**).

RESEARCH DESIGN

Concurrent Triangulation Mixed Research Design was adopted for the study (**Figure 1**).

Table 1. Sample composition.

Category	Age range (in years)	Gender Distribution	Total
Young Adult Anglo-Indians	20-35	Males: 08 Females: 14	22
Middle-Aged Anglo-Indians	45-60	Males: 13 Females: 15	28

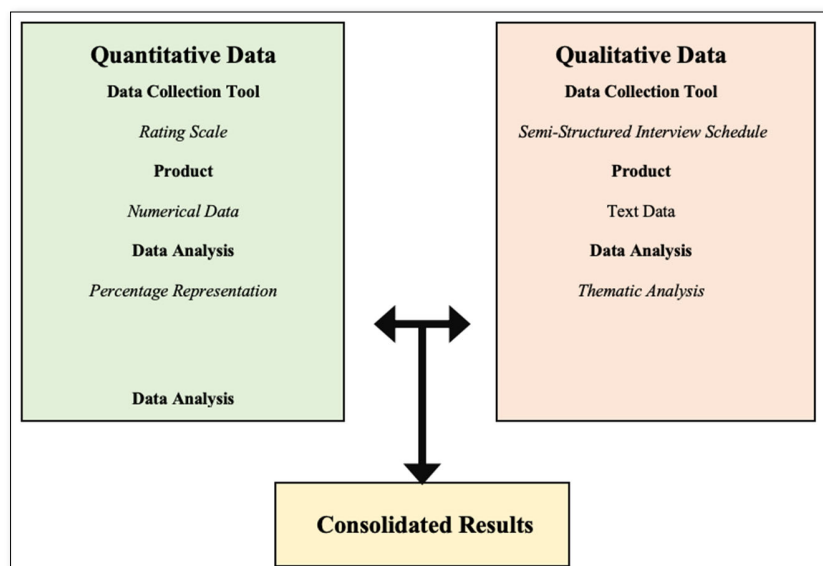


Figure 1. Concurrent Triangulation Mixed Research Design adopted for the study.

Inclusion criteria

Anglo-Indians who's earlier, a minimum of two generations have lived in the Indian sub-continent.

Tool

Semi-structured interview schedule on cultural ambiguity among Anglo-Indians: A semi-structured interview schedule consisting of 6 questions, which is seen to have a direct connection with the psychological and social aspects of marginality and helps to study the aspects of rejection and alienation experienced by Anglo-Indians across generations, was developed by the researcher in 2018. The tool consisted of three forced choice questions and three questions requiring quantifiable responses.

Along with the questions pertaining to the above-mentioned area, the researcher was free to explore by further enquiry of

the responses, as the tool used for the collection of data was a semi-structured interview schedule.

Validity

The validity of the Semi-Structured Interview Schedule on the experiences of Rejection and Alienation among Anglo-Indians, was established by the method of expert validation. The copy of the interview schedule was sent for review and validation to 4 experts in the field of Psychology and 3 experts in the field of History, who were asked to rate the relevance of each question to the particular area and the entire study in total. The ratings received were cumulated and a mean of ratings was calculated for each item. Since no item received a rating lesser than 50% of the aggregate, all the items were retained, but a few qualitative corrections suggested were incorporated before the questionnaires were used for data collection.

PROCEDURE

Organizations and associations in the chosen geographical area, specifically formulated for the Anglo-Indian population was approached and the purpose and the nature of the study was explained to them. After ascertaining the required permissions from the organizations, contact details of its members were procured and the members were approached in person and through the means of telephone and e-mails. Further contacts of other participants were collected from initial participants through the method of snowball sampling.

Having sought the contact details, every participant was contacted individually and after an introductory conversation, clear descriptions regarding the purpose of the study and its implications were explained them. After receiving the informed consent for participation and recording of responses, the participants were interviewed using the Semi-Structured Interview Questionnaire, either in person or by using the online methods of data collection and supportive information was collected by means of further questioning and clarifications. The responses of the participants were recorded and compiled for further analysis.

ANALYSIS

A thematic analysis of the obtained data was conducted, and the themes and subthemes emerged were listed and discussed with instances.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The present study examines areas pertaining to the Experiences of Rejection and Alienation, consists of questions on the probable experiences of estrangement, social rejection, neglect and alienation faced by Anglo-

Indian individuals. It seeks to explore the ways in which the members of the Anglo-Indian community have tried to fight the problems of exclusion and rejection and the effectiveness of constitutional provisions in this regard and discusses the socio-cultural and psychological impacts of the same on the community.

The results of the participants response to the Semi-Structured Interview Schedule on the Experiences of Rejection and Alienation among Anglo-Indians is discussed in terms of each question and the sub-themes emerged out of the responses as follows:

Q1 & 2. Have you come across circumstances where you have felt rejected in a social situation because of your identity? If yes, explain your responses to the same.

The above question was intended to understand if the participants have faced any sort of rejection in social situations, owing to their cross-cultural identity and if it had a lasting effect on the minds of the participants. The responses as represented by **Figure 2** are indicative that, it was least likely for nearly 65% of the participants to face any such rejection by their peers or in social circles. Among the remaining population, Young adults are seen to have faced slightly greater instances of rejection in social-situations than the middle-adults. Even though there exists a degree of variation in the incidence of experiences of rejection among young-adults and middle adults, it is observed to be not entirely significant. Thus, the results indicate that, even though majority of the participants have reported nil experiences of rejection, nearly 35% of the Anglo-Indian population has experienced rejection owing to their cross-cultural identity, in varied degree at some point in their life (**Table 2**).

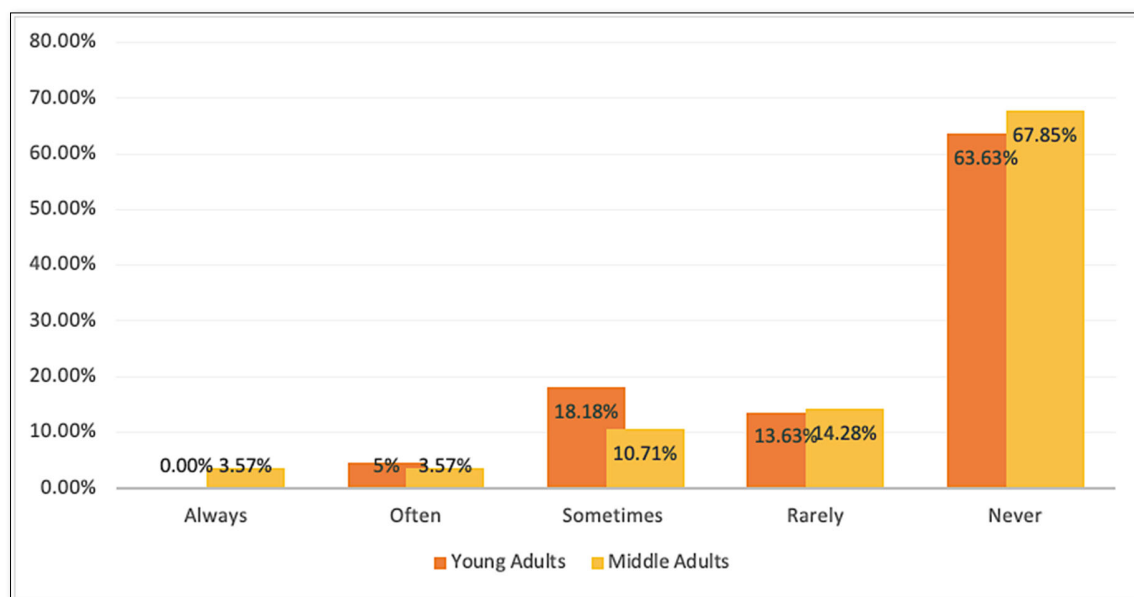


Figure 2. Rejection in social situations experienced by Anglo-Indians.

Table 2. Thematic analysis of response to the rejection experienced by Anglo-Indians.

Themes	Sample Statements
Withdrawal/ Avoidance	• “I never fight back! I walk away from it.” (M20) • “I refused to step my foot in their house again. I prefer to avoid such people around me. They only spread pain and hatred.” (Y14)
Humiliated	• “I felt I am an alien among them. Feels so out of place and lonely.” (Y11) • “Felt humiliated and abandoned. I do not want to be in such a situation again, I would do anything to come out of it.” (M14)
Disheartened	• “Felt humiliated and abandoned. I do not want to be in such a situation again, I would do anything to come out of it. I wasn’t expecting such a treatment for a human being” (M14) • “Being treated like a foreigner in India. How would someone forget that?” (M15)
Assertiveness	• “I speak for myself, but I am aware that a lot of the underprivileged of our community go through hell trying to avail what the Government offers for the minority. Language and the lack of representation are the major setbacks faced. But self-empowerment is the only way out.” (M11)

The following question was a continuation to the previous question, which was directed towards the participants who have experienced rejection in some form at some point in life alone. The question intended to understand the ways in which the negative experience of rejection is likely to have had a psychological impact on the individuals who have gone through the feeling. As indicated by the table, responses indicating avoidant or withdrawal behaviors were most commonly given by the participants, who said that they would rather prefer walking away from that place and the person and avoid facing them again, if a situation like that was faced. Some participants mentioned that they have had faced such rejection and have been avoidant of such places and situations ever since. Further, a few participants also reported of instances where in they felt humiliated and estranged because of the way in which they were treated by the Non-Anglo- Indians. It was mentioned that they felt alien among others, and this makes them feel lost and lonely most of the times. Experiences of disappointment, humiliation and intense disheartenment were also spoken of by the participants, who said that they have been deeply hurt several times for no good reasons but for mere ignorance and up right attitude by others in social situations. “An experience of rejection is not something one would easily forget and move on” was the core of their responses. Whereas, a few Anglo-Indian middle adults specifically mentioned that it was necessary to remain calm and assertive under a circumstance of rejection and they would like to explain themselves and speak for themselves and the community. They also made a reference to the need the being self-empowered in order to be able to face such situations efficiently.

Q3. What were your efforts towards fighting any rejection faced by you or the community?

The objective of the above question was to make a note of any active efforts by the participants towards facing and fighting the rejections faced by the Anglo-Indians at an individual or at the community level. In the response to the above question, most of the participants were seen to be ignorant about the issue by stating that, “I have never faced such a situation, hence I have never tried to fight back” (M08, 11, 19, 24, Y13, 17), even after having known of the various instances wherein Anglo-Indians were humiliated. A few other participants were seen to be detached and stoic in their approach by stating that “We need not fight or become aggressive about anything, things will take its own course when the time is right” (M05, 28). Among other participants who believed in taking active steps to set this issue right, some of the responses were assertive, organized and futuristic in nature.

Sample Statements

- “To justify unequivocally that I’m first human and then community oriented.” (M06)
- “We try getting the local representative to fight for the cause but that is a pipe dream as the office held is for self rather than for the community. Indifference by the nominated representative to addressing these needs is what is most disappointing.” (M11)
- “Education is the key, making people aware through social groups, inviting them to social gatherings etc” (M16)

- “I tried explaining my origins to everyone but was stereotyped as British offspring.” (Y11)
- “Always stand by yourself and voice your opinions strongly. I never budge to any social pressures.” (Y09)

Q4. Owing to their small number, the majority communities in all aspects have neglected the Anglo-Indians. React to the above statement.

The above item was included under the area of ‘Rejection and Alienation’, with the intent to study the perception of Anglo-Indians on the matter of how other majority communities perceive them and consider them to be an important part of the society. The results as represented by **Figure 3** indicates a clear distinction between the young adults and the middle adults on this issue, wherein, a little

over half of the young adult participants opined that they were not neglected as a community by other majority communities, whereas half of the middle-adult population felt that they were surely being neglected by the other communities. On the basis of the further enquiry, this disparity seen between the young-adults and middle-adults can be associated to the changes in the professional and socio-cultural sphere that have arrived with the changing times. The middle-adults who had to compete with other individuals belonging to the majority community for their job and professional advancement in the earlier years are likely to have felt neglected for varied reasons, but the equal qualification and the minimalized role of religion or community aspects that affects the work sphere in the recent decades have allowed the young adults to feel less neglected and more respected in the recent times.

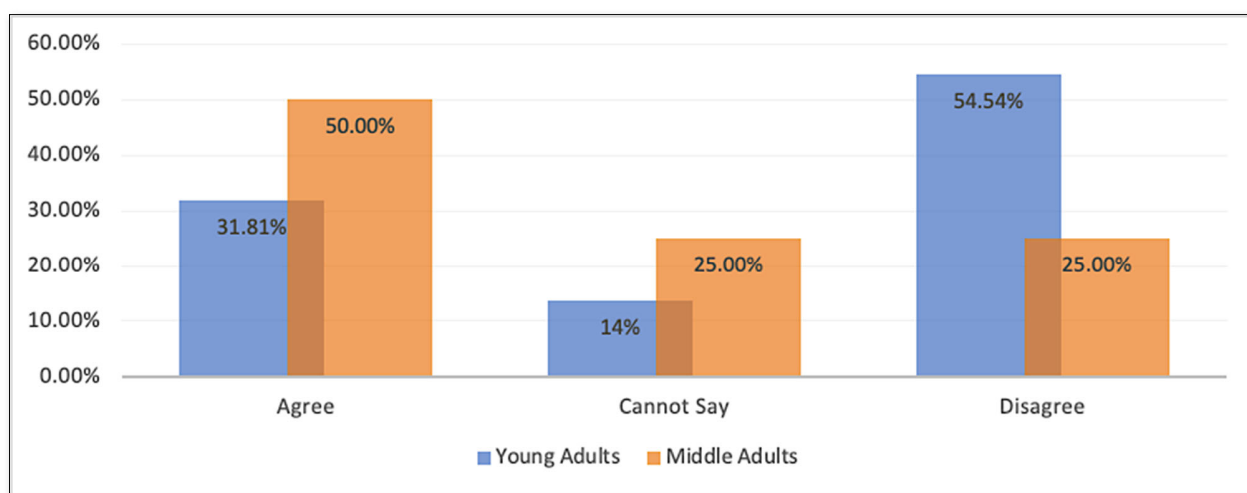


Figure 3. Feeling of being neglected by the majority communities among Anglo-Indians.

Q5. Do you feel that the constitutional provisions made to safeguard the interests of the Anglo-Indian community have been effective?

On the question of the effectiveness of constitutional provisions made to safeguard the interests of the Anglo-Indians as perceived by Anglo-Indians, a mixed response was received by both the young-adults and middle adult participants (**Figure 4**). A little over half of the participants were of the opinion that the constitutional provisions have been effective in safeguarding the interests of the community and has helped the community to grow and prosper, whereas the rest feel that the constitutional provisions are highly insufficient to address the injustice and discrimination faced by the community and hence are ineffective. They are also of the opinion that the ineffectiveness of the constitutional provisions is majorly caused due to the ignorance of the representatives at the centre and the state, who according to the participants are

only concerned about “feathering their own nests and making a name for themselves, rather than working for the betterment of the community” (M01, 11).

Q6. Are there instances when you have felt estranged and alienated by non-Anglo-Indians? If yes, please explain.

The above questions on the experiences of estrangement and alienation was intended to capture the experiences of the participants and study the impact of the same on the Anglo-Indian individuals. While only a minute part of the population reported that they have never come across such estrangement or alienation and have always felt accepted, most of the young and middle adults shared at least one instance of such an experience because of various social and cultural reasons, which can be encapsulated in their own words as below:

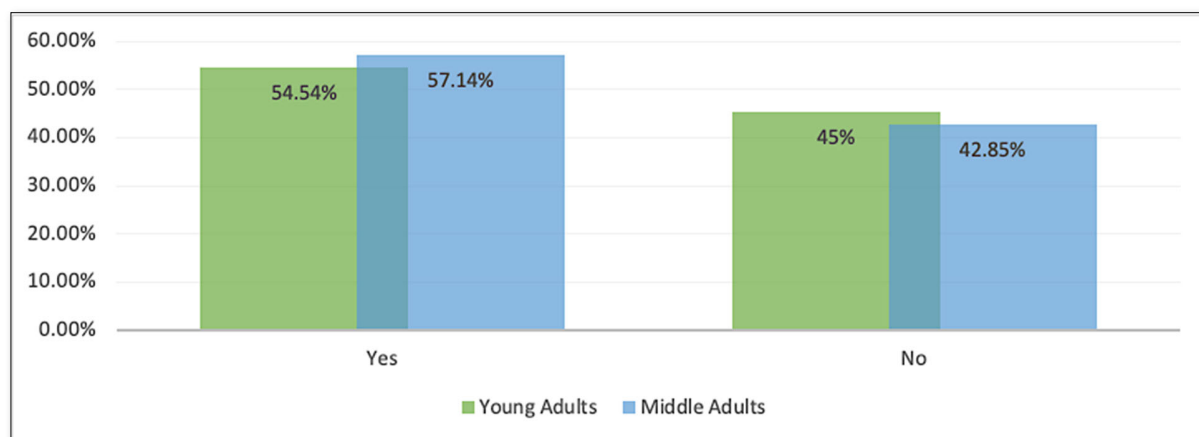


Figure 4. Effectiveness of constitutional provisions made to safeguard the interests of the Anglo-Indians as perceived by Anglo-Indians.

- “Yes, we need to admit that people in this country tend to bond better with people from their own community be it at the workplace or otherwise.” (Y04)
- “Most of the Non-Anglo-Indians have seen me with suspicion thinking I am a supporter of the British Imperialists. And as most Anglo Indians are Christians, we have a distinct western culture, cuisines, costumes, etc. and thus we have a different way of living then other majority communities...Non-Anglo Indians in my case have tried to impose their culture indirectly on Anglo Indians in many ways.” (Y11)
- “Yes, that was in school cause I use to have Hindu and Muslim friends so when I would take pork to school the Muslims would get pissed and not talk to me for the whole day or two. It was Vice Versa with the Hindus when I use to take beef to school.” (Y13)
- “There have been instances where I have felt that non-Anglo Indians can be quite judgemental about our western dress, not having arranged marriages etc.” (M12)
- “When visiting Calcutta - a sweets shop attendant ignoring me due to my pale face and obvious lack of local language.” (M15)
- Majority of the Anglo-Indian young adults displayed ignorance and detachment towards fighting the rejection faced by the community.
- Middle-adults feel more neglected by the majority communities in all aspects, in comparison to Anglo-Indian young-adults.
- Majority of the Anglo-Indians find constitutional provisions effective in safeguarding the interests of the community.
- Majority of Anglo-Indians have felt estranged and alienated by non-Anglo-Indians.

CONCLUSION

The Anglo-Indian community, during the colonial years, enjoyed a preferential treatment over the native Indians from the Raj [6]. They also were privileged with a superior social and economic status in the Indian society as they were the community that was bridging the gap between the two cultures [7]. But the Anglo-Indian community was not free from the experiences of rejection and alienation even during those times. For hundreds of years, the Anglo-Indians have been burdened by derogatory categorization such as ‘half-castes’, ‘chawni’, ‘kutchcha-butcha’ (half-baked bread) and other such to mean we belonged neither to India nor to Europe. The plight of the community doubled, when they were treated like ‘second-class citizens’ by the British, whom the Anglo-Indians looked up to and considered to be their fathers. The community faced a harder blow when they were ‘not welcomed’ in the Europe after the British left India and were neither seen as the original residents of India either. Thus, the instances of rejection and alienation faced by the Anglo-Indian community are not the first of its occurrence today, nor are it a thing of the past. Researchers and scholars who have worked with the community have recorded instances of the same sort that mirror the results of the present study.

MAJOR FINDINGS

- Majority of the participants have reported nil experiences of rejection, but nearly 35% of the Anglo-Indian population has reported the experience of rejection owing to their cross-cultural identity, in varied degree at some point in their life.
- The impact of rejection on Anglo-Indian participants have been in the form of withdrawal from such situation, feelings of being humiliated and disheartenment and in a few, increase in assertiveness.

Thus, the overview of the above domain and the available literature indicates that, even though much lesser in frequency than before, the Anglo-Indian community continues to experience the instances of rejection, alienation, estrangement and paradoxically, not even constitutional provisions have been entirely effective in safeguarding them from such humiliation. Researchers have also argued that the same has been the primary reason for the mass exodus of the Anglo-Indians from the Indian sub-continent [8-12].

LIMITATIONS OF THE PRESENT RESEARCH STUDY

Participants for the study were majorly chosen from one geographical area i.e., Bengaluru and hence the generalization is almost limited to that area alone.

IMPLICATIONS OF THE PRESENT RESEARCH FINDINGS

- The results of the study can be used to promote intercultural interactions between Anglo-Indian and native communities, promoting better interpersonal relationships.
- Anglo-Indian associations and organizations can make use of the data to address the dilemmas of the members of the community by means of counselling, guidance and awareness programmes.
- The data can also be used to formulate or alter the government policies to suit the needs of the Anglo-Indian community and make provisions for higher inclusions and better and healthier interactions with other communities.

SCOPE FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

- A comparative study of Identity Issues among Anglo-Indian young adults and young adults hailing from other minority communities such as Jews, Tibetans etc. who are domiciled in India can be taken up.

A study of other psycho-social issues among Anglo-Indians can be done as it can provide a more holistic approach towards understanding the community.

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