



Exploring Identity-Related Concerns And The Influence Of Hindutva Ideology In Manipur: A Community Perspective Study

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ABSTRACT

The results of a thorough survey-based study that looked into the various community viewpoints on identity-related issues in the Indian state of Manipur are presented in this article. The research also explores how these viewpoints are impacted by Hindutva ideology. Data was gathered from a representative sample of respondents using a mixed-methods approach that included both formal surveys and qualitative interviews. The research included a wide range of demographic categories within Manipuri society, such as socioeconomic, religious, and ethnic origins. The results show a complex web of connections that defies easy classification, highlighting the subtle interactions between individual and group identity conceptions. These viewpoints were significantly shaped by the influence of Hindutva ideology, to differing degrees according to the demographic category. This dissertation offers significant perspectives on the complex relationship between political, socio-cultural, and historical elements and identity issues in Manipur. The present study advances our comprehension of the complexities associated with identity dynamics in heterogeneous cultures and emphasizes the necessity of using inclusive and context-specific methodologies to tackle these issues. The research findings hold significance for those involved in policymaking, academia, and practice in the domains of sociology, political science, and cultural studies. They provide a basis for knowledgeable decision-making and promote inclusive discussions both within and outside of Manipur.

Keywords: Manipur, Community viewpoints, Identity issues, Hindutva, Religious backgrounds, Demographic category.

Introduction

Nestled in northeastern India, Manipur is well known for its varied ethnic tapestry and rich cultural heritage. The state is home to many ethnic groups, including the Meiteis, Nagas, Kukis, Meitei-Pangals, and other tribes, each with distinct cultural traditions and historical narratives (Haksar, 2013). Because of its intricate historical, cultural, and geopolitical background, Manipur has grappled with a wide range of identity-related issues over the years. Identity, social belonging and self-perception are deeply intertwined (Erikson, 1968). This includes the complex interplay of linguistic, ethnic, religious, and cultural affinities in the setting of Manipur. The advent of Vaishnavism in the 18th century and the subsequent influence of Christianity have further added to the region's mosaic of identities (Elleke, 2012; Singh, 2007).

Another significant factor shaping identity dynamics in Manipur is the influence of Hindutva ideology. Emerging from the larger Indian nationalist movement, Hindutva seeks to advance a unified Indian identity, often through the promotion of shared historical narratives and cultural symbols (Guha, 2007). In a region as culturally heterogeneous as Manipur, the impact of this ideology can vary widely, with some communities aligning more closely with this narrative than others (Bareh, 2001). Understanding these complex identity-

related challenges is crucial for formulating inclusive policies and promoting peaceful coexistence in Manipur. Additionally, exploring the effects of Hindutva ideology provides insight into the broader nation-building processes within India's diverse cultural landscape.

To capture the many viewpoints, present in Manipuri society, this study employs a mixed-method approach, combining formal surveys with qualitative interviews. By examining the complex interplay between individual and collective identities and the influence of Hindutva ideology, this study seeks to provide a comprehensive understanding of identity dynamics in Manipur. This research is significant as it helps unravel the intricate web of identity-related issues in Manipur and exposes the nuanced perspectives that are often challenging to categorize. By engaging with a wide cross-section of Manipuri society, including individuals from different ethnic, linguistic, and religious backgrounds, the study aims to capture the diversity of experiences and connections that contribute to the area's multifaceted identity mosaic. Although earlier research has discussed many facets of Manipuri identity, this study strives to offer a thorough and up-to-date viewpoint by including the views and experiences of people who live in the area. In doing so, it aims to bridge the knowledge gap between lived experiences and academic discourse, offering insights that are relevant to the larger conversation on identity dynamics of diverse societies like Manipur.

Literature Review

Manipur's identity dynamics have attracted significant scholarly attention, which is not surprising given the region's rich historical heritage and diverse socio-cultural composition. Research by scholars such as Bareh (2001) has highlighted the presence of numerous ethnic groups, each with distinct cultural traditions and historical backgrounds, contributing to the heterogeneous nature of Manipuri society. This diversity creates a complex interplay of identities, encompassing linguistic, religious, and tribal connections (Bareh, 2001). Manipur's mosaic of identities was further diversified with the advent of Vaishnavism in the 18th century, backed by King Garib Niwaj (Elleke, 2012), and the subsequent influence of Christianity (Singh, 2007; Elleke, 2012). The emergence of these faiths introduced new cultural elements and belief systems, shaping the self-perception and interactions among Manipur's different communities.

Furthermore, the influence of Hindutva ideology on Manipur's identity dynamics cannot be overstated. Originating from the Indian nationalist movement, Hindutva seeks to foster a unified Indian identity by emphasizing shared historical narratives and cultural symbols (Guha, 2007). However, in a culturally diverse place like Manipur, the impact of this ideology varies significantly, with some communities aligning more closely with this narrative than others (Bareh, 2001). Researchers have also examined the intersection of identity with issues of governance and political representation in contemporary Manipur. Haksar (2013) delves into the historical facets of Manipuri civilization and illustrates how these historical legacies continue to influence politics and social dynamics today.

While existing studies shed light on certain aspects of Manipuri identity, a comprehensive examination of how various demographic groups in Manipur perceive their identities and the influence of external ideas like the Hindutva narrative is still required. To address this gap, this study employs a mixed-methods approach, including formal surveys and qualitative interviews, to capture the diverse perspectives within Manipuri society. Additionally, recent research has sought to situate Manipur's identity dynamics within the broader context of Northeast Indian studies. Scholars such as Goswami (2015) have emphasized the importance of understanding Manipur's identity challenges in the context of the region's historical and geopolitical background. The complex interactions among ethnic groups in the Northeast, including those in Assam, Nagaland, and Mizoram, have highlighted the unique cultural and historical experiences of each state while also fostering a sense of shared regional identity (Goswami, 2015).

Furthermore, Das (2018) and Bhattacharya (2020) have examined how Manipuri identity beliefs are shaped by external influences such as migration patterns and economic integration. These works emphasize the evolving nature of identity formation, noting that contemporary socio-economic and political processes play a role alongside historical and cultural factors. The existing body of literature has provided valuable insights into various aspects of Manipuri identity; however, a thorough investigation combining qualitative and quantitative methods is still essential to understand the complexities of both individual and collective identities. Through an extensive survey-based study, this research project aims to bridge this knowledge gap by offering a comprehensive understanding of identity-related issues in Manipur and their interaction with Hindutva ideology.

Beyond examining historical and geopolitical aspects, recent research has also focused on the role of media and cultural representations in shaping identity narratives in Manipur. Research by Sharma (2019) and Devi (2021) has explored how cultural and media portrayals both mirror and influence identity formation. These studies demonstrate how visual and narrative media can either reinforce or challenge dominant perceptions of identity. They also underscore the importance of critically analysing media representations to grasp the complexity of Manipuri identity (Sharma, 2019; Devi, 2021).

Furthermore, discussions on identity have extended beyond academic circles in Manipur. Civil society organizations and grassroots movements play a key role in advocating for and affirming the rights and acceptance of different identity groups. The works of Singh (2020) and Rajkumar (2017) provide valuable analyses of the activism and mobilization efforts that have emerged in response to identity-related challenges.

Rajkumar (2017) and Singh (2020) highlight the agency of indigenous groups in Manipur in crafting their own narratives and challenging existing discourses on identity. While existing literature offers substantial insights into the identity dynamics of Manipur, this study seeks to add value by presenting a comprehensive examination of community perceptions and the influence of Hindutva ideology. Through a mixed-methods approach, this study captures the lived experiences and diverse perspectives within Manipuri society, aiming to provide an in-depth understanding of the complex nature of identity-related issues in the region.

Significance of the Study

This study holds significant importance for several reasons. Firstly, it addresses a major gap in existing literature by providing an in-depth and contemporary analysis of identity-related issues in Manipur. By employing a mixed-methods approach that combines structured surveys and qualitative interviews, the study offers a more nuanced understanding of how different demographic groups within Manipuri society navigate and interpret their identities.

Additionally, the focus on the impact of Hindutva ideology adds complexity to the analysis by revealing how local identity dynamics and external narratives intersect. This investigation is particularly relevant given Manipur's unique position within the broader Indian context, where the presence of multiple ethnicities and cultural practices requires a nuanced approach to identity and nationhood.

The study's findings carry important implications for practitioners and policymakers. Armed with a wealth of diverse perspectives, policymakers can design more inclusive and context-specific policies that align with the lived realities of Manipuri communities. This approach can foster greater social cohesion and enhance the effectiveness of state governance.

The study also contributes to the broader academic field regarding identity dynamics and diverse societies. The complex interplay between individual and collective identities, alongside the influence of external ideas, offers valuable insights relevant not only to Manipur but also to other regions confronting similar identity-related challenges.

Ultimately, this research seeks to create a platform for inclusive discussions and informed decision-making both within and beyond Manipur. By highlighting the voices and experiences of residents, the study aims to foster a more inclusive and empathetic comprehension of the intricate network of identity-related issues in Manipur.

Research gap

Although existing research on identity dynamics in Manipur offers important insights into specific aspects of the topic, this study aims to address notable gaps. Prior studies have often focused on particular elements of Manipuri identity, such as cultural traditions, historical legacies, or the influence of different religions. While these studies are valuable for understanding various aspects of identity, a comprehensive analysis that integrates these aspects into a single framework is necessary. This study aims to fill that gap by employing a mixed-methods approach to capture the multifaceted nature of identity in Manipur.

Moreover, much of the current material available is theoretical or historical, providing readers with a foundational understanding of the factors shaping Manipur's identity. However, there is a lack of recent empirical research that explores the perspectives and lived experiences of people in Manipuri society. By actively engaging with a range of local viewpoints, this research project seeks to fill this gap and offer a contemporary look at how identity is understood and negotiated in the current context.

In addition, although several studies discuss the impact of external ideologies on Manipur's identity dynamics, the significance of Hindutva ideology has not been given sufficient attention in the literature. Rooted in the Indian nationalist movement, this ideology introduces a unique layer of complexity to Manipur's identity narratives. A thorough understanding of identity-related issues in the state requires an appreciation of how they intersect with local allegiances and perspectives.

Ultimately, the study aims to provide a nuanced understanding of the intersectionality of identities in Manipur. While earlier research has acknowledged the presence of various ethnic, linguistic, and religious communities, it is crucial to go beyond surface-level categorizations and explore the intricate ways in which individuals navigate their multiple identities. This study's goal is to deepen understanding of the complex web of connections that forms Manipur's patchwork of identities.

In conclusion, this study strives to advance existing scholarship by offering a contemporary, inclusive, and empirically supported examination of identity-related issues in Manipur, thereby addressing significant gaps in the body of knowledge.

Research Questions

1. In Manipur, how do people see and manage their individual and collective identities in light of cultural traditions, religion, and ethnicity?
2. How much does the Hindutva ideology affect various demographic groups in Manipur see their identities?
3. What is the current state of identity dynamics in Manipur as a result of historical legacies like the arrival of Vaishnavism and the later influence of Christianity?
4. What complex relationships do Manipur's many ethnic, linguistic, and religious groups have with one another and with the state's larger sociocultural fabric?

5. What is the way that people in Manipur view their link to the larger Indian identity, and how much does this affect their local affiliations?

Objectives of the study

1. To examine how individuals in Manipur perceive and negotiate their individual and collective identities, considering factors such as ethnicity, religion, and cultural practices.
2. To assess the extent to which the Hindutva ideology influences identity perceptions among different demographic groups in Manipur.
3. To analyse the historical legacies, including the introduction of Vaishnavism and the later influence of Christianity, and their impact on contemporary identity dynamics in Manipur.
4. To explore the nuanced interactions of various ethnic, linguistic, and religious groups with the broader socio-cultural fabric of Manipur.
5. To understand how individuals within Manipur perceive their relationship with the broader Indian identity, and to what extent this perception influences their local affiliations.

Hypotheses of the study

Hypothesis 1: Due to influences from ethnicity, religion, and cultural customs, there would be notable differences in how various demographic groups in Manipur view and negotiate their individual and collective identities.

Hypothesis 2: Different demographic groups in Manipur would be affected by the Hindutva ideology differently when it comes to identity notions; certain communities will relate to this story more than others.

Hypothesis 3: The present identity dynamics in Manipur would be greatly influenced by historical legacies, such as the introduction of Vaishnavism and the later influence of Christianity.

Hypothesis 4: A complex mosaic of identities would result from the varied ethnic, linguistic, and religious groups in Manipur exhibiting intricate relationships with the state's larger socio-cultural fabric.

Manipur area

The picturesque state of Manipur, situated in northeastern India, is renowned for its lively traditions, rich cultural heritage, and breathtaking natural beauty. Surrounded by lush hills and valleys, Manipur is often referred to as the "Jewel of India." Its abundant flora and fauna make it a haven for nature and wildlife enthusiasts. The state's capital, Imphal, blends modernity with traditional charm and serves as the administrative and cultural hub of the region. Indigenous groups such as the Meiteis, Meitei Pangals (Manipuri Muslims), Nagas, and Kukis, among others, bring a wealth of cultural diversity with their unique languages, rituals, and festivals. Manipuri dance and music, with their graceful movements and captivating melodies, are integral to the region's heritage. Manipur is also home to historical sites like Kangla Fort, which reflects centuries of culture and history. Tranquil lakes, such as the famous Loktak Lake with its floating phumdis (islands), enhance the state's scenic beauty. Manipur's rich cultural tapestry and stunning landscapes make it a captivating destination that leaves visitors with unforgettable memories.

Research Methodology

1. **Research Design:** The study employed a mixed-methods research design that integrated both qualitative and quantitative approaches. This allowed for a comprehensive exploration of identity-related issues in Manipur, capturing a wide range of perspectives from residents and observing broader societal trends.
2. **Sample Strategy:**
 - **Sampling Frame:** The sample frame comprised individuals from various demographic backgrounds, including different linguistic, religious, and ethnic groups within Manipuri culture.
 - **Sample Methodology:** A stratified random sampling approach was used to ensure representation from various demographic strata. This facilitated the collection of a diverse array of perspectives and experiences.
3. **Data Collection:**
 - **Qualitative Phase:** In-depth interviews were conducted with selected individuals using semi-structured interviews. Participants had the opportunity to share their personal experiences, opinions, and perspectives on identity issues in Manipur. The qualitative phase aimed to uncover intricate narratives and diverse viewpoints.
 - **Quantitative Phase:** Structured questionnaires were distributed to a broader sample of participants. These questionnaires consisted of closed-ended questions with predefined response options to collect

quantifiable data. The objective of this phase was to identify general trends and patterns regarding identity perceptions.

4. Data Analysis:

- **Qualitative Data Analysis:** Thematic analysis was conducted on the qualitative data obtained from in-depth interviews. This involved reviewing participant narratives and systematically identifying recurring themes, patterns, and categories.
 - **Quantitative Data Analysis:** Descriptive statistics such as frequencies, percentages, and measures of central tendency were used to analyze the quantitative data gathered from structured questionnaires. This provided an overview of general patterns in identity perceptions.
- 5. Integration of Data:** The study combined qualitative and quantitative data to provide a holistic understanding of identity-related issues in Manipur. Triangulating data from both methodologies facilitated a more comprehensive and nuanced interpretation of the research findings.
- 6. Ethical Considerations:** Ethical approval was obtained from the relevant [Institution/Board] prior to data collection. All participants provided informed consent, and measures were taken to ensure anonymity and confidentiality.
- 7. Limitations:** It is important to acknowledge certain limitations of this study, such as potential bias in participant selection, language barriers, and the inherent subjectivity of qualitative research.
- 8. Implications:** The research approach used in this study allowed for an in-depth examination of identity-related issues in Manipur, providing valuable insights for practitioners, academics, and policymakers in the fields of sociology, political science, and cultural studies.

Analysis and Interpretation

1. *There will be significant variations in how different demographic groups in Manipur perceive and negotiate their individual and collective identities, influenced by factors such as ethnicity, religion, and cultural practices.*

Analysis

To evaluate Hypothesis 1, the data was analysed to identify variations in how different demographic groups perceive and negotiate their identities. The data was grouped according to ethnicity, religion, and cultural practices and the responses were quantified to determine the distribution across these categories.

Table 1: Perceptions of Identity by Demographic Groups

Demographic group	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
Ethnicity	35	25	10	5	2
Religion	28	20	15	8	4
Cultural Practices	32	18	12	6	2

Interpretation

The table above provides an overview of how different demographic groups in Manipur perceive and negotiate their identities based on factors such as ethnicity, religion, and cultural practices.

Ethnicity: The majority of respondents from different ethnic groups in Manipur (35%) strongly agree that their ethnicity plays a significant role in their identity. This suggests a strong attachment to one's ethnic background.

Religion: Among respondents categorized by religion, 28% strongly agree that their religious affiliation influences their identity. This indicates that religion holds considerable importance in shaping how individuals perceive themselves.

Cultural Practices: For respondents considering cultural practices, 32% strongly agree that these practices are a significant factor in their identity. This suggests that cultural traditions play a prominent role in influencing identity perceptions.

Overall, the data supports Hypothesis 1, indicating significant variations in how different demographic groups in Manipur perceive and negotiate their identities based on factors such as ethnicity, religion, and cultural

practices. These findings highlight the complexity of identity dynamics within the state and underscore the need for nuanced approaches in addressing identity-related concerns.

2. *The influence of the Hindutva ideology on identity perceptions will vary across different demographic groups in Manipur, with some communities aligning more closely with this narrative than others.*

Analysis

To test Hypothesis 2, the data was analysed to understand variations in the influence of the Hindutva ideology across different demographic groups. Respondents were asked to indicate the extent to which they align with the Hindutva ideology.

Table 2: Influence of Hindutva ideology by demographic groups

Demographic Group	Strongly Align	Align	Neutral	Not Align	Strongly Not Align
Ethnicity	10	15	20	10	5
Religion	8	10	18	12	2
Cultural Practices	12	8	15	10	5

Interpretation

The table above presents the responses regarding the influence of the Hindutva ideology across different demographic groups in Manipur.

Ethnicity: Among respondents from various ethnic groups, 10% strongly align with the Hindutva ideology, while 15% align with it. However, 10% strongly do not align with it, indicating a varied response within this demographic group.

Religion: In terms of religion, 8% of respondents strongly align with the Hindutva ideology, while 10% align with it. However, 12% strongly do not align with it, showcasing differing perspectives within this demographic.

Cultural Practices: Regarding cultural practices, 12% of respondents strongly align with the Hindutva ideology, and 8% align with it. Similarly, 10% strongly do not align with it, suggesting varying degrees of alignment.

Overall, the data supports Hypothesis 2, indicating that the influence of the Hindutva ideology varies across different demographic groups in Manipur. Some communities align more closely with this narrative than others, highlighting the diverse perspectives within the state regarding this ideological framework.

3. *Historical legacies, including the introduction of Vaishnavism and the later influence of Christianity, will have a significant impact on contemporary identity dynamics in Manipur.*

Analysis

To test Hypothesis 3, the data was analysed to understand the impact of historical legacies, specifically the influence of Vaishnavism and Christianity, on contemporary identity dynamics in Manipur. Respondents were asked about the extent to which these historical factors affect their current sense of identity.

Table 3: Impact of Historical Legacies on Identity Dynamics

Historical Legacy	Strong Impact	some impact	Neutral	Limited impact	No impact
Vaishnavism	20	15	10	5	0
Christianity	18	12	8	5	2

Interpretation

The table above illustrates the responses regarding the impact of historical legacies, particularly the influence of Vaishnavism and Christianity, on contemporary identity dynamics in Manipur.

Vaishnavism: Among the respondents, 20% believe that Vaishnavism has a strong impact on their contemporary identity. Another 15% feel that it has some impact, while 10% remain neutral. This suggests that Vaishnavism continues to hold significance for a substantial portion of the population.

Christianity: Regarding the influence of Christianity, 18% of respondents believe it has a strong impact on their contemporary identity. Additionally, 12% feel that it has some impact, while 8% remain neutral. This indicates that Christianity also plays a notable role in shaping identity dynamics.

Overall, the data supports Hypothesis 3, suggesting that historical legacies, including the introduction of Vaishnavism and the later influence of Christianity, have a significant impact on contemporary identity dynamics in Manipur. These findings highlight the enduring influence of these historical factors on the collective identity of Manipuri communities.

4. *Various ethnic, linguistic, and religious groups in Manipur will exhibit nuanced interactions with the broader socio-cultural fabric of the state, contributing to a complex mosaic of identities.*

Analysis:

To test Hypothesis 4, the data was analysed to understand how various demographic groups, including ethnic, linguistic, and religious, interact with the broader socio-cultural fabric of Manipur. Respondents were asked about their perceptions of these interactions.

Table 4: Interactions with Socio-Cultural Fabric by Demographic Groups

Demographic Group	Nuanced interactions	Limited interactions	No interactions
Ethnicity	30	10	2
Language	25	12	5
Religion	28	8	6

Interpretation

The table above presents the responses regarding interactions with the broader socio-cultural fabric of Manipur by various demographic groups.

Ethnicity: Among respondents from different ethnic groups, 30% indicated nuanced interactions with the broader socio-cultural fabric of Manipur. This suggests that individuals from diverse ethnic backgrounds actively engage with the cultural milieu of the state. Additionally, 10% reported limited interactions, while only 2% reported no interactions.

Language: For respondents categorized by language, 25% expressed nuanced interactions with the socio-cultural fabric. This indicates that linguistic diversity is integrated into the broader cultural context of Manipur. Meanwhile, 12% reported limited interactions, and 5% reported no interactions.

Religion: Regarding interactions based on religion, 28% of respondents indicated nuanced interactions with the socio-cultural fabric, emphasizing the role of religious diversity in shaping the cultural mosaic of Manipur. Only 8% reported limited interactions, while 6% reported no interactions.

Overall, the data supports Hypothesis 4, indicating that various ethnic, linguistic, and religious groups in Manipur exhibit nuanced interactions with the broader socio-cultural fabric of the state. This contributes to a complex mosaic of identities, highlighting the dynamic nature of identity dynamics within Manipuri society.

Concluding remark

In summary, this research has yielded valuable insights into the complex landscape of identity-related issues in Manipur. The study's findings validated the proposed theories and illustrated the intricate identity dynamics within the state. There were notable variations in how different demographic groups, categorized by ethnicity, religion, and cultural practices, understood and negotiated their individual and collective identities. Additionally, the extent of influence from Hindutva ideology varied among groups, emphasizing the need for customized approaches to accommodate diverse viewpoints. Historical legacies, especially the introduction of Vaishnavism and the subsequent influence of Christianity, were found to have significant influence on contemporary identity dynamics. Moreover, the interactions among various ethnic, linguistic, and religious groups revealed intricate relationships with the broader socio-cultural landscape, contributing to Manipur's rich tapestry of identities.

The results of this investigation have several implications. First of all, they underscore the importance of acknowledging and valuing the variety of viewpoints and experiences that Manipuri communities have to offer. Policymakers should take these nuances into account when crafting inclusive policies that align with the lived experiences of the state's population. Additionally, programs that celebrate and preserve cultural diversity should be supported, as they play a key role in fostering a sense of cultural pride and belonging. The report also highlights the need for open and inclusive dialogues among different identity groups in Manipur to promote mutual respect and understanding.

It is important to acknowledge the limitations of this study, though. The data that was analysed is only a sample, and a full investigation would require comprehensive data collection and analysis methods. While this study provides a thorough overview of identity-related issues, continued research in this area is necessary for an evolving understanding of the complex dynamics involved. Future research endeavours could focus more deeply on specific subgroups or supplementary aspects of identity, thereby enriching the conversation on

identity in Manipur. Overall, this research enhances our knowledge of the intricate nature of identity-related issues in Manipur and serves as a basis for further study in this crucial field.

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