

## The Impact of Discrimination Against Black Haafu in Japanese on Youtube by The Black Experience Japan: I Kept Telling Him, I'm Half Japanese, Not A Foreigner

<sup>1</sup>Nadya Hanifatin Nabela, <sup>2</sup>Pipiet Furisari

<sup>1</sup>Universitas Dian Nuswantoro, Semarang, Indonesia

<sup>2</sup>Universitas Dian Nuswantoro, Semarang, Indonesia

([312202000927@mhs.dinus.ac.id](mailto:312202000927@mhs.dinus.ac.id))

**Abstract.** *Haafu* is a term used in Japan to refer to individuals who have a mixed ethnic or racial background, especially those who have one Japanese parent and one parent from a different country or culture. Discriminatory actions by Japanese society against black *haafu* individuals have significant repercussions, motivating the author to undertake this study. The author uses Fulthoni's types of discrimination theory (2009) and the social anxiety theory from La Greca and Lopez (1998) to analyze the discrimination and impacts experienced by sources on YouTube by The Black Experience Japan: I Kept Telling Him, I'm Half, Not A Foreigners are Ark and Raimu. The research method used by the author is a descriptive qualitative method with the data source being the YouTube by The Black Experience Japan: I Kept Telling Him, I'm Half, Not A Foreigner. The results of this research prove that black *haafu* often receive types of verbal racial discrimination, such as being called "*gaijin*" or foreigners, "black monkeys", even being shouted at "just go back to your country!". This has an impact on the psychology of black *haafu* people, they experience social anxiety, such as stress, feeling uncomfortable, and even a decrease in self-confidence.

**Keywords:** black *haafu*, discrimination, japan, racial

### RESEARCH BACKGROUND

*Haafu* is a term used in Japan to refer to individuals who have a mixed ethnic or racial background, especially those who have one Japanese parent and one parent from a different country or culture. This term originates from the English word "half" to signify that these individuals are regarded as half Japanese and half of another ethnic group.

According to Yelni Rahmawati et al. (2022: 35-39), mixed-race populations are often not regarded favorably by those who identify themselves as 'pure Japanese race'. Hence, it is not surprising that the term '*haafu*' was previously considered derogatory in Japanese culture, indicating that mixed-race individuals are frequently treated unfairly and unequally in Japanese society. *Haafu* communities often encounter discriminatory behaviors, both verbal and non-verbal. Sarcastic epithets such as 外人 (*gaijin*), meaning "foreigner," are not uncommonly directed at them within their surroundings. This makes them feel alienated in their own country. *Haafu* individuals are marginalized in Japan because they are judged based on Japanese characteristics. For instance, some women in Japan choose to avoid sunlight exposure and even use skin-whitening products to achieve pale skin, mimicking Western beauty standards. In contemporary Japanese beauty standards, the common ideals include as fair and flawless skin, slim and proportional body, long legs, and calm personality (Weiner in Kana Yamamoto, 2015).

According to Supriyadi (2018), physically, black *haafu* individuals can be distinguished from native Japanese people. The notable differences in black *haafu* include a tendency to have slightly darker skin compared to the general Japanese population. Additionally, black *haafu* individuals often have round eyes, whereas native Japanese people typically have almond-shaped eyes. *Haafu* generations

are categorized into four generations: *Issei* (first-generation *haafu*), *Nisei* (second-generation *haafu*), *Sansei* (third-generation *haafu*), and *Yonsei* (fourth-generation *haafu*). In the 1970s, many *haafu* individuals ventured into the entertainment industry as models, actors, singers, athletes, journalists, sports commentators, and news presenters. However, Japanese society still struggles to fully accept or be open to the presence of *haafu* individuals in Japan.

In the summer of 2020, conversations regarding the Black Lives Matter movement spread through Twitter, noting that "discrimination in Japan is not as severe as in the United States." A survey conducted by the Korea Scholarship Foundation in December 2019, involving 1,030 Korean respondents, revealed that 73% of those who were subjected to discriminatory words and actions expressed feeling offended. Additionally, 30.9% acknowledged experiencing 'verbal harassment,' such as being shouted at to "go back to their home country", "go out of Japan" in public spaces, while 21.3% reported feeling anxious and fearful about living in Japan. Takahiro Akedo, a sociologist and researcher specially assigned to analyze the survey results at Hosei University, noted that individuals directly experiencing discrimination through words and actions tend to harbor self-loathing. He also observed that those who witness online hate speech or hate demonstrations on the streets tend to hold negative views of Japanese society. Cho Kyongho, a research assistant at Hosei University who was also involved in survey analysis, stated that discrimination has significant emotional repercussions on victimized students, and in some cases, could even lead to suicidal tendencies. (Mainichi Japan, 2021)

Several factors underlie this phenomenon, including *sakoku* or isolationist policies. During the Tokugawa government in the *Edo* period, Japan implemented a policy of isolation known as *sakoku*, which lasted from 1633 to 1854. According to Miranti Artarina (2021: 47-48), this policy not only led to Japan's isolation from foreign trade but also resulted in its society becoming closed off and isolated from cultural diversity. In addition to the *sakoku* policy, we can see this mindset reflected in the familiar Japanese proverb "出る杭は打たれる" (*deru kui ga utareru*), which translates to "the nail that sticks out gets hammered down." This proverb illustrates the Japanese society's tendency to avoid differences and desire for everyone to adhere to established social standards to maintain harmony in communal life. This attitude of homogeneity then becomes the root of the discrimination issues that have persisted in Japan since the *Edo* period.

## REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

According to Fulthoni et al. (2009), discrimination involves unfair treatment towards individuals or groups. Differences in treatment can arise from factors such as skin color, social background, ethnicity, gender, economic status, religion, and others. Some common forms of discrimination that often occur in society include:

1. Discrimination against AIDS sufferers. For example, AIDS patients often face societal discrimination as they are perceived as societal refuse.
2. Gender-based discrimination. An example of this discrimination is prioritizing male children to access education, while female children are considered the property of their husbands once married.
3. Discrimination based on social caste. In India, there still exists a belief in caste within society, resulting in lower castes being deprived of adequate educational access and fundamental rights, being considered inferior, and impoverished.
4. Discrimination against people with disabilities. Individuals with disabilities are often not

- given opportunities to work in government agencies as they are perceived as sick individuals.
5. Discrimination based on religion, ethnicity, or race.

One of the psychological disorders is social anxiety. According to La Greca and Lopez (cited in Zahrahtussyafiyah, 2022), individuals experiencing social anxiety typically fear negative evaluations from others, leading them to avoid interactions with strangers and even familiar individuals. Social anxiety can result in various negative impacts. Those experiencing this condition often feel low self-esteem, doubt their self-worth, and perceive themselves as unattractive or unappealing. They also frequently worry about being ridiculed or embarrassed in social situations (La Greca & Lopez, 1998). La Greca and Lopez (1998) outlined the main aspects of social anxiety, including fear of negative evaluation, avoidance of social interactions, feeling distressed in new situations or with unfamiliar people, as well as avoiding social interactions and feeling distressed when with generally familiar individuals.

In this study, the author focuses on the impact of racial discrimination on minority groups, specifically individuals of mixed Japanese-black heritage in Japan, as well as the psychological disorders they experience.

## RESEARCH METHOD

The research methodology employed by the author is qualitative descriptive, utilizing data sourced from the YouTube video titled "The Black Experience Japan: I Kept Telling Him, I'm Half, Not A Foreigner." This video interview was published in 2019 on the YouTube channel "The Black Experience Japan." In this study, sentence analysis from the video is conducted to identify the types and impacts of discrimination portrayed in "The Black Experience Japan: I Kept Telling Him, I'm Half, Not A Foreigner." The research focuses on sentences spoken by the interviewees in the video, collected by the researcher.

The data collection technique devised by the author involves initially watching the YouTube video "The Black Experience Japan: I Kept Telling Him, I'm Half, Not A Foreigner," followed by transcribing the statements made by the two female interviewees in the video. Subsequently, the relevant data is identified for the research, where this identification process is divided into two theories: the discrimination typology theory by Fulthoni et al., and the impact of discrimination on psychology using the social anxiety disorder theory by La Greca and Lopez. Next, sentences uttered by the interviewees in the video related to the research problem statement are written and categorized. The researcher sifts through the statements made by the interviewees in the video, which will be used in accordance with the research problem formulation.

There are several data analysis techniques used by the researcher to examine the YouTube video. Firstly, the researcher selects relevant data segments related to the research topic. Subsequently, the researcher categorizes each data point associated with the impact of discrimination in the YouTube video "The Black Experience Japan: I Kept Telling Him, I'm Half, Not A Foreigner." The researcher then analyzes the types of discrimination using Fulthoni et al.'s theory and the impact of discrimination on social anxiety disorder using La Greca and Lopez's theory. After analyzing the data with discrimination typology theory and the impact of discrimination on social anxiety disorder, the researcher draws conclusions.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

In this discussion, the author analyzes the impact of discrimination faced by two black haafu individuals named Raimu and Ark in the YouTube video "The Black Experience Japan: I Kept Telling Him, I'm Japanese, Not A Foreigner." Raimu is a 22-year-old woman residing in Osaka. Her father is from Nigeria, and her mother is Japanese. Meanwhile, Ark is a 16-year-old girl and a high school student in Tokyo. Her father is from Uganda, and her mother is Japanese.

Raimu : "エットっ例えば公園で友達とかと何人かと遊んでてなんかすごいそれが近所迷惑になってうるさかったっていう時になんかその近所のおじいさんが起こりに出てきた時にまず指摘されるのが私で阿部せられる言葉としたらお前は国に帰れっていうことの言われたりとかしたことがあってでその時私はハーフだし日本出身で日本で育って国に帰れっていう言われたときにすごい動揺してなんか自分の居場所についてすごいなんか迷った地域があった"

Raimu : "Etto, tatoeba kōen de tomodachi toka to nan'ninka to asondete nanka sugoi sore ga kinjo meiwaku ni natte urusakattatte iu toki ni nanka sono kinjo no ojisan ga okori ni detekita toki ni mazu shitekisareru no ga watashi de abeserareru kotoba to shitara omae wa kuni ni kaerette iu koto no iware tari toka shita koto ga atte de sonotoki watashi wa hāfudashi Nihon shusshin de Nihon de sodatte kuni ni kaerette iu iwareta toki ni sugoi dōyō shite nanka jibun no ibasho ni tsuite sugoi nanka mayotta chiiki ga atte."

Raimu : " One day, while playing with friends in the park, we were a bit noisy and caused disturbance to the neighbors. When one elderly man came out to scold us, I was the first to be approached. Some of the things he said to me included, "Go back to your country!" At that moment, I thought to myself, "I'm of mixed Japanese descent, I was born here, I grew up here." When I was told to "go back to my country," I felt irritated. There are times when *I feel confused*, "where do I really belong?"



**Figure 1** Raimu Experiencing Discrimination From an Elderly Man in The Park [1:00-2:00]

At minute 1:22 – 2:00, Raimu recounts her experience of facing discrimination from her neighbor. While she was playing with her friends and they caused a disturbance to the neighbor, an elderly man scolded her and uttered discriminatory words like "go back to your country!" These words had an impact on Raimu's psyche. She felt a bit irritated and confused by the words. Raimu began to question where she belongs, despite being born and raised in Japan.

Raimu : "When people made such thoughtless remarks casually asking me to "go back to your country!" I wondered a lot about where exactly I was supposed to go back to? And also the word *gaijin* (foreigner in Japanese) people who use this word, they may not any intention to discriminate but when I got called a *gaijin*, I felt very hurt. When I told him, "I'm half. I'm not a foreigner." Many people would frequently make passing remarks about me being *gaijin*. When this happened in my daily life, I often felt shocked and upset. My ears became sensitive to little comments like these as grew up. Even If the comments weren't about me, my ears would still pick them up. Are they talking about me? What are other people saying about me? I grew up with this constant worry in my mind."

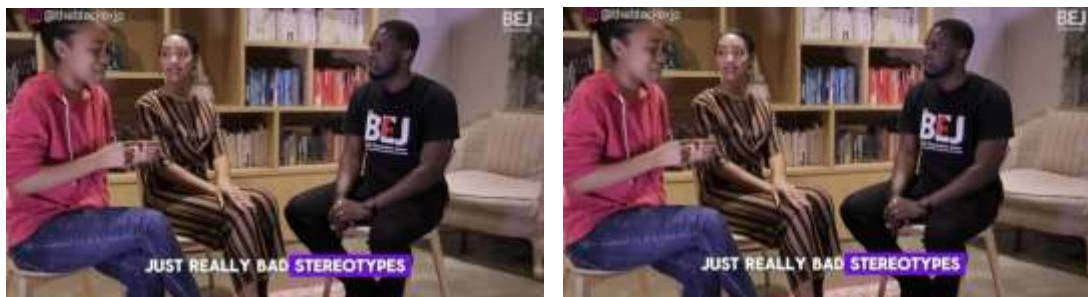


**Figure 2** Raimu Reflects on Experiencing Discrimination [02:07-03:16]

Based on the statements made by Raimu above, it can be proven that black *haafu* face discrimination from Japanese people regarding their different skin color. Raimu mentions that in her daily life, she often receives negative remarks such as "go back to your country!" and "*Gaijin* (foreigner)" uttered by Japanese individuals. This has left Raimu feeling shocked and angry. In this case, there are stereotypes about black skin color being viewed negatively, and Japanese individuals of black descent are perceived as foreigners. Therefore, black *haafu* encounter difficulties socializing with native Japanese people as they are treated like foreigners. The impact on black *haafu* includes stress or depression, and as a result, they grow up feeling anxious about other's judgements and experience a decrease in self-confidence. (02:07 – 03:16)

Based on Ark's statement at minute 11:37 - 12:43 as follows:

Ark : "After I moved to a Japanese Public School and there it was so like the teachers were people who never went out of that area or even like when never went to Tokyo. So, they had like just really bad stereotypes about black people and all just foreigners in the first place, and also the students like that kids in that school, they just got all of their their idea about black people from television. So, I would get call like black monkey or you know just a random like a student will come up to me and say "Hey, do you eat hamburgers all day?" I'm not American but I don't know They just forget the fact of that African people. Some African people come from the continent Africa not everyone comes from the US. So, it was really racial and yeah it's been bittersweet."



**Figure 3** Ark's Statement When Experiencing Discrimination at School [11:37-12:43]

Based on above, illustrates Ark's recounting of the bitterness she felt during her experience of discrimination in a public school in Japan. Previously, Ark had never faced discrimination in an international school for 11 years, but everything changed when she transferred to a public school in Japan. Ark mentions that the teachers there had never left their local area or even been to Tokyo, leading them to harbor negative stereotypes about black people and foreigners. Demeaning actions towards black haafu in her school were also carried out by the students there, with remarks such as "black monkey" and some students saying, "Hey, do you eat hamburgers all day?" These words uttered to Ark caused disappointment. In the interview video, Ark also added her opinion that one way to reconcile racial attitudes is by forming a black haafu community and organizing open events for everyone so that other Japanese people can learn about black cultures and gradually accept their presence in society.

## CONCLUSION

The findings of this research prove that discrimination against black skin color is based on Westernized beauty standards in Japan, such as fair and flawless skin, slim and proportional body, long legs, and calm personality. They receive discrimination from Japanese people because they are seen as different from native Japanese society.

The forms of discrimination experienced by the black *haafu* community are diverse. For example, they are called '*gaijin*' or foreigners, looked down upon, and referred to by their skin color instead of their names, such as "black monkey." The discrimination often faced by the black *haafu* community is mockery due to their physical appearance being different from the native Japanese population in

general. This impacts the psychology of the black *haafu* community, making them feel uncomfortable, stressed, and even experiencing a decrease in self-confidence.

Through the data sources, the *haafu* community hopes that discriminatory actions can be stopped through comprehensive efforts. To effectively minimize these efforts, it must involve all parties, starting from oneself, schools, communities, and government authorities. Additionally, forming a black *haafu* community in Japan is necessary. It is hoped that this community can help eliminate the forms of discrimination they face. By organizing various events together, it will also help spread awareness of the presence of black *haafu* and potentially change the stereotypes of Japanese society towards black *haafu*.

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