

Review Paper on the Surname "Perera" – The Most Used Surname in Sri Lanka

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Abstract: Perera is the most common surname in Sri Lanka, despite being introduced by Portuguese colonisation centuries ago. The review investigates how Perera emerged in history together with its social impacts, geographical range, and linguistic background throughout time. This paper thoroughly examines Perera inside the Sri Lankan identity system by integrating historical evidence with linguistic data and population research. This review includes academic perspectives about surnames, colonial effects, and modern naming customs. The research paper outlines forthcoming investigation methods alongside the ethical aspects that should be addressed concerning surname heritage during future investigations.

Keywords: Perera; Sri Lanka; surname evolution; colonial influence; naming conventions

1. Introduction

1.1. Background Information

The surname serves as a fundamental element of personal identity because it expresses cultural background, social organisation, and historical events. The surname Perera dominates Sri Lankan society because it demonstrates the complex Portuguese colonial period that shaped the island (Chandralal, 2010; Hanks, Coates, & McClure, 2016).

The Perera surname originated from the Portuguese surname Pereira, which means “pear tree” (Hanks et al., 2016). According to Wanasundera (2002), Sri Lanka received the surname Perera through Portuguese colonial rule in the 16th and 17th centuries. Many Sinhalese took Portuguese last names during this period, which became widely accepted by the local population (Chandralal, 2010).

According to Wanasundera (2002), the Sinhalese took Portuguese surnames as much more than words because these naming practices revealed their deep cultural integration. This historical reality illustrates how colonial relationships shaped permanent reorderings of societal structures that blended Indigenous and colonial cultural elements. Within colonial settings, Hanks et al. (2016) explain how Portuguese surnames were assimilated into Sinhalese society, creating new cultural combinations of identity.

According to Chandralal (2010), Perera is the most common family name in Sri Lanka. There are 965,666 people with the surname Perera, while 1 in 22 individuals bear this name. Sri Lankan society continues to feel the extended effects of Portuguese colonisation because Portuguese surnames remain very popular. The Perera surname represents both family genealogies while giving expression to historical events that merged diverse cultures, according to Wanasundera (2002).

The widely used Perera surname in Sri Lanka reveals important aspects of regional colonial experiences, sociological adjustments, and linguistic development throughout history. This surname illustrates the lasting power of previous cultural contacts and how cultural identities transform due to continuous historical developments.

1.2. Objectives of the Review Paper

This paper aims to:

- Trace the origins and evolution of the surname *Perera* in Sri Lanka.
- Examine its sociocultural and caste-related implications.
- Analyze its geographical distribution and impact on Sri Lankan diaspora communities.
- Discuss theoretical perspectives on surname transmission and colonial influence.
- Propose future research directions for surname studies in Sri Lanka.

1.3. Research Importance

Studies about this topic maintain substantial importance for postcolonial studies and cultural anthropology since they aim to explain how colonial history shapes modern identity development. The research investigates how many and where the surname "Perera" initially appeared in Sri Lanka while studying its historical roots.

1. **Illuminate the Influence of Colonial Legacies on Modern Identities:** People often use surnames to show their cultural background and individual identity features. A study of how Perera gained wide use as a Portuguese-derived surname helps explain how colonial pasts formed and still affect personal and group identities within modern post-colonial societies. Research has established that colonialism shapes identity development and cultural absorption processes (Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o, 1986).
2. **Offer a Framework for Analysing Surname Distribution in Post-Colonial Contexts:** This research brings new methods for using surname statistics to trace past societal shifts in social class status, population movements, and social combination patterns. The research demonstrates a model for tracing colonial influence by studying Perera surname distribution and adoption patterns. This reflects both changes in naming customs and transformations in the social system structures of previous colonies (Clark et al., 2014).

This paper aims to deepen our understanding of the intricate ways in which colonial histories continue to shape contemporary identities and societal configurations by comprehensively reviewing the existing literature.

1.4. Research Questions

This study explores the role of surnames, particularly *Perera*, in shaping contemporary Sri Lankan identity and understanding the influence of colonial history. The key research questions guiding this investigation are:

1. How did Portuguese colonial rule contribute to adopting and widespread use of the surname *Perera* in Sri Lanka?
2. What role does the surname *Perera* play in contemporary Sri Lankan identity and social stratification?
3. How does surname distribution reflect historical colonial influence, migration, and cultural assimilation patterns in Sri Lanka?
4. What methodological approaches can be used to analyse surname distribution in post-colonial societies?
5. How do surnames like *Perera* compare to other colonial-influenced surnames in Sri Lanka regarding adoption, retention, and significance?

These research questions will guide the study's literature review, historical analysis, and contemporary examination of surname usage, providing a framework for understanding the lasting impact of colonial legacies on identity formation

2. Methodology

2.1. Research Design

This study adopts a **narrative literature review** approach to explore the origins, colonial influence, and sociocultural significance of surnames in Sri Lanka, particularly those linked to Portuguese colonisation. The narrative review method allows for a flexible, thematic synthesis of interdisciplinary literature across history, linguistics, sociology, and postcolonial studies.

2.1.1. Search Strategy

The review draws on diverse academic and archival sources to ensure breadth and contextual richness. The following databases and archives were consulted:

- **Google Scholar**
- **JSTOR**
- **PubMed**
- **Scopus**
- **Sri Lankan National Archives**

Search terms were tailored to capture a broad range of relevant literature and included Boolean operators such as:

- "Perera" AND "Sri Lanka"
- "Surname origin" AND "Portuguese influence"
- "Colonial surnames" OR "Sri Lankan naming traditions"
- "Caste system" AND "surname distribution"

2.1.2. Inclusion and Exclusion Criteria

Inclusion Criteria:

- Peer-reviewed articles focusing on Sri Lankan surnames
- Historical accounts of Portuguese colonial influence in Sri Lanka
- Sociocultural studies addressing Sri Lankan identity and caste dynamics

Exclusion Criteria:

- Studies unrelated to the Sri Lankan context
- Unverified or anecdotal genealogical sources

2.1.3. Data Extraction and Thematic Synthesis

Relevant literature and archival material were reviewed and categorised under emergent themes such as **etymology**, **colonial legacy**, **sociocultural meaning**, and **geographical distribution**. The thematic organisation facilitates a contextual understanding of how Portuguese colonisation influenced Sri Lankan naming systems, particularly in relation to caste and regional identity.

2.1.4. Limitations

This review acknowledges several limitations:

- Restricted access to original Portuguese colonial records
- Scarcity of large-scale quantitative studies on surname patterns in Sri Lanka
- Potential biases present in colonial-era documentation and retrospective interpretations

3. Literature Review

3.1. *Etymology and Origins*

The Portuguese word Pereira formed the basis of the surname Perera, meaning "pear tree" (Hanks et al., 2016). Sri Lanka received the Perera surname when Portugal controlled the island from 1505 through 1658, according to Wickramasinghe (2014). The Portuguese introduced family names to local communities, bringing Christians to their faith during this historic time (de Silva Jayasuriya, 2001). According to de Silva Jayasuriya, the widespread distribution of surnames Perera, Fernando and de Silva within Sinhalese and Tamil communities became possible because of this practice (2001).

3.2. *Colonial Influence and Adoption*

During their 1505–1658 dominance over Sri Lanka, the Portuguese changed cultural and social aspects of the islands by successfully converting many coastal community members to Christianity. Sinhalese in coastal Sri Lankan communities accepted Catholicism while taking Portuguese surnames, including Perera, Fernando, Silva, and De Souza, at that time of religious and social integration (de Silva Jayasuriya, 2001). The Portuguese authorities and missionaries used their assigned names to differentiate between Catholic converts and non-Christian populations while asserting colonial control over them (Wickramasinghe, 2014). The western and northern coastal areas saw widespread conversion movements, and this practice regularly occurred (Pearson, 2005).

During their respective rule (1658–1796 and 1796–1948), Dutch and British colonial powers had minimal influence on Sri Lankan naming practices compared to the substantial Portuguese impact. The Dutch colonial authorities adopted a trading-oriented approach while discouraging Catholicism but refrained from modifying Portuguese family names that had assimilated into local culture (de Silva, 1981). During their colonial presence, the British adopted administrative modernisation, yet their rule did not force extensive changes to naming traditions in Sri Lanka (Roberts, 2004). Several Portuguese-origin last names, including Perera, Fernando, and De Silva, continued to be widely used throughout Sri Lankan society because of the enduring impact of Portuguese colonial rule on identity maintenance (de Silva Jayasuriya, 2001; Wickramasinghe, 2014).

3.3. *Sociocultural Significance*

The surname **Perera** holds substantial sociocultural significance in Sri Lanka. It reflects intricate intersections of caste, religion, and evolving perceptions of social status.

Caste Associations

In Sri Lankan society, the Perera surname traditionally belongs to members of both the Goigama and Karava caste groups. Agricultural workers belong to the Goigama caste, which ranks at the top among Sinhalese people. During the Portuguese colonial era, the Karava caste adopted the surnames Perera, Fernando, and De Silva from maritime activities in their traditional occupations (Roberts, 1982).

Religious Links

Religious ties between Sri Lankan Catholics directly influenced people to take on the surname Perera. When the Portuguese ruled Sri Lanka between 1505 and 1658, many Sinhalese people changed their faith to Roman Catholicism and received Portuguese surnames to mark their new religious orientation, according to de Silva Jayasuriya (2001). The name Perera exists within the Sinhalese Buddhist community apart from its Catholic associations, as Wickramasinghe (2014) reported.

Perceptions and Status

At the outset, Perera served as a surname that raised social standing through its European roots. Surnames originally linked to European descent completely merged with the Sinhalese community until they ceased to carry any specific connection to European ancestry. Perera has become a commonly recognised Sinhala surname as Sri Lanka's population shifts its social structure (Wickramasinghe, 2014).

3.4. Geographical Distribution

The family name Perera follows a specific geographic pattern across Sri Lanka and throughout Sri Lankan communities worldwide. The distribution of the Perera surname aligns with colonial history, Sri Lanka's native migration patterns, and the worldwide resettlement of Sri Lankan populations.

Prevalence in Sri Lanka

According to Wickramasinghe (2014), Perera family members reside predominantly in the Western and Southern Sri Lankan provinces and primarily inhabit the cities of Colombo, Gampaha, and Negombo. During the Portuguese colonial period, most mass Christian conversions occurred in these historic areas that now bear many Perera, Fernando and Silva families (de Silva Jayasuriya, 2001). The economic role of Colombo, together with surrounding districts, has further concentrated the Perera family population because these areas operate as Sri Lanka's key commercial and administrative center (Roberts, 2004).

Presence in the Sri Lankan Diaspora

Christopher McDowell's 1996 work, "A Tamil Asylum Diaspora: Sri Lankan Migration, Settlement and Politics in Switzerland," provides a significant academic perspective on Sri Lankan migration during that period, though it focuses explicitly on Tamil migration to Switzerland. Sri Lankan surnames have spread across the globe because of post-independence migration, the ethnic conflict from 1983 to 2009, and economic possibilities abroad. The city centers of Melbourne and Sydney in Australia have extensive Sri Lankan populations, making Perera one of the prevalent surnames throughout those areas, according to Jayawardena (2021). The migration of Sri Lankans to the United Kingdom grew in the late 20th century, and Perera families primarily chose London and Birmingham as their new homes, according to Fernando (2012).

3.5. Review of Relevant Theories

Colonial Naming Theory:

The practice of naming under colonial rule created geographical place names (toponyms) and anthropological personal names (anthroponyms) in colonised areas through colonial power execution. The colonial powers employed naming to establish dominance and enforce new cultural identities on indigenous populations (Berg & Vuolteenaho, 2009; Brower, 2025).

Place Naming (Toponymy)

During European colonial rule, officials renamed geographical locations because the process helped them administrate new lands and gave honor to their rulers and leaders while implementing their language system. Through this practice, native place names were de-emphasised while colonial power was embedded onto topographic areas (Berg & Vuolteenaho, 2009). The political rulers of Sri Lanka, including the Portuguese, Dutch, and British authorities, changed place names and river and road names to display a combination of power maintenance and historical influence (Wickramasinghe, 2014). Officials used this naming practice specifically to destroy indigenous identities alongside their aim of strengthening colonial dominance (Berg & Vuolteenaho, 2009).

Personal Naming (Anthroponymy)

Implementing European surnames through Western colonial rule became a common practice for indigenous populations under conversion and bureaucracy requirements. The Portuguese colonial rule in Sri Lanka between 1505 and 1658 administered surnames Perera, Fernando and Silva to Catholic converts according to de Silva Jayasuriya (2001). The naming practice interrupted traditional naming patterns of Sinhalese and Tamil communities because they used to follow systems based on patrilineal descent and caste affiliations (Roberts, 1982). In African and Latin American colonial regions, European-style surnames were made official because they streamlined taxation operations and provided data using operations and land documentation (Brower, 2025). The colonial administration developed innovative naming procedures but removed indigenous names from their traditional cultural understanding (Berg & Vuolteenaho, 2009).

Implications and Resistance

Colonial authorities who imposed their names on native peoples eliminated indigenous identities while removing their historical connections. Indigenous groups now strive to restore their authentic names because it represents decolonisation efforts (Yellowhead Institute, 2019). The Sinhala community has accepted Perera surnames deeply while native naming restoration initiatives demonstrate global trends to recover pre-colonial cultural heritage, according to Wickramasinghe (2014). The process of returning indigenous names represents a potent movement of opposition because it revives the diluted cultural heritage that colonial control had attempted to erase (Brower, 2025).

Linguistic Evolution Theory:

Portuguese surnames in Sri Lanka underwent linguistic development, through which colonial names were adapted to match native phonetics and cultural customs. Changes in sounds, social assimilation, and religious conversions made alterations of Portuguese names possible, resulting in localised forms of originally Portuguese names (de Silva Jayasuriya, 2001; Wickramasinghe, 2014).

Adaptation of Portuguese Surnames

The Portuguese colonial rule from 1505 to 1658 saw the Portuguese authorities give Roman Catholic Sri Lankans their Portuguese last names. Sri Lankans modified their Portuguese surnames by allowing them to follow normal Sinhalese and Tamil phonetic pronunciation patterns (Roberts, 1982). The Portuguese surname Pereira developed into Perera through sound alteration, and Mendes metamorphosed into Mendis, and Pires evolved into either Peiris or Pieris (de Silva Jayasuriya, 2001). Local phonetics influenced the alteration of Portuguese surnames through linguistic changes that incorporated Sinhalese structural elements when utilising elements and vowels (Wickramasinghe, 2014).

Research shows that colloquial languages in the former Portuguese territories of Goa and Macau led to surname adaptations, according to Pearson (2005). Post-colonial societies exhibit this linguistic adaptation pattern, in which European names acquire local forms yet retain their traditional colonial origins.

Integration into Sinhalese Society

Many original Portuguese-based family names spread throughout Sri Lanka beyond their religious roots. Portuguese surnames achieved full integration within Sri Lankan society during the Dutch reign (1658–1796) and the British period (1796–1948), so they spread from Catholic communities into names adopted by Buddhists and other faith groups, according to Wickramasinghe (2014). Today, Perera, Fernando, and de Silva rank among the most prevalent surnames throughout

Sri Lanka, showing enduring Portuguese influence in the colonial period, as described by Roberts (1982).

The Portuguese colonial influence on Sri Lankan naming customs lasted throughout generations following their rule despite subsequent Dutch and British administration (de Silva Jayasuriya, 2001). The longevity of Portuguese surnames within Sri Lankan sociolinguistic customs demonstrates their assimilation beyond European ancestry toward representing a joint historical and cultural heritage (Pearson, 2005).

Sri Lanka witnessed historical changes in Portuguese surnames resulting from exhaustive linguistic and cultural integration processes. Phonetic changes and native naming practices assimilated these surname types, leading them to establish themselves as fundamental components of Sri Lankan cultural heritage. According to Wickramasinghe (2014), Perera names today show Portuguese and Sri Lankan cultural fusion instead of European ancestry.

Caste Mobility Theory:

The Caste Mobility Theory examines the means through which people and groups move up and down social ranks in stratified systems. Surname adoption and modification functioned as a significant factor for social mobility from colonial to post-colonial Sri Lanka as they reflected broader aspects of power dynamics, identity structures, and social classes (Roberts, 1982; Abeyrathne et al., 2017).

Colonial Era: Surname Adoption and Social Mobility

Sri Lankan society experienced substantial social structure changes when Portuguese (1505–1658), Dutch (1658–1796), and British (1796–1948) controlled the island. The colonial government maintained caste distinctions while implementing novel ways for people to gain social status through taking European surnames (Roberts, 1982). Various individuals and caste groups adopted Portuguese surnames, including Perera, Fernando, and de Silva, to improve their place in colonial society.

According to de Silva Jayasuriya (2001), members belonging to the Karava, Salagama, and Durava castes used Portuguese names to connect with colonial administrators while integrating into Christian elites. These communities used European surnames as a tool for social advancement to obtain better education opportunities, government positions, and trade advantages (Wickramasinghe, 2014).

Post-Colonial Period: Surname Modification and Identity Negotiation

Surnames maintained their function as indicators of caste background and social positioning after Sri Lanka gained independence in 1948. Sri Lankan society continued to hold caste-based discrimination in its substrata despite the decline in official systems of discrimination (Abeyrathne et al., 2017). People have changed their last names to hide their caste background because it enabled better social advancement.

Research shows that lower-status families took over surnames linked with the Goigama landowning caste, as per Roberts's conclusions (1982). People changed their last names to maintain social fairness in their jobs and educational prospects, as well as their findable spouse, because of caste discrimination (Abeyrathne et al., 2017). The enduring symbolic function of surnames serves to organise social interactions despite the fact that Sri Lanka has formally abolished the caste system (Wickramasinghe, 2014).

Implications for Social Mobility

Sri Lankan surname practices show that caste identities shift flexibly instead of staying fixed. According to de Silva Jayasuriya (2001), the strategic selection of naming patterns allowed people to maintain control of their social advancement under existing social frameworks. Contemporary social hierarchies in Sri Lanka change traditional understandings of static caste systems through their dependency on historical memory combined with colonial history and cultural adaptations (Wickramasinghe, 2014).

3.6. Theoretical Implications

Surname Homogenization:

The name Perera demonstrates how Sri Lanka received its standardised naming system from colonial rule. The introduction of Portuguese rule between 1505 and 1658 resulted in Sinhalese Catholics receiving Catholic surnames like Perera, which originated from Pereira, meaning pear tree (Mafaas, 2022). The implementation of Portuguese surnames served administrative needs and social assimilation purposes, which resulted in the modern Sri Lankan surname homogenisation (Mafaas, 2022).

Cultural Identity Formation:

Surnames function as strong indicators of cultural heritage, containing information about ancestry, religion, and family lineage paths. They operate beyond basic identification to represent heritage roots alongside community membership and functional roles, which influence both personal and shared identities, according to Roberts (1982) and Abeyrathne et al. (2017).

Historical Significance

Historical background often appears in surname types because names maintain ancestral occupational information, ancestral places of origin, and social position listings. During the colonial era of Sri Lanka (1505–1658), Portuguese surnames like Perera, Fernando, and De Silva spread widely because of imperial regulation and religious conversion practices (de Silva Jayasuriya, 2001). Through generations, these Portuguese surnames took root in Sri Lankan society, providing ongoing evidence about colonial relationships and transformations in power dynamics (Wickramasinghe, 2014).

Religious Identity

People in various cultural groups connect their surnames with their religious practices. Sri Lankan Catholics have retained Portuguese-origin surnames since the Spanish colonial era, which led to mass conversions (Roberts, 1982). Traditional surnames among Hindu and Buddhist communities of Sinhalese and Tamil descent expose religious and caste associations since they maintain religious and social distinctions, according to Abeyrathne et al. (2017). Surnames sometimes serve as indicators of religious lineage beyond Sri Lanka's borders.

Cultural and Ethnic Markers

The use of surnames functions as an ethnic marker which separates diverse communities from one another. According to de Silva Jayasuriya (2001), the surname Perera primarily indicated Catholic conversion in Sri Lanka, yet Buddhist use of this name has become widespread because of cultural identity changes. The historical evolution of naming protocols showcases how ethnicity changes over time through surname changes and transformations, according to Wickramasinghe (2014).

Social Structures and Mobility

The traditional family name becomes a social tool which affects how individuals obtain education and employment and whom they can marry. Some Sri Lankan families altered their family names during colonial and post-colonial times to place themselves under religious or caste systems which offered better social advantages (Abeyrathne et al., 2017). Research shows that name alterations for avoiding discrimination and societal norm conformism occur in Sri Lanka, India, Latin America, and the African diaspora (Roberts, 1982).

History, religion, and culture merge into surnames, which maintain lasting indicators of belonging and societal rank. Surnames throughout Sri Lanka and the world stem from every aspect of identity emergence (de Silva Jayasuriya, 2001; Wickramasinghe, 2014). Surnames carry historical and cultural meanings that help us comprehend how people and their communities build their identities in a continuously changing social environment.

Diaspora Identity:

Surnames function as essential cultural identity markers that Sri Lankan migrants use to maintain heritage connections, familial ties, and ethnic community bonds throughout migrations. Traditional surnames are preserved by diaspora members, who use them to establish cultural preservation while revealing identity challenges that occur when migrating to new environments.

Cultural Significance of Surnames

The traditional naming customs in Sri Lankan culture closely relate to family heritage, geographic ancestry, and social background categorisations. Names in Sri Lankan society contain deep historical details and social status information that reveal the family's original profession or place of origin or the profession of its members from previous generations. Surnames serve as markers of caste position for the Sinhalese people because they have developed connections to distinct social classes, according to de Silva (2009). Tamil surnames function to indicate specific caste identities as well as distinct regional origins, which establish both social position and membership to community groups (Dissanayake & McConatha, 2011).

Name Retention in the Diaspora

Sri Lankan immigrants strongly maintain their traditional family names because they help them stay connected to their ancestral traditions. High levels of name preservation are evident among Sri Lankan people who reside in multicultural environments, even though Westernization or renaming is prevalent in those areas. The practice shows deliberate measures for cultural preservation while sustaining family affiliations. The complexity and length of specific Sri Lankan surnames often create difficulties for those who migrate overseas because they might decide to adjust these names to improve their social and professional interactions (de Silva, 2009).

Implications for Identity and Integration

The presence of Sri Lankan diaspora members who keep their ancestral surnames during migration affects their connection to heritage and their adaptation to new environments. Traditional surnames remain an important daily practice which connects Sri Lankan migrants to their roots and strengthens their connection to the diaspora. Retaining traditional surnames creates opportunities to challenge multicultural demands as they fortify Sri Lankan cultural identity recognition. The practice respects ancestral heritage and simultaneously increases host countries' cultural complexity by adding new naming traditions and ancestral stories.

Prolonged use of surnames by Sri Lankan migrants transcends basic identification because they symbolize the extensive cultural heritage that exists alongside strong roots in their place of origin. Migrants purposely continue using their original names to demonstrate enduring cultural identity while maintaining it through various generations and distances.

4. Future Directions

4.1. Longitudinal Studies

Investigating the Evolution of 'Perera' Through Historical Records

Researchers studying the historical development of the prevalence of "Perera" surnames must examine birth records and population census databases. By utilising this method, researchers can identify surname selection trends, cultural adjustment data, and population changes. Numerous Sri Lankans hold the Perera surname derived from Pereira, which originated during the Portuguese colonial dominance between 1505–1658 (Abeyrathne et al., 2017). The surname "Perera" is the leading surname in Sri Lanka because it currently appears in the records of 965,666 people, making up 1 in every 22 residents (Forebears, n.d.). Research following the descendants of "Perera" members throughout generations helps scientists understand how the surname spreads across society while determining social and cultural adaptations throughout time.

4.2. Intervention Studies

Examining the Role of Educational Institutions and Government Policies in Surname Practices

The decision to maintain or change a surname depends heavily on the policies and systems set by educational institutions and governmental bodies. Sri Lankans modify their surnames to overcome prejudice and move up the social ladder because their current surnames indicate their caste standing, according to de Silva (2009). Research interventions should evaluate educational policies which support equality and anti-discrimination to determine their effects on decisions concerning surname modifications. The relationship between affirmative action policies and inclusive curricula with the perceived need for surname modification provides essential information about social equity efforts.

4.3. Ethical Frameworks

4.3.1. Addressing Ethical Considerations in Surname Changes and Research

Caste-Based Discrimination and Surname Changes

Sri Lankan people conduct surname changes mainly to escape cultural discrimination. Despite being illegal, the caste system impacts social activities in Sri Lanka, so individuals from lower castes modify their surnames to reduce discrimination (Silva et al., 2009). Such name alterations should be included in ethical frameworks as they evaluate personal rights against social equality objectives.

Privacy Concerns in Demographic Studies

The analysis of demographic data based on surnames produces privacy concerns when names are connected to private information about socioeconomic status and caste identification. Researchers must protect participant privacy through confidentiality practices and obtain informed consent under ethical standards to prevent harm or discrimination. Secure data protection methods need to be implemented because they help maintain research credibility and participant trust.

Future investigations should concentrate on these key elements to enhance knowledge about how the Sri Lankan surname "Perera" represents and affects social interactions in the nation and resolve the ethical issues related to such studies.

5. Discussion

This part analyses the research data regarding the surname Perera, its background, and cultural and sociological aspects in Sri Lanka. The investigation addresses five crucial research questions using historical studies and academic viewpoints to fully understand how the surname Perera developed historically and culturally.

5.1. How Did Portuguese Colonial Rule Contribute to Adopting and Widespread Using the Surname Perera in Sri Lanka?

During the Portuguese colonial rule of Sri Lanka between 1505 and 1658, local Sinhalese and Tamil families converted to Roman Catholicism and took Portuguese names. Perera as Christians adopted new religious and social affiliations (de Silva Jayasuriya, 2001). Missionaries and colonial administrators selected the names mainly for administrative purposes, including governance, taxation, and legal paperwork (Wickramasinghe, 2014).

According to Roberts (1982), Sri Lankan Catholic converts took up Portuguese surnames, including Perera, Fernando, and De Silva. The extensive use of Perera proves that colonial naming systems shaped how people defined themselves by adopting European family names, which became an integral part of Sri Lankan heritage.

Perera emerged as an especially common surname in coastal Sri Lanka, including the Colombo, Negombo, and Gampaha regions, because Portuguese influence reached its peak there (Pearson, 2005). Over time, this surname absorbed Sinhalese and Tamil demographic groups and shifted past its colonial origins to become widely popular across Sri Lanka (Wanasundera, 2002).

5.2. What Role Does the Surname Perera Play in Contemporary Sri Lankan Identity and Social Stratification?

Many Pereras exist in various religious groups, and their ancestry background has transcended into a Sinhalese family name (Wickramasinghe, 2014). Modern Sri Lankan identity formation traces its origins back to Perera because this surname assimilated into various communities regardless of caste and religious identities.

According to Roberts (1982), the traditional bearers of the Perera surname included various families belonging to the Goigama (agricultural caste) and Karava (maritime caste) castes. The surname system functions to sustain traditional caste-ranking systems in Sri Lankan society (Abeyrathne et al., 2017).

Decades ago, Perera was a term for Catholic converts, but today, it exists universally among Catholic and Buddhist Sri Lankans. The widespread acceptance of the Perera surname across different religions reflects cultural blending and social elevation between families since they used the name independent of their beliefs (de Silva Jayasuriya, 2001).

People historically interpreted Perera and similar surname bearers as representatives of colonial dominance and European heritage, thus assuming elevated social rank, according to Wickramasinghe (2014). Modern Sri Lanka does not attach any colonial significance to the name Perera but treats it as a normal Sinhala surname (Roberts, 1982).

5.3. How Does Surname Distribution Reflect Historical Colonial Influence, Migration, and Cultural Assimilation Patterns in Sri Lanka?

Historical migration movements and colonial control shaped both the native Sri Lankan distribution of the Perera surname and its occurrence in Sri Lankan communities worldwide.

The surname has its highest occurrence rates in the Western and Southern provinces and especially in cities like Colombo, Gampaha, and Negombo because these areas served as crucial Portuguese administrative and missionary centers (Wickramasinghe, 2014). The extension of the surname Perera throughout the country stems from the social movement of the population together with economic migration (Roberts, 2004).

Sri Lankan working professionals, together with their expatriate communities, migrated worldwide starting from British colonial times through today, which resulted in the spread of the Perera surname (Jayawardena, 2021).

According to Fernando (2012), Sri Lankan migrants who settled abroad have shown strong resistance to modifying their Perera surname while living in the diaspora because they recognize its essential role in preserving their cultural heritage abroad.

5.4. What Methodological Approaches Can Be Used to Analyze Surname Distribution in Post-Colonial Societies?

To study **surname distribution and evolution**, researchers can use several **methodological frameworks**:

1. Longitudinal Studies:

- Examining historical **census records, birth registries, and parish records** to track the **growth and spread** of the surname over centuries (Abeyrathne et al., 2017).

2. Quantitative Data Analysis:

- Using **surname frequency databases and GIS mapping** to visualise **regional concentrations and historical migrations** (Clark et al., 2014).

3. Ethnographic and Oral History Approaches:

- Conducting **interviews with Sri Lankan families** to understand **surname inheritance, social mobility, and identity formation** (Wickramasinghe, 2014).

4. Comparative Analysis with Other Colonized Societies:

- Studying surname patterns in **India, Goa, Macau, and Latin America** to compare **how colonial naming systems impacted different regions** (Pearson, 2005).

5.5. How Do Surnames Like Perera Compare to Other Colonial-Influenced Surnames in Sri Lanka Regarding Adoption, Retention, and Significance?

Comparison with Other Portuguese Surnames:

Perera is a surname of Portuguese origin in Sri Lanka, yet the names Fernando de Silva and Mendis have also spread extensively throughout the nation (de Silva Jayasuriya, 2001). All these names originated from colonial and religious backgrounds, although they appear at different frequency levels.

Retention Across Generations:

- **Perera** has shown **higher retention rates**, possibly due to **its early adoption and widespread use across multiple castes and religious groups** (Roberts, 1982).
- Some surnames, such as **De Souza**, have declined in use due to **association with European ancestry and elite colonial families** (Wickramasinghe, 2014).

Caste and Social Mobility:

- The **Perera surname** has transcended **caste barriers**, unlike certain other colonial surnames that remain **closely linked to specific caste groups** (Abeyrathne et al., 2017).
- Some families historically **modified their surnames** (e.g., adopting "Perera" instead of less socially accepted names) to enhance **social mobility and avoid caste-based discrimination** (de Silva, 1981).

6. Conclusion

6.1. Summary of Key Findings

The study of the surname **Perera** reveals significant insights into **colonial influence, sociocultural evolution, and identity formation** in Sri Lanka. The key findings are as follows:

Key Findings	Description
Portuguese origin and adoption of 'Perera'	Perera derived from the Portuguese 'Pereira' during colonial rule (1505–1658), became the most common surname in Sri Lanka.
Link to colonial history, religious conversion, and caste	Adoption of Perera influenced by Catholic conversion and caste mobility, notably among Goigama and Karava castes.
Widespread distribution in Sri Lanka and diaspora	Concentrated in Western and Southern Sri Lanka; widely retained by diaspora communities in UK, Australia, Canada, etc.
Supports multiple theoretical frameworks	Aligns with Colonial Naming Theory, Linguistic Evolution Theory, Caste Mobility Theory, and Diaspora Identity Theory.

The study aligns with several **theoretical frameworks**:

- Portuguese colonial rule applied the Colonial Naming Theory to standardise surnames, which it imposed primarily for administrative and religious functions, Berg & Vuolteenaho (2009) explain.
- According to the Linguistic Evolution Theory, Perera underwent a semantic shift from Pereira by adopting Sinhalese phonetics, though it maintained its Portuguese roots (de Silva Jayasuriya, 2001).
- Social mobility became possible through surname modification based on Caste Mobility Theory because this enabled people to separate themselves from their lower caste roots, according to Roberts (1982).
- Sri Lankan migrants preserve the Perera surname according to Diaspora Identity Theory to signify their culture and maintain heritage transfer throughout multiple generations of diaspora (Wickramasinghe, 2014).

A complete picture of colonial impact merges with religious conversions, caste practices, and linguistic adaptation to explain the surname Perera. The surname Perera continues to endure through history while staying prevalent from Sri Lanka to international areas thus demonstrating its essential role as part of Sri Lankan cultural heritage. Sociolinguistic research about surname distributions together with modern identity studies in post-colonial settings must remain a focus for future scholarly investigations.

6.2. Call to Action

The research establishes the importance of Polish surname adoption and surname distribution patterns, as well as ethical concerns in Sri Lankan society. Future research about surnames, such as Perera, must address questions of their historical development and societal effects.

1. More Historical Research on Portuguese Surname Adoption

The impact of Portuguese colonial influence on Sri Lankan surnames requires additional historical research regarding naming patterns, according to de Silva Jayasuriya (2001). Specifically, future research should:

- Studies should utilise Portuguese baptismal records, missionary documents, and colonial administration records to reveal the assignment processes of surnames.
- Research should detail how local people adopted surnames by assessing their freedom to choose names or the imposition of names (Roberts, 1982).
- The analysis of Sri Lankan surname practices will benefit from comparisons involving former Portuguese colonies Goa, Macau and Brazil to identify shared and distinct patterns of assimilation (Pearson, 2005).
- Historians examine archival records to gain detailed knowledge about the initial integration of Portuguese surnames into Sri Lankan cultural heritage (Wickramasinghe, 2014).

2. Large-Scale Demographic Studies on Sri Lankan Surname Distributions

At present, research on Sri Lankan surnames focuses mainly on historical sources combined with qualitative evaluation methods. Additional research is needed with quantitative approaches to study how Perera and other names spread throughout Sri Lanka (Abeyrathne et al., 2017). Future studies should:

- Nationwide surveys about surnames need to be conducted through census records, electoral registers, and civil registration databases to monitor how surnames spread across the country (Clark et al., 2014).
- GIS mapping should illustrate the geographical patterns of colonial surnames that extend from Sri Lanka into the Sri Lankan diaspora worldwide (Jayawardena, 2021).
- The research should demonstrate how specific surnames link to economic position, the circulation of castes, and educational achievements (Roberts, 1982).
- A large quantitative study of Sri Lankan surnames will generate statistical findings about how colonial and indigenous naming traditions transform Sri Lankan identity (Wickramasinghe, 2014).

3. Ethical Considerations Regarding Surname Discrimination

Surname-based discrimination is a severe social problem in Sri Lanka that affects opportunities in jobs and personal relations (Abeyrathne et al., 2017).

Future research should address:

Some surnames continue to link to distinct caste groups; thus, people experience discrimination or receive preferential treatment while working and interacting professionally (Silva et al., 2009).

Academic research must assess which current anti-discrimination laws properly handle name-related discrimination named in Sri Lankan law systems (Wickramasinghe, 2014).

Studies conducting surname research that utilises demographic information encounter privacy and ethical dilemmas because data collection involves caste or socioeconomic elements (Clark et al., 2014). Research operators need to follow ethical data collection methods alongside the requirement to gain consent and anonymize personal information to prevent possible abuses.

Future studies need to determine if naming-based discrimination continues throughout modern Sri Lankan society or if historical prejudices started to diminish according to Abeyrathne et al. (2017).

6.3. Conclusion

The Perera surname functions as a critical case study of how colonial power and societal differences shaped and adjusted cultural traits within Sri Lanka.

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