

DECOLONIZING URBANITY: A COMPARATIVE CASE STUDY OF THE STREET NAMES OF INDIA AND PAKISTAN

Background

- Street names and their wider socio-cultural symbolism have received considerable academic attention in name studies.
- Street names demonstrate what is considered worth commemorating. In fact, in the 20th century, the alliance between commemorative street names and the creation of nations and identities in the context of postcolonial and indigenous restoration became vital (Azaryahu 1996: 314).
- Despite this, there is a lack of comparative research on the street names of different countries and what they might collectively suggest about the cultural nature and priorities of these countries on a national level.

Aims

- To empirically highlight the street naming patterns and collective priorities in India and Pakistan.
- To shed light on residents' interactions with street renaming and decolonization initiatives in India.

Research Questions

- What does the decision-making that went into the naming and renaming of street names in India and Pakistan tell us about the national identities of the two countries and the societal distinctions between them?
- How have people responded to decolonization and street renaming in India?

Significance

- This research will shed light on not only what cultural distinctions exist between the street naming conventions of India and Pakistan, but also what constitutes the collective cultural identities of these two South Asian countries.
- Survey results will underline people's thoughts on and responses to decolonization and street name changes in India, and initiate discussions on the ways in which people can be encouraged to use the new street names and partake in the decolonization movement.

Methodology

- Street names from the central areas of Bangalore, Chennai, Kolkata in India, and Islamabad, Karachi, Lahore in Pakistan were collected using Google maps, Wikipedia and online websites.
- Drawing inspiration from Taylor (2019)'s commemorative categorizations, street names were subsequently categorized into various commemorative contexts such as 'Religion', 'Science', 'Locals' and 'Royals'. Well-known public figures were easily recognizable, whereas street names commemorating locals were sorted in terms of their clustered presence on Google maps.
- Street names from each commemorative category were then calculated to carry out a comparative analysis and quantify the different priorities that exist in the street naming conventions in India and Pakistan. Results were then further analyzed using bar graphs and pie charts to facilitate data visualization.
- Small-scale survey of Kolkata and Bangalore residents was conducted. Open-ended survey results were studied in terms of positive, negative and neutral trends in responses; suggestions offered by participants were either paraphrased or directly quoted during the qualitative analysis process.
- Close-ended results were calculated in terms of aggregate responses to the multiple-choice questions in the survey.

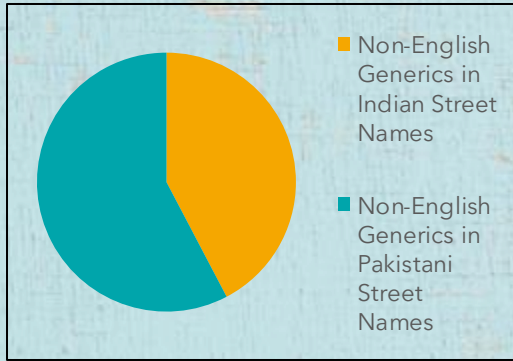
COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS OF STREET NAMES IN INDIA & PAKISTAN - RESULTS

Metadata

- Number of Indian street names analyzed - 922
- Number of Pakistani street names analyzed - 978
- Total number of street names analyzed - 1,878
- Number of street names that couldn't be categorized: 250+

Street names from sectors G6, G11, G12, G13 and I-9 in Islamabad have not been included because most of them were listed as street numbers on Google maps. Street names that commemorated people or places from these sectors, however, were included. 250+ street names could not be analyzed because of their ambiguous or untraceable nature.

Distribution of non-English generics in Indian and Pakistani street names



Non-English Generics in Indian Street Names

22

Non-English Generics in Pakistani Street Names

30

Examples of Non-English Generics in Indian and Pakistani Street Names

India – Salai, Sarani, Gali
Pakistan - Gali

Commemorative Contexts	Indian Street Names	Pakistani Street Names
Religion	91	26
Arts, Sports, Academia & Business	90	38
Political or National Figures	108	23
Political or National Figures (British)	39	1
Politics (Other Nationalities)	7	3
Locals	114	38
Science	4	
Descriptive	249	750
Buildings, Industries, Groups, Rivers	60	29
Transferred Locality / Area	146	48
Royals	10	12
Other	6	10
Total =	922	978

SURVEY FINDINGS & CONCLUSION

Participants' main thoughts on decolonization:

- Freedom of choice and livelihood, and freedom from serfdom. Freedom to have political and economic independence.
- Doing away with repressive laws and legislations from the colonial era but preserving remnants of colonial material cultures such as buildings, architectures and foods.
- Self-realization and self-actualization as a nation - embracing one's own indigeneity and reviving the dead or dormant cultural heritage of former colonies.
- It wastes taxpayer money since the old street names are historically important too.
- "Decolonization is essential to make [a] new path of history but at the same time we cannot think about redoing/ re-making of history. We need to understand [the] balance over past and present."

Participants' thoughts on street renaming:

- 26 responses in total to this question
- 7 responses show positive attitudes towards street renaming - 26.92%
- 12 responses show negative attitudes towards street renaming - 46.15%
- 4 responses show neutral attitudes towards street renaming - 15.38%
- 3 responses could not be categorized because they were either not answered relevantly or seemed complex and finely nuanced - 11.53%

Participants' suggestions to encourage the use of new street names:

- Updating Google maps to show the new street names.
- Endorsement from celebrities.
- Bus conductors should use the new street names rather than the old ones while announcing stops.
- Programs organized by TV shows and social media platforms to raise awareness of the implications of the old and the new street names.
- New street names should be easy to remember and pronounce. They should not be too long. New street names' association with politics and the anti-colonial movement can inspire people to use them.

Limitations

- Google maps did not show names for all streets in Lahore and Karachi, and therefore they could not be included and analyzed in the project.
- The survey is small-scale in nature and includes responses from 30 participants. The results are, therefore, not absolute or representative of the residents living in Bangalore and Kolkata.

Residents' aggregate responses to each survey option

- Option 1 - Yes, I use the new street name: 76
- Option 2 - No, because I wasn't aware of the new name: 53
- Option 3 - No, because I'm more used to the old name: 86
- Option 4 - I use both alternately: 52
- Option 5 - I use neither: 30

Conclusions

- Differences between Indian and Pakistani street names exist in the corpus curated for this project.
- Some of the popular commemorative contexts in Indian street names include religion, politics, academia, business, art and transferred localities. Compared to this, Pakistani street names in the corpus seem to be more self-descriptive. Other notable commemorative contexts in Pakistani street names include local people, transferred localities and arts, academia and business – although they are less frequent.
- While Option 1 in the survey garnered 76 responses, options 2 and 3 garnered 139 responses in total. This indicates that there are more instances of nonuse of the new street names. Negative attitudes towards street renaming are almost two times as frequent positive attitudes.

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