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Editorial

This is the Volume 16, Number 2 of the OUSL Journal, the Journal of the Open University of Sri Lanka which is published biannually. The articles published in this Volume include research based on Law, Education, Health Sciences, and Folkloristics.

The paper titled *Information Printed on Sugar-Sweetened Beverage Labels: A Comparative Analysis of the Australian and Sri Lankan Legal Framework*" is a unique study as it is a combined an analysis of food with the disciplines of health and law. The authors explore and compare the law of sugar-related information of sugar-sweetened beverage labels in Sri Lanka and Australia from a global perspective. Authors broadly analysed the existing Sri Lankan labelling law framework on 'ingredient list', 'nutrition information panel', 'nutrient claims' and 'front of pack labelling'. They have cited legislative tools and scholars who have explored sugar information on food labels. The authors have successfully identified the areas to be updated in the Sri Lankan labelling law on sugar information to place them on par with international standards. At the same time, they have developed and suggested a legal framework to the Sri Lankan food label on sugar sweetened beverage information. By addressing the issues in the legal framework of labelling sugar sweetened beverages by amending the existing law of Food (Labelling and Advertising) Regulations of 2005, the authors are of the view that health of Sri Lankans consumers would be better protected.

Bilingual Education (BE) is a common educational approach used around the world. BE refers to classroom instruction offered in two languages and the use of those two languages as a medium of instruction for any part or all of the school curriculum. Bilingual

Education has been implemented in Sri Lanka since 2002. The paper titled *Challenges for Bilingual Education at the Junior Secondary Level of Education in Sri Lanka: Student and Teacher Perspectives* focuses on the problems and issues faced by the teachers and students in the bilingual classrooms. The study uses a qualitative case study design and an analytic framework informed by theoretical ideas of Cummins's (1981) Common Underlying Proficiency (CUP) model and Krashen's (1984) Monitor Model to understand the students and teacher perspectives about bilingual teaching and learning at the junior secondary level classrooms. Six bilingual teachers and 30 students from Grades 6 and 8 of a selected school participated in the study. Focus Group Interviews (FGI) with the students and semi-structured interviews with the teachers were used to generate data. Findings of the study indicated that both teachers and students face many challenges and issues in teaching, learning and assessments in their classrooms mainly due to lack of adequate and appropriate physical and human resources and the lack of necessary support from school and other educational authorities. Teachers with limited experience and training in BE had to face many difficulties in teaching and assessment of students due to the lack of second language (L2) proficiency among their learners. Students, in turn, face challenges in learning and assessments due to the lack of basic skills in L2 and support from their teachers, peers and home environments as well as self-learning skills. Since BE is beneficial to both individual and society, it needs to be expanded and further developed to enhance equity, inclusivity, and quality of education and capacity for lifelong learning among learners. For successful implementation of BE, teachers and students should be adequately supported through a 'try level engagement' approach to education reforms.

The study titled *Criminological Organized Network Models of Human Smuggling: An Analysis with Special reference to the United Nations Convention on Transnational Organized Crime and the Protocol against Smuggling of Migrants* examined the extent to which the salient features of the Criminological Organized Network Model (CON Model) have been translated into Article 2(a) of the United Nations Convention on Transnational Organized crime (UNCTOC) and Article 3(a) of the protocol against Smuggling of Migrants (HS Protocol). The study was based on three objectives, namely, identify the main characteristics of the CON Model, describe the features of the CON Model, and to compare the features of the CON Model and Article 2(a) of the UNCTOC and Article 3 (a) of the HS protocol in order to suggest amendments to existing legal provisions. Doctrinal research incorporating conceptual, descriptive, interpretative, analytical, and comparative methodology have been employed to achieve the objectives of the paper. The paper discusses and analyzes the objectives, nature, and tasks of organized crime groups relevant to the definition of an organized criminal group and human smuggling as per the UNCTOC and the HS Protocol and also, extracts the gaps in these definitions. The findings revealed that the UNCTOC does not adequately define the term 'transnational organized crime'; definition of the 'organized crime group' is narrow and fails to accommodate various types of the groups that engage in human smuggling and does not specify the period of existence of the organized criminal group. Further, the study reveals that Article 2(a) of the UNCTOC read with Article 37(4) of the UNCTOC and Article 3(a) of the human smuggling protocol provides no clear demarcation as to whether facilitating human smuggling without monetary benefit will fall under the overall ambit of human smuggling. Based on these findings the research study recommends that there is a dire need to revisit the legal

provisions of the UNCTOC and the human smuggling Protocol for refinement.

Healthcare provider responses and preparedness towards caring for females who have experienced intimate partner violence (IPV) in Sri Lanka come under focus in a cross-sectional study in hospital and community care settings in four provinces. Based on quantitative data gathered from 405 nurses, doctors, and midwives through a questionnaire, this study indicates the need for all healthcare providers to be trained and prepared to support females disclosing IPV regardless of whether they work in specialized IPV-care centres or routine settings in the country. The paper titled *Healthcare Provider Responses and Preparedness towards Caring for Females who have Experienced Intimate Partner Violence in Sri Lanka* provides important insights into healthcare provider preparedness and shows that most of them, both females and males, recognize and reject stereotypical ideas about IPV and can be part of an effective healthcare response to IPV in Sri Lanka with the necessary institutional supports, training, skills, and resources.

The paper titled *Air Mobility, Ten Heads and Universal Authority: Constructing Ravana in the Folk Imagination of Sabaragamua -- a Folkloric Study* attempts to re-read a collection of folktales from Sabaragamuwa which focuses on the anti-hero of Ramayanaya, King Ravena. Surrounded by thematic of aggression, betrayal, magic and asceticism Ravana is also a personality who has undergone a 'rebirth' owing to specific nationalistic discourses that were fermented in the post-civil-war Sri Lanka. This study undertakes a folkloric reading of the folktales from Sabaragamuwa for the modes of construction of the personality of Ravana and the insights such constructions might offer

into the material conditions of the story creators/tellers/listeners. This is a preliminary study that leads on to a larger study to understand the symbolic meaning of Ravana to the people of the modern nation state.

Career indecision that refers to the inability to resolve issues in a particular chosen profession (Feldman, 2003) is recognized as a noteworthy issue among many university graduates. With increased choice of courses at universities, and more opportunities and options to pursue tertiary education, in addition to expanding work opportunities globally, the career decision-making process has become more complex, and as such, more challenging for students. Making an appropriate career decision is a very important and it has been quite a pressing issue especially for young students. This phenomenon has been explored by many researchers throughout several decades mainly to identify key factors contributing to career indecision among various individuals. Most of the previous studies on career indecision were aimed at exploring significant factors influencing on career indecision among college students and were of a western orientation. However, none of them focused on university students in a Sri Lankan context. Further, it is challenging to generalize the findings of these studies that were based on students in developed economies, to the Sri Lankan context owing to the differences in the cultural settings, demographics, economic aspects, and disparities in financial situations of the developed and developing contexts. The paper titled *Can Gender and Location Create Career Indecision among the Undergraduates of Management Studies in State Universities of Sri Lanka?* explored whether there is any significant differences in career indecision among the Management undergraduates of state universities in Sri Lanka, when it comes to

the segregation of the target population based on the gender as well as the geographical location of the state universities. As per the key findings of the study, it was revealed that career indecisiveness was higher among males and the difference in career indecision between male and female management undergraduate was significant. Moreover, this study found that there are no significant differences in career indecision between students studying in peripheral or urban universities. These findings would be beneficial to undergraduates, policy makers and government institutions as well as for the society at large, when it comes to devising human resource development programs, related policies etc. As this study found empirical support for significant differences in career indecision between male and female management undergraduates, the authorities who design career counselling interventions need to pay attention to this. As male undergraduates experience relatively high degree of career indecisiveness, separate strategies are required to address the differences.

The online learning platform has had an influence in various ways, particularly in the sector of higher education, especially in light of the present Covid-19 pandemic. To keep academic courses continuing, the bulk of educational institutions have resorted to online learning platforms. However, the interpretation of university student demographics is yet to be evaluated in the Sri Lankan context. To address this issue a study was conducted titled *Online Learning during the COVID–19 Outbreak: Undergraduates' Perspective – A Case of the Faculty of Agriculture, University of Ruhuna, Sri Lanka* to look at the perspectives of agricultural students on online learning during the pandemic. Undergraduates from the University of Ruhuna's Faculty of Agriculture were chosen as the study's respondents. The

researchers performed an online survey of 334 students to learn about their preferences for various elements of online courses, their perspectives on online learning, and the benefits and drawbacks of online learning for students. The majority of students were pleased with their online learning experience, want to recommend it to the others and wants it to be a part of the academic curriculum in the future. For online learning, the laptop was the device of choice for the vast majority of students. The majority of students desired to plan their online classes so that they could finish the semester and preferred having classes on weekdays between 8 and 10 a.m., for aduration of 1.5 hours per class. During the pandemic, however, majority of students experienced a lack of connectivity/network troubles as their primary difficulty. Hence these elements should be considered while creating an online course in order to improve the teaching-learning process. Understanding the preparedness and perspective of students for online learning is one of the objectives of this research study.

We welcome your suggestions for further improvement of this Journal. We are looking forward to publishing your current research findings in our next issue.

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Information Printed on Sugar-Sweetened Beverage Labels: A Comparative Analysis of Australian and Sri Lankan Legal Framework

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Abstract

Sugar is one of the main ingredients in sugar-sweetened beverages (SSBs): a major contributor to added sugar intake in the diet. Excess consumption of added sugars can adversely affect human health mainly by contributing to non-communicable diseases. Information related to sugar content is usually declared on an SSB product in the section titled ingredients, nutrition information panel, non-addition claim and in front-of-pack labelling (FOPL). Various countries have implemented laws to disclose sugar-related information in SSBs. The aim of this research is to assess sugar labelling requirements for SSBs in Sri Lanka against international Codex standards and sugar

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labelling requirements in Australia. A doctrinal review was conducted based on legal related literatures.

Both Sri Lankan and Australian legislations as well as Codex standards have provisions on ingredients and claims. FOPL is compulsory for Sri Lankan law for selected sugar sweetened beverages. FOPL is neither recommended by Codex currently nor made compulsory by Australian law; however, Australia does have a voluntary code in that regard. NIP, a compulsory requirement in codex standards is mandatory in Australian food label; whereas, it is not mandatory in Sri Lanka. Introducing legal provisions on nutrition information panel would not only align Sri Lankan law with international standards and jurisdictions but also contribute to the control of non-communicable diseases. Highlighting the sugar content raw in the NIP of SSB with 'high sugar' in red colour would further improve the expected outcome. Furthermore, more legal clarity will be achieved in Sri Lanka by adding definitions to terms 'ingredient' and 'non-addition claim'.

Keywords: Food Label, Nutrition Information Panel, Sugar-Sweetened Beverages, Nutrition Labelling

Introduction

Background of the study

Sugar is one of the main ingredients in sugar-sweetened beverages (SSBs). SSBs are a major contributor to added sugar intake in the diet. Excess consumption of added sugars can adversely affect human health (Keller & Bucher Della Torre, 2015). Therefore, various countries have implemented laws to disclose sugar-related information in SSBs, allowing consumers to make informed choices about consumption (Grummon et al., 2019).

Sugar-related information on SSB labels can be provided in different forms, for example, sugar-based ingredients may be listed in an ingredient list, sugar may be quantified in a nutritional information panel on back of a pack, and/or sugar may be mentioned in nutrient claims: e.g., 'sugar free'. Sugar may also be incorporated in the scoring of foods for newer forms of simple, graphical, front-of-pack nutrition labelling system. However, there is no uniformity across jurisdictions in terms of regulating these aspects of the label. Many laws are in line with the *Codex Alimentarius*, a body of international food standards which provides guidance on nutrition labelling broadly, including provisions relevant to sugar labelling.

This research is a comparative study of regulations in Australia and Sri Lanka. Both jurisdictions have their own legislative requirements

around sugar information on SSBs. Australia is a federal country constituting of six States and two Territories. However, food labelling is governed by federal legislation in the form of the *Australia New Zealand Food Standards Code* (FSANZ). Sri Lanka is a unitary country and also has a single legal framework regulating food labels throughout the country. Similar to Sri Lanka, Australia is a common law country based on the English law; therefore, comparing the Sri Lankan law with a develop country like Australia which has similar legal principals, would be beneficial for further improvements in the Sri Lankan law.

Scope of the study

This study summarizes the existing state on scientific evidence of the health harms of sugar, particularly as consumed in SSBs. We then present a comparative legal analysis of sugar labelling requirements found in international Codex standards, and national legislation in Australia and Sri Lanka.

Aim of the study

The aim of this research is to assess sugar labelling requirements for SSBs in Sri Lanka against international Codex standards and sugar labelling requirements in Australia in order to identify gaps in the Sri Lankan law and to make recommendation to Sri Lanka in line with international standards.

Implication of the study

By comparing the strengths of existing legislation in both countries, this study will make recommendations on how the public health impact of legislation in Sri Lanka may be enhanced.

Theoretical framework

Sri Lankan and Australian legislations, and international standards regulating sugar information on SSB labels are reviewed, analysed, compared and presented. The study is not based on a particular theory.

Literature Review

Sugars

*Sugar*s are a type of carbohydrate, as are starch and fibre. Sugar and starches are digested in the gastrointestinal tract, whilst fibre is not digested. There are two types of sugars, *monosaccharides* and *disaccharides*. Glucose and fructose are monosaccharides, whilst

sucrose and lactose are disaccharides. Sucrose is present in table sugar, fructose is present in fruits and lactose is present in milk (WHO, 2015a).

Sugars can occur naturally in foods such as milk (lactose) and fruit (fructose) but can also be added (added sugars) to food and drinks by the manufacturer or consumer. It is these 'added sugars' that dietary guidelines recommend consumers to avoid. At an international level, the World Health Organization (WHO) uses the term 'free sugars' to describe those sugars which should be limited in the diet. These 'free sugars' include all 'added sugars', as well as sugars naturally present in honey, syrups, fruit juices and fruit juice concentrates constitute (WHO, 2015a).

Sugar-Sweetened Beverages

Beverages are type of food in liquid form, broadly categorized as alcoholic and non-alcoholic beverages. Non-alcoholic beverages include water, dairy based beverages, juice and juice drinks, carbonated drinks, tea and coffee (Hettiarachchi, 2017). *SSBs* are all non-alcoholic water-based beverages with added sugar but do not include milk-based beverages and 100% fruit juices (Cancer Council, 2011).

Many factors contribute to the consumption of SSBs, which warrant legislative control by the governments. Most consumers report buying SSBs due to their taste (Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2015). High availability of SSBs in the market positively influences consumption particularly amongst school-aged children (Grimm et al., 2004). Social settings, such as peer groups in educational institutions and workplaces, also influence consumption of SSBs (Hattersley *et al*., 2009). Marketing and advertising strategies play a major role in increasing consumption – particularly in children, who are often targeted by SSB manufacturers (Brownell & Warner, 2009; Paes et al., 2015; Reeve & Gostin, 2019). Research has shown that, SSBs are addictive (Psych Central, 2018). Young people who stopped consuming of SSBs for 3 days reported headaches; reduced inspiration, happiness, and satisfaction, poor focus; and a lack of overall well-being (Felbe et al., 2018). High levels of SSB consumption are a major contributor to added sugar consumption in the diet.

Health Effects of Sugars

Excess consumption of added sugars has direct and indirect harms on health. Excess consumption of added sugars can contribute to weight gain, obesity, cardiovascular disease, diabetes, and dental caries (WHO, 2003). Obesity is a risk factor for cancer, so high sugar intake can also indirectly result in cancer (World Cancer Research

Fund, 2007). Reducing consumption of SSBs would lower the incidence of diabetes, cardiovascular disease and some cancers, improving life expectancy and reducing health care cost (Veerman *et al*, 2016).

The WHO recommends free sugar consumption be less than 10% of total energy intake for both adults and children. Further reduction to below 5% or roughly 25 g of free sugar per day would provide additional benefits, particularly for dental health (WHO, 2015b). These health harms create the impetus for policies to address and reduce sugar consumption, through use of effective legislation.

Previous Research on Sugar Information on Sri Lankan SSB labels

Strengths and deficiencies of Sri Lankan food beverage labels had been assessed by comparing with Codex Alimentarius Standards (Hettiarachchi et al, 2018). Presence on ingredient list, colour code and quantity for sugar level in fruit-based beverages and carbonated drinks were identified as strengths while unavailability of ingredient quantity, title as 'ingredient', nutrient declaration and standard categorization for claim were identified as deficiencies. In another research, attitudes of manufacturers, law enforcing officers and consumers on the Sri Lankan labelling regulations were assessed (Hettiarachchi et al, 2021). Though most consumer were unaware of an existence of a law to regulate food labels, most were in a favourable opinion on the colour code for sugar level and had perceived as very useful.

A cross sectional study had analysed the impact of nutritional labelling on consumer buying behaviour in Kandy, Sri Lanka (Prathiraja & Ariyawardana, 2011). It was found that 65% bought products with nutrition labelling due to perceived benefits, suggesting the importance of the nutritional labelling on consumer choice.

Research Methodology

The study is a doctrinal review. An extensive literature review was performed to identify food labelling laws and regulations relating to sugar, sugar-related information in SSB labels in the selected jurisdictions. International standards, legal standards and regulations were sourced from official websites of international organizations and government bodies of Sri Lanka and Australia. Further, doctoral theses, journal articles, textbooks and reports were reviewed extensively to enrich the research.

Findings and Discussion

All packaged food, including SSBs have *labels* as per legislative requirements of both Australia and Sri Lanka. Codex standards define 'label' as a 'tag, brand, mark, pictorial or other description, either written, printed, stencilled, marked, embossed or impressed on or attached to a container of food' (Codex Alimentarius, 1991). In Australia, the Food Standard Code defines label as 'any tag, brand, mark or statement in writing or any representation or design or other descriptive matter on or attached to or used or displayed in connection with or accompanying any food or package (Federal Register of Legislation, 2020a). In Sri Lanka, similar to the Codex definition, label is defined as a 'tag, brand, mark, pictorial or other description, either written, printed, stencilled, marked, embossed or impressed on or attached to a container of food' (Government Publication Bureau, 1980). In both jurisdictions, information on sugar content of the product has to be displayed either as a statement or as a pictorial design of any description.

Both jurisdictions and the Codex Standards define sugar as all monosaccharides and disaccharides in food (Federal Register of Legislation, 2020a; Government Publication Bureau, 2016; Codex Alimentarius, 2017). In Sri Lanka, *Low sugar* is claimed when sugar content is less than 2g per 100ml. *Medium sugar* indicates the sugar content between 2 to 11 g per 100ml. When the sugar level is more than 11g per 100ml, it is considered to be *high sugar* (Government Publication Bureau, 2005).

Sugar information on a label, can be presented in four formats - *ingredients*, *nutrition information panel, claims* and *front-of-pack nutrition labelling*. The next section summarises these requirements in Codex Standards national legislations in Australia and Sri Lanka.

Ingredient list requirements

The term *ingredient* is not defined in either jurisdiction. However, according to Codex, an *ingredient* means any substance, including a food additive, used in the manufacture or preparation of a food and present in the final product, although possibly in a modified form (Codex Alimentarius, 1991).

The ingredient list is mandatory in both jurisdictions. However, in Australia, certain foods are exempted from the requirement of an ingredient list, such as standard alcoholic beverages and food in a small package. *Food in a small package* means a package (surface area of less than 100 cm^2) (Federal Register of Legislation, 2020a). Further, similar to Codex, the ingredients have to be presented as a

list in descending order of weight (Federal Register of Legislation, 2020b). In Sri Lanka, ingredients have to be presented as a list in descending order of their proportions (Government Publication Bureau, 2005) and Sri Lankan law does not provide any exemptions. Additionally, Sri Lankan law does not stipulate whether proportion of the ingredient is by weight or volume. Neither Australia nor Sri Lanka displays the weight or proportion of ingredients. Therefore, the consumer must believe the manufacturer's placement of sugar in the descending list of ingredient weight. This is not much as an issue in Australia as the quantity of sugar in the product must also be displayed in the nutrition information panel.

Nutrition Information Panel

Codex standards recommend a mandatory nutrient declaration and it is defined as a standardized statement or listing of the nutrient content of a food (Codex Alimentarius, 2017).

In Australia, the *nutrition information panel* (NIP) means nutrition information that is required to be included on a packaged food label in accordance with FSANZ Standards. It is a panel that must appear on the back and quantify specific nutrients per 100 mL/g (Federal Register of Legislation, 2020a). The display of the NIP is mandatory in Australia, which has similar regulations as Codex Standards, with specific exclusions for products such as standard alcohol beverages; fruit/vegetables that comprise a single ingredient or category of ingredients; prepared filled rolls; sandwiches; bagels and similar products; and food in small packages (Federal Register of Legislation, 2020c). NIPs on Australian labels provide information on the average quantity of energy in kilojoules or kilocalories. The nutrition information panel must be presented in a standard format showing the average quantity of sugar (alongside protein, fat, saturated fat, carbohydrate and sodium) per serving and per 100 g or 100 mL (Federal Register of Legislation, 2020c). The Nutrition InformationUser Guide provides an example as shown in Figure 1 (FSANZ, 2013).

Figure 1.
Example Nutrition information panel for Australian food label

Servings per package: 25 Serving size: 15g		
	Average Quantity per Serving	Average Quantity per 100 g
Energy	384 kJ	2560 kJ
Protein	4.4 g	29.3 g
Fat, total	7.6 g	50.7 g
-saturated	1.5 g	10.0 g
Carbohydrate	2.0G	13.3 g
-sugars	0.9 g	6.0 g
Sodium	51 mg	273 mg

Note: This example is given in the Nutrition Information User Guide

This legal requirement is similar in other countries, both developed and developing countries including the United Kingdom (Food Standard Agency, 2020), United States (FDA, 2020a) and India (FSSAI, 2020). In addition, from 2020, the United States has taken a further step making it compulsory to display the *added sugar* amount on labels (FDA, 2020b; Firman, 2019). Currently, Australia too in a process of adding 'added sugar information' into the food label (FSANZ, 2020).

However, in Sri Lanka, the NIP is not mandatory, preventing Sri Lankan consumers from accessing quantified nutritional information on sugar which is important for controlling weight and preventing non-communicable diseases. Whilst, there is no legal requirement in Sri Lanka, most SSBs that are both imported and manufactured by local large-scale companies display a NIP. However, small-scale manufacturers are often unable to bear the additional cost of analysing the nutrient content of their products in the competitive market.

Nutrient content claims

Codex standards define a claim as 'any representation which states, suggests or implies that a food has a particular quality relating to its origin, nutritional properties, nature, production, processing, composition, or any other quality' (Codex Alimentarius, 1991). The term *claim* is defined in Australia as 'an express or implied statement, representation, design or information in relation to a food or a property of food which is not mandatory in the Code' (Federal Register of Legislation, 2020a).In Sri Lanka, similar to Codex, a *claim* means 'any representation which states, suggests or implies that a food has a particular quality relating to its origin, nutritional properties, nature processing, composition, or any other quality'; however, the

definition has omitted the word 'production' (Government Publication Bureau, 2005).

According to the Australian definition, sugar information in both the ingredient list and nutrition information panel is a mandatory requirement, meaning that sugar information is not a *claim*. However, the Sri Lankan definition of *claim* does not as clearly exclude sugar information.

Displaying claims related to nutrition are optional in both jurisdictions. However, if displayed, the claims must adhere to legal requirements. The most relevant types of claims for SSBs are *nutrient content claim* (e.g. 'sugar free') and *non-addition claim* (e.g. 'no added sugar'). The *nutrient content claim* is defined in both Australian and Sri Lankan laws and Codex standards. As per Codex standards, *nutrient content claim* is a claim describes the level of a nutrient contained in a food (Codex Alimentarius, 1997). In Australia, *nutrient content claim* is a claim that is about the presence or absence of any specific nutrient stated (Federal Register of Legislation, 2020a). In Sri Lanka, *nutrient content claim* is a claim which describes the level of a nutrient contained in a type of food (Government Publication Bureau, 2005), which is similar to the Codex standards. Nutrient content claims in both jurisdictions are conditional claims as they must meet certain criteria in order to be permissible. For example, in Sri Lanka, *sugar free* can be claimed if the sugar content is less than 0.5g per 100g/100ml. Furthermore, false and misleading claims are prohibited in both jurisdictions.

The *non-addition claim* is not defined in either jurisdiction, although Codex defines as a claim that an ingredient has not been added to a food, either directly or indirectly (Codex Alimentarius, 1997). In Australia 'no added sugar' claim could be declared in foods do not contain added sugars, honey, malt and malt extracts; concentrated fruit juice or deionised fruit juice with certain exceptions (Federal Register of Legislation, 2020d).

Front-of-pack labelling (FOPL)

Nutrient declarations provide essential information about the nutrient content of foods, but the complexity of the quantitative information in NIP means that it is not readily accessible and is often poorly understood. Front-of-pack labelling (FOPL) provides at-a-glance nutritional information for consumers in a simple and graphical form, presented on the front of food packages. FOPL is an intervention to reduce diet related NCDs and provides convenient, relevant and readily understood information on the front of packs (WHO, 2019).

Sri Lanka has two additional regulations under *Food Act of 1980* relevant to sugar levels in food: *Food (Colour Coding for Sugar Level) Regulations 2016* and *Food (Colour Coding for Sugar - Salt - Fat) Regulations 2019*. However, only the *Food (Colour Coding for Sugar Level) Regulation, 2016* is relevant to *SSBs* as the latter does not include beverages. The 2016 regulation is relevant to *carbonated beverages*, *ready-to-serve beverages*, *fruit nectars* and *fruit juices* (Table 1).

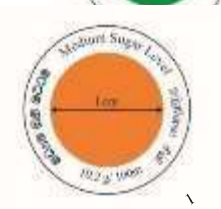
Table 1.
Sri Lankan legal definitions of beverage types

Beverage type	Legal definition
Carbonate beverage	Non—alcoholic, water-based beverage containing dissolved carbon dioxide, sugar other permitted ingredients
Ready to serve beverage	Fruit drink intended for consumption without dilution and prepared from unfermented but fermentable fruit juice or puree or concentrate with or without some of the pulp and containing any soluble sweetener and portable water
Fruit nectar	Unfermented but fermentable product obtained by adding water with or without the addition of sugars, honey, treacle, and/or syrups and/or sweeteners and other permitted ingredients to fruit juice
Fruit juice	Unfermented but fermentable liquid obtained from the edible part of appropriately mature and fresh fruit maintained in sound condition by suitable Means

Note: Definitions are stipulated in the Food (Colour coding for Sugar Level) regulations, 2016

As per the legal definitions of all ready-to-serve beverages, fruit nectars and fruit juices are fruit-based beverages. Therefore, Sri Lankan law excludes non-fruit based and non-carbonated beverages with added sugar. As per the regulations, the corresponding colour category, according to the sugar content in grams per 100 ml, and a statement in three languages (Sinhala, Tamil and English) must be displayed: *Green* for low sugar (<2 g/100 ml), *Amber* for medium sugar (2-11 g/100 ml) and *red* for high sugar (>11 g/100 ml) (Government Publication Bureau, 2016). The provisions are summarized in Table 2 (Hettiarachchi, 2017).

Table 2.
Sri Lankan colour code provisions for sugar level

Sugar level	Colour code
Numerical description of the sugar content ➢ <2g/100ml ➢ 2-11g/100ml ➢ >11 g/100ml	Colour of the circle should be according to the sugar level as follows. Diameter of the colour circle should be not less than 1cm
Description of the sugar level ➢ High sugar (for >11g) ➢ Medium sugar (for >2-11g) ➢ Low sugar (for <2g)	<2g - Green 
Should be in all 3 languages (English, Sinhala and Tamil)	2-11g– Amber (yellow to orange) 
Font size not less than 1.5mm	>11g – Red 

Note: Source is the Food (Colour Coding for Sugar Levels) Regulations, 2016

Australia does not have a legislated FOPNL system, however since 2014, it has implemented the Health Star Rating system on a voluntary basis. The Health Star Rating rates foods overall from 0.5 to 5.0 stars using an algorithm that considers total sugar content as one of seven food components included (Health Star Rating, 2020).

At an international level, Codex is currently working on international guidance on front-of-pack labelling, but it is anticipated that the result of this process will not be to prescribe a single FOPNL but rather to set out principles for countries considering these policies (Thow et al., 2020).

The sugar content is determined by analysing a beverage sample in a laboratory. However, manufacturers use equipment called the *Brix meter* for measuring sugar concentration, which measures the percentage of sugar content as *Brix degrees*. One *Brix Degree* is equal to 1 g of sugar (Sucrose) in 100 g of solution and not in 100 ml. Therefore, in practice the sugar content declaration is not legal, as it is measured in 100 g, while the regulations require it to be measured

in 100 ml. This means the colour code regulations are not correctly implemented, in-addition to their failure to include non-fruit based and non- carbonated beverages with added sugar. Furthermore, the labelling laws are poorly implemented in Sri Lanka by manufacturers and enforcement officers (Hettiarachchi, 2017). Hence, it is reasonable to argue that these weaknesses in implementation are limiting the potential public health impact of FOPNL in informing Sri Lankan consumers of the true sugar content of these products and supporting them to make healthier choices.

The NIP provides more information on sugar than the colour code. Even though sugar is included under the carbohydrates amount on the NIP, it is also displayed separately. The NIP provides the sugar amount per serving or per 100 ml/100 g, whereas the colour code only provides a range. As the exact sugar amount is required to calculate the energy value of the sugar, the energy value per serving or per 100 ml can only be calculated from the NIP. The total volume of the product is available in the label as the *net content* or *net volume*, so by combining the net volume and sugar content per 100 ml or per serving, the total sugar amount can be calculated if necessary. Serving size is usually decided by the manufacturer, so 100 ml/100 g could be used for a precise calculation and to allow standardised comparison between similar products. Furthermore, the NIP also includes information on other nutrients if relevant and energy levels.

Iran has more recently introduced an alternative label that presents a hybrid form of the NIP and a colour-coded FOPL. The NIP is overlaid with colour coding over the quantified nutrient information provided for fat, sugar, salt, trans fatty acids and energy content. Green indicates low or a little amount of the corresponding nutritional risk factor, yellow indicates a moderate amount and red shows a high amount, with thresholds set for each colour (WCRF, 2018). It is implemented to reduce non communicable disease burden in Iran. Poor media involvement and poor public awareness are some of challenging factors in Iran to achieve a successful outcome (Edalati et al., 2019).

Conclusions

Adverse health effects of the excess consumption of sugars were recognised. Both Sri Lankan and Australian legislations as well as Codex standards have provisions on sugar-related information on the labels of SSB. Several notable omissions and deviations from international standards were noted in the Sri Lankan law especially on nutritional information which need to be corrected in future legal amendments.

Even though, definitions are important for technical as well as legislative matters, Sri Lanka does not define the terms 'ingredient', 'non-addition claim': defining them as per Codex standards would make legal provisions clearer. Furthermore, stipulating the measurement (weight or volume) of proportion of ingredients and displaying the proportion with each ingredient would make this information more credible to the consumer.

The quantity of sugar in a product is displayed in the NIP, which is mandatory on beverage labels in most countries. It assists consumers deciding on portion size and energy intake as well as helps to plan their immediate as well as their overall diet. In Australia, as recommended by codex standards, these NIPs are mandatory. However, in Sri Lanka it is still not mandatory to display the NIP. Instead, alternative FOPL requirements in Sri Lanka provided simplified information on amount of sugar in the product within specified ranges only, using traffic light colour coding. Sri Lanka does not have a reasonable excuse for not making NIP compulsory, except the extra financial burden for small scale manufacturers which can be overcome by exempting them or allowing additional time for implementation.

Sugar content in the colour code is legally expected to be measured for 100 ml and it is not compatible with the Brix degree which measures sugar content for 100 g. Allowing to measure sugar content by weight (grams) as an alternative, would make this legal provision more practical.

Introducing of NIPs for Sri Lankan food labels, in addition to existing FOPL requirements, could be beneficial in supporting consumers to reduce excess sugar consumption; therefore, there is a need to for NIPs to be incorporated into the Sri Lankan food label. Considering the financial cost of analysing nutrient content accurately, it is reasonable to exempt the small-scale manufacturers and those producing small packages– less than 100 ml - from the mandatory display of NIPs, or allowing them to quantify sugar using reasonable alternative methods *eg*. using estimations from national nutrition databases of similar products. Highlighting the sugar content raw in the NIP of SSB with 'high sugar' in red colour would improve the effective usage of NIP by consumers.

Abbreviations

FOPL – Front-of-Pack Labelling

FSANZ – Food Standards Australia and New Zeeland

NIP – Nutrition Information Panel

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Challenges for Bilingual education at the junior secondary level of education in Sri Lanka: Student and teacher perspectives

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Abstract

The purpose of this qualitative case study is to understand the challenges for implementing Bilingual Education (BE) at the junior secondary level of education in Sri Lanka from the perspective of students and teachers. Six bilingual teachers and 30 students from Grades 6 and 8 of a selected school participated in the study. Focus Group Interviews (FGI) with the students and semi-structured interviews with the teachers were used to generate data. It has emerged in the analysis that both teachers and students face many challenges and issues in teaching, learning and assessments in their classrooms mainly due to lack of adequate and appropriate physical and human resources and the lack of necessary support from school and other educational authorities. Teachers with limited experience and training in

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BE had to face many difficulties in teaching and assessment of students due to the lack of sufficientL2 proficiency among their learners. Students, in turn, face challenges in learning and assessments due to the lack of necessary basic skills in L2 and support from their teachers, peers and home environments as well as self-learning skills. In conclusion, the authors argue that since BE is beneficial to both individuals and society, it needs to be expanded and further developed to enhance equity, inclusivity, and quality of education and capacity for lifelong learning among learners. Moreover, for successful implementation of BE, teachers and students should be adequately supported through a 'try level engagement' approach to education reforms.

Keywords: Bilingual education, Education reforms, Junior secondary level, Student and teacher perspectives, Teaching and learning

Introduction

A growing body of research indicates that Bilingual Education (BE) is beneficial to individuals as well as society. In his meta-analysis of the effectiveness of BE, Greene (1998) asserts that BE helps children to learn English and subject content. Wijesekera et al. (2019) based on a study conducted in bilingual classrooms in Sri Lanka argue that BE can be used by the teachers to promote more inclusive and 'supraethnic' identities among learners. Benson (2002, 2004) observes that BE in developing countries indicates encouraging development efforts in improving participation in primary education and learning processes. However, the teachers in those countries work in challenging contexts, which constitute undertrained and underpaid teachers, under-resourced schools and under-nourished children (Benson, 2004). Studies conducted in Sri Lanka (Wickremagamage et al., 2010; Karunakaran, 2011; World Bank, 2011; Perera, 2014) also indicate comparable challenges for successful implementation of BE at the junior secondary level.

Bilingual Education (BE) has been introduced to the education system in Sri Lanka since 2002 under the 'National Amity Schools Project' (HRD/EQD/2002/12). Studies conducted on the implementation of BE in Sri Lankan schools indicate that the performances of bilingual students are generally high in all subjects at the GCE (O/L) examination (World Bank, 2011). However, the programme faces several challenges (World Bank, 2011; Karunakaran, 2011; Perera et al, 2014). These challenges could be summarized as follows:

- shortage of teachers in the government schools who are adequately competent to teach other subjects in the English

medium and teacher educators competent to develop bilingual teachers;
- lack of a suitable Content and Language Integrated Learning (CLIL) model which is generally used in other countries;
- lack of cooperation between ESL teachers and bilingual teachers in implementing BE in schools; and
- lack of specifically prepared textbooks for BE.

The above challenges need to be addressed at different levels of the education system by different authorities and actors. Although these challenges are identified at the macro level, the challenges faced by teachers, students, parents and principals at the school level have not been well understood in the Sri Lankan context. Therefore, the current study particularly focuses on understanding the challenges faced by teachers and students in bilingual classrooms. Following specific objectives have been set for this purpose:

1. to explore the challenges faced by the teachers in the teaching and learning process of bilingual classrooms in the particular school.
2. to understand the problems and issues faced by the students in bilingual classrooms.

Review of Literature

Bilingual Education in the Sri Lankan context

Bilingual education in Sri Lanka in the current form is first introduced in 2002 through a circular issued by the MoE. According to the Circular, the main objective of the initiation of BE was to enhance social harmony and develop proficiency of students in Sinhala, Tamil and English while providing opportunities to study selected subjects in English medium starting from grade six onwards. The subjects were Science, Mathematics, Social studies and Health and Physical Education. Another objective of the introduction of BE was to overcome the lack of exposure to the English language which is considered a major obstacle to the skill development in English (Perera, 2014).

In 2008 by Circular No.2008/12 the principals were instructed to mix mono-medium and bi-medium students and specified the number of subjects that can be taught in the English language based on the available resources of each school. Through the above mentioned Circular MoE instructed the schools to offer 6 subjects which include Mathematics, Science, Health and Physical Education, Western Music, Geography and Life Competencies and Citizenship Education. The maximum number of subjects that can be selected from the above to study in the English medium is 5 (Circular No. 2008/12 ED/01/12/06/15/01 section 4.4).

In the Sri Lankan Teacher Development Manual issued by the NIE (2010, p.76) CLIL has been recognized as an effective instructional approach for BE in the Sri Lankan context. However, Perera et al. (2014) point out that Sri Lanka lacks a clearly defined bilingual framework and as a result, it is difficult to define the content standards, process standards and the role of stakeholders in BE. According to (Perera, 2014) there was only 17.5 per cent of schools of the total number of Junior Secondary schools implementing BE in the country at the time. Highlighting the weaknesses of the current BE programme in Sri Lanka, Perera (2014) argues for the adaptation of a CLIL model to develop bilingualism in learners.

Theoretical Framework

BE is a common education approach used around the world. An estimated 60-75 per cent of the world's population is bilingual.

BE is defined by Anderson and Boyer as follows:

"BE is instruction in two languages and the use of those two languages as medium of instruction for any part, or all of the school curriculum" (Anderson, Boyer & Southwest Educational Development Laboratory, 1970 cited in Pacific Policy Research Centre (2010).

According to the above definition, a bilingual programme must provide both content and delivery in two languages. A more recent definition by Cummins (2008) describes BE as follows:

"BE is the use of two (or more) languages of instruction at some point in a students' school career" (Cummins cited in Creese & Blackledge, 2010: p.103).

The main purpose of BE is to achieve bilingualism among the students. Garcia (2009) distinguishes two categories of definitions of bilingualism concerning early and late scholars. Early scholars in the early period of the 1930s considered only native-like control of two languages as a sign of bilingualism. The later scholars in the period of the mid-1950s defined bilingualism in a broader sense. They considered minimum proficiency in two languages as a sign of bilingualism while someone who can alternate between the two languages was bilingual.

Garcia (2009) argued that although the concept of 'balanced bilingualism' is a widely accepted idea among educators it has long been recognized that such a form of bilingualism does not exist. Garcia emphasizes that the concept of bilingualism itself has been extended beyond the traditional "balanced" conception of the bicycle with two perfect wheels. Garcia further

iterates that bilingualism is not like a bicycle with two balanced wheels and it is more like an "All-terrain vehicle":

“The wheels of this vehicle do not move in unison or the same direction, but extend and contract, flex and stretch, making possible, over highly uneven ground, movement forward that is bumpy and irregular but also sustained and effective” (Garcia, 2009: 44-45).

The metaphor used by Garcia implies that BE has clear goals to achieve while carefully moving through a complex and difficult terrain constituted with interacting variables of two languages, academic contents, pedagogic practices, teaching and learning materials, students and the teacher.

Research in language acquisition and education provides a theoretical basis for BE. According to the developmental interdependence theory (Cummins, 1979), the development of a second language is dependent upon a well-developed first language. Cummins further postulates in his thresholds theory that a child must obtain a certain level of proficiency in both native and second language to achieve successful bilingualism. Cummins focusesboth on primary language development and academic achievement (California State Department of Education, 1981). In his Common Underlying Proficiency (CUP) model, Cummins distinguishes two types of skills acquired by the students in learning a language. They are: Basic Interpersonal Communicative Skills (BICS) and Cognitive Academic Language Proficiency (CALP). BICS comprise everyday language skills while CALP is required to understand linguistically and conceptually demanding material in academic content areas (Cummins, 1981). According to Cummins (1981) if children master their CALP in L1, then it is transferred to L2 since the language proficiency is the same across the languages.

Krashen (1984) evaluates five hypotheses of language acquisition and learning environments and claims that the key to language acquisition is the exposure to substantial amount of comprehensible input under optimal conditions. Krashen's monitor model of second language acquisition has been used for designing and implementing educational programmes for language-minority students.

Pedagogical approaches and practices used in bilingual education

According to Garcia (2009), BE combines three pedagogical approaches that are well known in language education:

1. agrammatical approach (Grammar- translation method)
2. acommunicative approach (Immersion instruction and Integrated Content-Based Instruction - ICBI)

3. acognitive approach (use two languages with greater flexibility, two-way BE programmes and CLIL programmes

CLIL is used in many countries as a pedagogic approach in BE. Coyle et al. (2010) define CLIL as "a dual-focused educational approach in which an additional language is used for the learning and teaching of both content and language (p.1)."

Research findings on the CLIL approach recommend it as a successful strategy to improve students' foreign language competence in bilingual contexts (Coyle, 2009; Harrop, 2012; Benegas, 2012). Coyle et al. (2010) report that in their study about 2/3 of the learners reported a positive attitude towards their CLIL experiences and felt motivated to continue using the foreign language. However, she cautions that CLIL raises many issues as it solves. Therefore, it must not be seen as a 'solution' to improving learner motivation in modern languages but as a 'fertile ground for changing practice which is no longer motivating'.

By reviewing some of the latest evidence and considering the interaction between CLILs features and contextual factors Harrop (2012) evaluatesCLILs potentials and limitations. Accordingly, Harrop infers that CLIL has the potential to develop a higher level of linguistic proficiency and heightened motivation in the learners, support learners of different abilities and provide unique opportunities to prepare them for global citizenship. According to Harrop (2012), a major limitation of the CLIL approach is the possibility of imbalanced linguistic development in learners that promotes receptive skills rather than productive skills.

Garcia (2009) proposes 'translanguaging' as a pedagogical practice which is introduced by Cen Williams that switches the language mode in bilingual classrooms. Creese & Blackledge (2010) in their study conducted in Chinese and Gujarati community language schools in the UK describes translanguaging as a flexible approach to language teaching and learning. They highlight the importance of teaching bilingual children using bilingual instructional strategies, in which two or more languages are used alongside each other. They discuss how the translanguaging approach can be used effectively in situations where teachers and students construct and participate in a flexible bilingual pedagogy in assemblies and classrooms.

Pacific Policy Research Centre (2010) highlights five critical features of successful bilingual and immersion programmes that relate to pedagogy. These features include promotion of positive interactions between teacher and learners; use of a variety of teaching techniques that respond to different learning styles; student-centered teaching and learning; use of cooperative learning strategies where students collaborate interdependently on common objective tasks and share

experiences; and the use of cooperative learning strategies which are focused around a language task that facilitates the students sharing language knowledge (Pacific Policy Research Centre, 2010, p. 8).

In this review, the authors have defined BE and bilingualism and identified that bilingualism is one of the main purposes of BE. It was also discussed that according to Garcia, there is nothing called balanced bilingualism and the concept of bilingualism can be identified metaphorically as an all-terrain vehicle that moves along difficult terrain. Theoretical underpinnings of BE includes the concepts of CALP and BICS introduced by Cummins in his CUP model and the Monitor model of Krashen (1984). The authors have also discussed research on effective pedagogical practices used in BE and identified the strengths and limitations of such practices. Understandings developed through the above review provides an analytic framework for our data analysis and interpretation.

Methodology

A qualitative approach was used in this research. The data reported in this paper were generated during the process of a Collaborative Action Research (CAR) study conducted over nine months. A part of the data collected in the CAR is used in this descriptive case study that utilizes qualitative data generated through the interviews with teachers (n=6) and Focus Group Interviews (FGI) with selected groups of students from Grade 6 (n=18) and Grade 8 (n=12). Since there were more than 6-8 students in each group we have used a specific strategy to collect the responses from all students (including the shy ones, silent ones etc.) in which, the students were first asked to write their responses in brief in the mother tongue or English with the question number on a blank paper given to them when a question was posed. After they finished writing the volunteers were asked to elaborate their answers orally to the whole group. Written responses were collected at the end while oral comments were electronically recorded during the FGI. Interviews with teachers were also recorded electronically and later transcribed verbatim.

Consent of the teachers and students for participation in the research was obtained at the beginning of the study and data were anonymized immediately after the collection to ensure ethical conduct of the study. Eight out of nine teachers who teach in the junior secondary grades (Grades 6-11) in the English medium had given their consent for participation in the study. Percentages and a graph were used to analyze quantifiable responses of the students and the constant comparative method (Merriam, 2009) was used in the analysis of qualitative data to identify categories, patterns and themes.

Findings and Discussion

The context of the school and the BE programme and the analysis of the challenges faced by the students and teachers are presented below.

The school and the BE programme

The school is situated within Kandy municipal limits. The total student population is 1800 and there are 84 teachers. Classes are held from Grades 1-13 and the school belongs to the type 1C category with GCE Advanced Level classes in the Arts and Commerce streams. According to the principal and the teachers, the majority of students in the school are from the lower middle class and low-income families.

The school was started as a Roman Catholic missionary school in the year 1837 and the government took control in 1962 as per the Parliamentary Act of the takeover of private and grant-aided schools in 1960. The school layout appeared somewhat compact with single and two-storied buildings erected close to one another in a limited land area.

BE has been implemented in the school since 2006. At present 123 out of 852 students in the Grades 6-11 are in BE classes. According to the BE teachers, the majority of students in the bilingual classes belong to the lower middle class. Also, there are a few students who receive Grade 5 Scholarship Examination (G5SE) bursaries which are offered by the government for the students who excel in G5SE and belong to low-income families.

The junior secondary curriculum consists of six core subjects, i.e. Sinhala/Tamil, English, Mathematics, Science, Religion and History and three groups of optional subjects called basket subjects. Students offer 9 subjects for the GCE (Ordinary Level) examination. The school offers five prescribed subjects, i.e., Mathematics, Science, Health and Physical Education, Geography and Citizenship education in the both Sinhala and English media and are thus categorized under bilingual subjects. Students in Grade 6-11 are encouraged to follow the above subjects in the English medium. To become a student in the bilingual stream the students must follow at least one subject from the bilingual subjects listed above.

On average, about 135 students who complete primary education in this school enter Grade 6 of the same school. However, only a small proportion of students opt for BE. Teachers reported that the parents seem reluctantto admit their children to BE class due to many reasons which include thefear of failure to achieve good results etc. Therefore, to recruit an adequate number of students to the bilingual classes, the school adopts the following procedure:

- conduct annual special awareness programmes for the parents of Grade 5 scholarship holders on the benefits of BE to motivate them to admit their children to Grade 6 bilingual class. These programmers succeeded in convincing almost all parents of Grade 5 scholarship holders to admit their children to BE class.
- recruit additional students for Grades 6 bilingual classes based on a selection test administered by the school.
- prevent of the newly admitted BE students from opting-out of bilingual subjects of their choice until they reach Grade 9.

On the one hand, the above procedure appears to be a tightly controlled process that exerts considerable pressure on the parents to admit their children to bilingual classes. On the other hand, it puts a lot of pressure as well as the responsibility on the school authorities and BE teachers to provide better learning opportunities for the BE students and enhance their achievements. The school and the bilingual teachers seem to actively advocate the governmental policy on bilingual education.

The school uses both subject specialist teachers and ESL teachers to teach bilingual subjects. The teachers have been trained to teach in bilingual classes by the MoE, NIE and the provincial and zonal education offices through different short-term in-service training programmes.

Five out of six teachers who participated in the study were ESL teachers turned bilingual teachers. Their total years of experience in teaching range from 11 years to 30 years while their years of experience in bilingual teaching range from 1-8 years. Three of them had postgraduate qualifications in education. The mathematics teacher did not have professional training in language teaching (See details in Table 1).

Table 1.
Qualifications and experience of the bilingual teachers

Teachers	First Appointment	Highest Educational Qualification	Professional qualifications	Teaching Experience	Subject taught	Experience in Bilingual teaching
Teacher 1	ESL	BA	PGDE*	24	Civic Education	2
Teacher 2	ESL	MA	PGDE	16	Geography	8
Teacher 3	ESL	GCE (A/L)	TTC**	30	Science	2

Teacher 4	ESL	MSc	PGDE	15	Science	8
Teacher 5	Mathematics	GCE (A/L)	NDT***	17	Mathematics	3
Teacher 6	ESL	GCE (A/L)	NDT	11	Geography	1

Note: *Postgraduate Diploma in Education

**Trained Teacher Certificate

***National Diploma in Teaching

Problems and challenges faced by the teachers

Seven main categories of challenge emerged in the analysis of teacher responses.

1. Relatively small number of students in BE classroom

Teachers reported that the parents have been reluctant to admit their children to bilingual classes due to many reasons. Following comments that were made by parents and later reported by teachers in their interviews indicate some of these reasons:

> *"My child won't be able to get "A" grades in O/L if he studies in the English medium."*
>
> *"Are there enough teachers to do bilingual subjects?"*
>
> (Interview data/teacher 1)

The parents seem to be worried about the possibility of their children achieving less than 9As at the GCE (O/L) examination which will make it difficult for them to admit their child to a more popular school to study for GCE (A/L). They also seem to be concerned about the possible resource constraints.

2. Dropping out of students from the BE programme from Grades 6-9

Teachers also highlighted the trend of students dropping out from grade 6 to 9 BE classes due to their parents' concerns and misunderstanding:

> *"In grade 6, when the students get low marks, parents want to move their children to a monolingual class. The reason is these parents do*

not understand that a student takes some time to get familiar with the bilingual medium, which was a transformation from children's grade 1-5 learning medium of Sinhala."

(Interview data/teacher 2)

3. Students' insufficient knowledge of English

This was also identified as a major obstacle for teachers to meet the expected outcome of their lessons. The students' lack of sufficient vocabulary, knowledge on spelling and difficulties in answering questions in the target languages have been significant classroom realities. For instance, one teacher said:

"When we take the answer scripts we can see the blank spaces without answers. For example, during the last term test, there were some questions where students haven't even touched. We noted that when they are asked to provide answers in sentences or couple of sentences they never bothered to answer them".

(Interview data/teacher 4)

Teachers' views on students' knowledge of English were supported and further elaborated by the responses of students in the FGIs.

4. Additional administrative workload and other organizational barriers

Students and teachers both pointed out this issue. It was noted that assigning different responsibilities other than teaching by the school management is an issue for some of the bilingual teachers as it consumed a lot of teacher's teaching time:

"I was involved in the distribution of 'uniform materials' for students of the whole school during the past few weeks and I couldn't go to the classrooms some time."

(Interview data/teacher 2)

5. Lack of permanent classrooms for BE

During the interviews, all teachers highlighted this as a serious practical issue. One teacher articulated her view as follows:

"There is no particular place…I mean a classroom for BE students. Usually, 10-15 minutes we are spending searching for a place. Then we have only 25 minutes to give the content as well as to develop the language skills. On some days we have to conduct lessons under a tree. So how can we do a quality lesson?"

(Interview data/teacher 1)

6. Conflicting guidelines and circulars

According to the data from teachers' interviews, ad hoc changes made by circulars and conflicting guidance provided by higher authorities from time to time posed serious challenges for teachers:

> *"Even the concepts are the same in science, there were some changes in the teaching methodologies from time to time. In the beginning, it was totally in one medium (English), later it was said that the students should know the mother tongue terms and not be much concerned about grammar, but now it is quite different in the CLIL methodology, the teacher should concentrate on both academic terms and accurate grammar."*
>
> (Interview data/teacher 4)

The teachers' view indicates the need to maintain consistency in BE policy.

7. Lack of support for students at home

Teachers also reported that most of the bilingual students in the school belong to the lower middle class whose parents were not English speakers:

"They don't know English. Most of them are unable to help the children at home."

(Interview data/teacher 3)

Teachers' view is further supported and elaborated by the students in their views on support from home environments.

Challenges faced by the students

According to the FGI data, almost all students (Grade 6 & Grade 8) reported that they had one or more language problems concerning reading, writing, speaking and comprehension. Their problems emerged both in classroom learning as well as in the assessments/examinations. A comparison of the magnitude of the above problems faced by bilingual students in grades 6 and 8 is set out in Figure 1.

As shown in Figure 1, except for two problems, the magnitude of the problem for grade 6 students (n=18) was always greater than that of the grade 8 (n=12) students. The majority of students from both grades indicated that they had difficulty in understanding what the teacher explained in the bilingual lesson. A greater percentage of eighth-graders had

this problem compared to the sixth-graders. The reported data indicates that grade 8 students were better in reading, remembering English words, as well as memorizing the meanings than the grade 6 students. Moreover, pronunciation was a great problem for grade 8 students compared to grade 6 students.

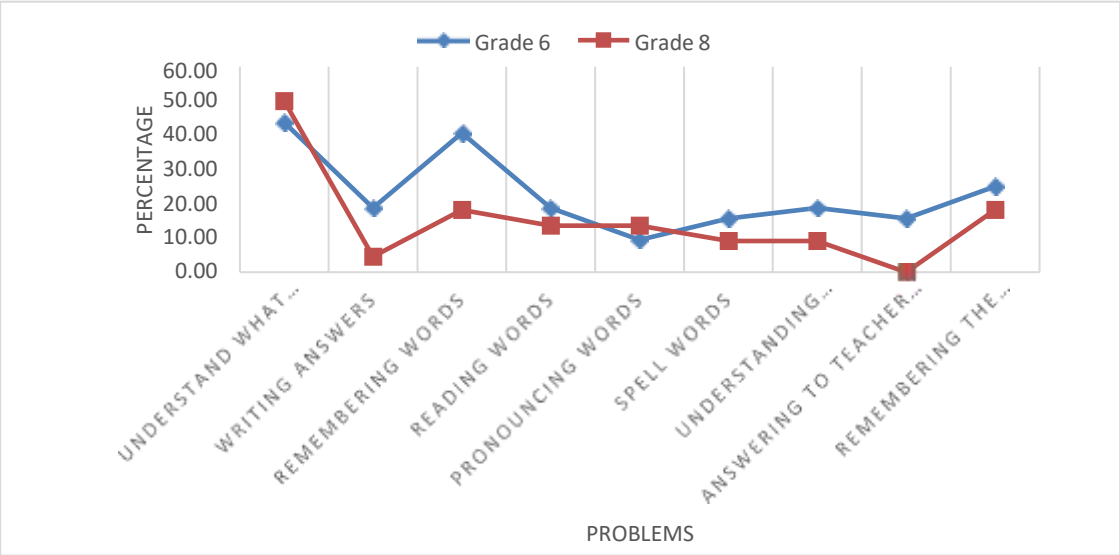

Figure 1: *Language problems faced by students in Grade 6 and Grade 8*

Students reported that these problems emerged both in classroom learning and in assessments/examinations. The following section elaborates the five categories of issues highlighted by the students in teaching, learning and assessments in their bilingual classrooms.

1. Insufficient second language (L2) skills

*A*mong the problems that emerged in relation to insufficient L2 skills in classroom learning were:

- difficulty in understanding teacher explanations
- difficulty in remembering words and their meanings
- difficulty in reading
- difficulty in pronunciation
- difficulty in articulating answers to teachers' questions
- difficulty intaking down notes when the teacher dictates them

Insufficient L2 skills such as reading, comprehension, writing and speech and lack of an adequate vocabulary, spelling and the unavailability to use

language learning resources such as dictionaries and modern technological tools seem to have affected students' learning. The situation implies a need to introduce appropriate resources for learning a second language and developing self-learning and self-directed learning (Zimmerman, 1990) skills among the students.

2. Inappropriate teaching strategies of the teachers

Students reported that during some of the lessons many of them had problems in understanding what the teacher explained in the classroom. Student comments are as follows:

> *"Our Health teacher uses difficult words in the lesson. He is not explaining some technical terms using simple words that we already know. Our civics teacher does that. When we come across two or three complex words while he is explaining we will not be able to understand the lesson."*
>
> (FGI /GR.8)

> *"When the teacher is not using Sinhala words in explaining lessons, I can't understand them"*
>
> (FGI /GR.6)

> *"Difficult to understand the subject as the teacher is not explaining all the terms. Even though I want to ask the meaning of the words during the class, I am scared to ask as the teacher always looks very serious"*
>
> (FGI /GR.8)

Students' difficulties seem to have been aggravated by the teacher's style of teaching and power relations between the teacher and the students. Apparently, there is little interaction and two-way communication between students and the teacher. Krashen's idea of the need to provide substantial amount of comprehensible input under optimal conditions to facilitate language acquisition or the Cummins' concepts of BICS and CALP do not seem to have received the attention of some teachers in the bilingual classrooms. The learning environment also did not seem to support student learning by providing opportunities to interact with the teacher and the peers and to use simple tools such as a dictionary and/or a thesaurus.

3. Difficulties in memorizing subject-specific terms

Memorizing content and subject-specific terms appear to have been difficult for some students:

> *"I try to remember the words but it is very difficult for me. When I hear some words in the classroom, I know some words are familiar to me. ...I mean I already tried to learn by heart those words. However, when I want them, the meaning of the word is not coming to my mind"*
>
> (FGI /GR.8)

> *"I do not know the meaning of the words and I do not have a way to find the meaning of difficult words."*
>
> *"I forget the meaning of the words."*
>
> (FGI /GR.6)

The above comments suggest that the students are used to rote learn the words and their meanings. The lack of student-centered pedagogic practices which promote meaningful learning rather than rote learning and the inability to use language learning resources in and outside the classrooms seem to aggravate this situation.

4. Problems of spelling and pronunciation

The students also seem to have problems of spelling and pronunciation:

> *"When the teacher reads the note, I can't take down them all... as the spellings of some words are not coming to my mind."*
>
> (FGI /GR.6)
>
> *"I do not know how to pronounce some words. So, when the teacher asks me to read it is very difficult. Always the teacher says that the way I pronounce is not correct."*
>
> (FGI /GR.6)
>
> *"The teacher is not pronouncing the words clearly. So, when I want to say that word I do not know how to pronounce it."*
>
> (FGI /GR.8)

Students' difficulties seem to be related to the teacher's way of teaching and providing guidance. Bilingual teachers seem to do their work in isolation and try to grapple with the issues that they face in classrooms individually. However, as pointed out by DuFour (2004) staff in schools need to focus on learning rather than teaching to improve student learning. They need to collaborate in groups to examine ways of helping students to learn better and hold them accountable for the results that lead to school improvement

with commitment as effective professional learning communities (DuFour, 2004).

5.Lack of guidance and support at home

Students also pointed out the difficulties that they encounter due to the lack of support and guidance at home for learning English.

> *"When I am doing homework or studying at home it is difficult to get the meaning of some words. No one is there to help me. I mean my mother and father do not know English."*
>
> (FGI/Gr.6)

Although this is the case for most of the students, one child pointed out:

> *"My father bought me a computer and I am using it to learn difficult terms etc."*
>
> (FGI/Gr.8)

The above students' response opens up the possibility of productive use of modern technology in and out of classrooms to support student learning in BE in this school.

Discussion

The above analysis indicates that BE is implemented at the school level amidst certain drawbacks. The lack of classroom facilities and other resources, the lack of adequate support and guidance for teachers from school and other levels of educational authorities to solve the context-based problems (for example lack of adequate permanent space to conduct bilingual classes) aggravate the situation. The challenges faced by teachers are comparable to those in developing countries where BE teachers work in challenging contexts, which are characterized by the presence of "undertrained and underpaid teachers, under-resourced schools and under-nourished children" (Benson, 2004).

Parental anxieties related to students' achievements in public examinations and their inability to provide appropriate support and guidance at home to their children also add to the complexities of the situation. Benson (2004) based on his studies conducted in Bolivia and Mozambique in primary schools' states that bilingual teachers have the challenge of teaching both communicative language skills in the 'exogenous' or old colonial language and curricular content in both at the same time. The teachers have to possess both bilingualism and biliteracy for this purpose. Moreover, they have to fill the cultural and linguistic gap between home environment and

school (Benson, 2004). Comparable situations prevail in the classrooms of the current study where the teachers have to work with inadequate physical resources and inadequate professional training and guidance in bilingual teaching while trying to address the issues of lack of support from children's home environments, parents and school authorities.

The unique characteristics of bilingual learners in different classroom settings require situated approaches to teaching andlearning that require teachers to make choices and have specific understandings about their profession. The current study revealed theunique nature of the learners in this specific context and the dilemmas faced by the teachers in teaching, learning and assessment of the students. The study findings also implicate the need to provide adequate support by the peers, principals, and officers at different levels of education administration and the parents for the teachers to adapt their teaching according to the specific needs of students. To provide this kind of supportto teachers it may be necessary to develop professional learning communities (DuFour, 2004) comprising teachers and other educational professionals who work collaboratively to enhance student learning in BE.

At the macro level, education authorities could also pay attention to providing additional curricular materials for the students studying in the bilingual mode to encourage self-learning and self-regulated learning (Zimmerman, 1990) to enhance their English language proficiency as well as content mastery.

It has also emerged in the current study that the ESL teachers are assigned to teach subjects for which they are not trained in the bilingual classrooms. This situation analyzed in previous studies (NEC, 2016; Perera, 2014). NEC (2016) recommends that when the need arises to employ an ESL teacher who has nonspecialized in the content area, such teachers should be encouraged to work with the regular subject teacher in planning lessons and assessing students.

Teachers were also of the view that students' lack of exposure to English at the primary school level made their task more difficult. NEC (2016) pays attention to this issue and recommends extending the current practice of implementing Activity Based Oral English (ABOE) from Grade 3 to Grade 1 onwards together with the second language (Sinhala for Tamil students and Tamil for Sinhala students). However, it is advisable to provide adequate training on the use of activity-based English and second language teaching for the primary teachers before the launching of this kind of programme and to provide ongoing support throughout the implementation. The idea of 'tri-level engagement' (Fullan, 2007) which advocates collaborative action by the education authorities (Central and Provincial levels), schools and teachers at the classroom level to improve students' learning is applicable

here.

Conclusions

Although this study is limited to a single school and to the experiences of its BE teachers and students the above analysis suggests that teaching and learning in bilingual classrooms could be a great challenge for both teachers and students in this kind of under-resourced schools where students come from underprivileged families. Students' lack of necessary basic skills in the English language due to lack of exposure toL2 during primary school level and the inappropriate pedagogical practices used by the BE teachers appear to be a major barrier for successful BE in this particular school. In this context, the use of English as the medium of instruction in bilingual classrooms is quite problematic. Current practices need to be revised to include strategies such as the gradual introduction of English medium instructions. It may be useful to encourage teachers through teacher education and In-service training programmes to use more flexible approaches such as translanguaging (Garcia & Lin, 2017; Creese & Blackledge, 2010) in teaching and learning, student-centred teaching and an appropriate CLIL model by providing adequate theoretical understanding and practical strategies to flexibly adapt them in different classroom situations.

Bilingual education is beneficial to the individual as well as the society and therefore the authors argue that it needs to be further expanded and developed in Sri Lanka to enhance the quality, equity, inclusivity and to promote lifelong learning which is highlighted in the Sustainable Development Goal (SGD)-4 relevant to education. To improve the current situation of BE in Sri Lanka it is necessary to provide adequate training, guidance, and necessary resources as well as support for the BE teachers by the school and other relevant authorities. Developing professional learning communities (DuFour, 2004) comprising collaborating teachers in schools and other professionals/officers who are supposed to support teachers at the school level will also be useful to improve teaching-learning and students' achievements. To facilitate that kind of involvement of provincial/zonal and school level authorities and teachers the MoE and the NIE have to adopt a participatory approach or 'tri-level engagement' where mutual interaction and support for change occur among three levels of school and classroom, provincial, and Central (MoE and NIE) as suggested by Fullan (2007) in reforming education rather than using a top-down approach.

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Criminological Organized Network Models of Human Smuggling: An Analysis with Special reference to the United Nations Convention on Transnational Organized Crime and the Protocol against Smuggling of Migrants

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Abstract

The Criminological Organized Network Model (CON Model), one of the theoretical models propounded by several scholars, postulates that the assignment of human smuggling is carried out by well-organized international criminal networks. This model elucidates the objectives, the form, and the tasks carried out by organized criminal groups. The United Nations Convention on Transnational Organized crime 2000 (UNCTOC) and the Protocol against Smuggling of Migrants via Air, Sea and Land (HS Protocol) are the major international legal instruments governing human smuggling. Both these instruments state that human smuggling is a transnational crime committed by organized criminal groups. Against this

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background the main objective of the paper is to examine as to how far the features of the CON Model has been translated into international legal instruments particularly in Article 2(a) of the UNCTOC and Article 3(a) of the HS protocol in order to identify the gaps in the said articles and make recommendations for comprehensive legal provisions in line with the CON Model of human smuggling. Doctrinal research incorporating conceptual, descriptive, interpretative, analytical, and comparative methodology have been utilized in the research. The paper discusses and analyzes the objectives, nature, and tasks of organized crime groups relevant to the definition of an organized criminal group and human smuggling as per the UNCTOC and the HS Protocol and draws out gaps in these definitions. It can be noted that the definition of the organized crime groups fails to be sufficiently comprehensive. There is uncertainty in the human smuggling protocol read with UNCTOC as to whether people who help the human smuggling operation on humanitarian grounds are guilty or not. The paper, it is hoped, will contribute to the establishing of a more comprehensive definition of an Organized Criminal Group (OCG) and set out a clear demarcation and differentiation between people who act with profit-making motives and the sympathetic supporters.

Key words: Criminological Organized Network Model, UNCTOC, Human smuggling protocol, Organized Criminal Group

Introduction

Human smuggling can be defined as an illegal transnational movement through which people are taken from one state to another. Different modus operandi is used to carry out this enterprise. Smuggling through air, sea, and land are employed in the transportation of migrants. The crime is committed both by individuals as well as by criminal groups. Both smugglers and the migrants in addition to becoming collaborators and liable are the crucial parties involved in the criminal process

In the 1990s, the US, Western and Central Europe, and North America experienced a significant increase in the number of unauthorized arrivals of irregular migrants facilitated by human smugglers. Therefore, states have initiated several domestic and regional level counter measures. Gradually, such state-centric and regional initiatives have led to global action to develop international instruments. (McClean, 2007).

The major steps taken in this regard were the adoption of the UN Convention on Transnational Crime2000 (UNCTOC) and the Protocol against Smuggling of Migrants via Air, Sea and Land (HS Protocol). The HS Protocol and UNCTOC contain provisions for criminalizing human smuggling as well as for the protection of the rights of smuggled migrants. The UNCTOC defines what an Organized Criminal Group (OCG) is, and clarifies the different types of transnational organized crimes and national and transnational obligations of states parties, rights of the victims and witnesses etc. The HS protocol defines human smuggling and lists out the crimes connected with human smuggling, such as documents fraud, and explains the obligation of states parties, the rights of smuggled migrants, and mutual legal assistance between states etc.

Parallel to the deliberation on international legal instruments, a set of scholars have attempted to develop theoretical models on human smuggling based on empirical evidence across the globe. These models can be categorized as the Business Model, Human Rights-Based Model, Criminological and Organized Network Models, Estimates of Flow, Mode of the Crossing, and the Likelihood of Apprehension Models. In addition, there have been other developments such as the Gender Approach, Global Comparative and Structural Approach, Labor Demand and Supply, and Deterrence Theory Models. While several models have been conceived, it is nevertheless to be appreciated and recognized that these are all interrelated and interdependent. They fall within the overall ambit of the human smuggling process and reflect the different facets of this considerably complex operation.

This paper focuses on the Criminological, Organized Network Model (CON Model) which examines the objective, nature, characteristics, and tasks of the organized criminal groups. The CON model has presented diverse views regarding the objective, nature, characteristics, and tasks of the organized criminal groups. This paper mainly focuses on the extent such diverse research findings of CON model are reflected in both the Article (2a) of UNCTOC, and the Article 3(a) of the HS protocol in order to comprehend the lacuna and to suggest making comprehensive legal provisions in line with the CON Model of human smuggling.

The paper first sets out the objective of the study and outlines the methodology used. Thereafter, the discussion is presented in three parts. The first part of the paper elaborates an examines the model in detail, and the second part of the paper explains the definition of Organized Criminal Group (OCG) under Article 2 (a) of the UNCTOC, and the definition of human smuggling under Article 3(a) of the HS protocol and other relevant provisions of both

instruments. In addition, this part provides a comparative analysis to affirm the extent UNCTOC and the HS protocol are the fundamental components of the CON model. The final section which concludes the study seeks to set out the key findings.

Objective of the study

The objectives of the paper are as follows.

- To identify the main characteristics of the of the CON model
- To describe the features of the CON model and
- To compare and contrast the features of the CON Model and Article 2(a) of the UNCTOC and Article 3 (a) of the HS protocol in order to suggest amendments to existing legal provisions.

Materials and Methodology

The doctrinal research method was used in this study which is a genre of research in the legal field most suited to the objective of this study. Also known as theory-testing research, it deals with analytically studying existing laws, related cases and authoritative materials on some specific matter. Under the doctrinal method, conceptual, analytical, interpretative, and comparative methodologies were adopted. Conceptual analysis was used to describe and explain the indispensable meaning of the CON model and different facets of the model. The analytical and interpretative methodology is used to describe and explain the relevant articles in the UNCTOC and the HS protocol. The comparative methodology is employed to ascertain how far the underpinning of the CON model is mirrored in the international instruments namely the UNCTOC and the HS Protocol.

The UNCTOC and the HS Protocol have been used as primary data. Books, journal articles, reports of the United Nations Office on drugs and Crime, guidebooks, web resources have been analyzed as secondary data.

Scope of the Study

Several studies indicate that although both organized criminal groups and organized criminal gangs share common features there are dissimilarities between these two. In broader context organized criminal gangs commit transnational crimes, drug smuggling, human trafficking and terrorist activities, whereas the organized criminal groups particularly do not engage in terrorist activities. This paper is restricted only to organized criminal groups that involve transnational crimes, particularly human smuggling.

Findings and Discussion

Criminological, Organized Network Model and Human Smuggling

According to the EU, the transnational criminal organizations collaborate with more than two people to commit serious crimes for the purpose of obtaining financial benefit. (Holmes, 2015). The German Police defined the OCG as 'any group of people who have consciously and deliberately decided to co-operate in illegal activities over a certain period of time, apportioning tasks among themselves and often using modern infrastructure systems, with the principle aim of amassing profits as quickly as possible' ~~(German Police,1992)~~. Another definition given by the Interpol's Organized Crime Unit is: 'any group having a corporate structure whose primary objective is to obtain money through illegal activities, often surviving fear or corruption'. The Canadian criminal code defines the OCG as:

> *"a group of three or more people whose purpose is the commission of one or more serious offences that would likely result in the direct or indirect receipt of a material benefit, including a financial benefit, by the group."*

Nature of human smuggling networks

A group of scholars have attempted to theorize the nature of the organized criminal smuggling networks. Human smuggling networks have numerous characteristics. Some groups may claim all the features while some may just fit in to just a couple. (Samuel, 2003, 2004).

Several studies reveal that human smuggling is committed by well organized criminal groups. John Salt and Jeremy Stein state that 'smuggling of migrants is an established branch of a well-organized international gangster syndicate' (2000). One such example is the Big 'Snakehead', the Chinese human smuggling network. Such organized human smuggling criminal networks are sophisticated (Samuel, 2003, 2004) having a hierarchical structure~~,~~ and clear division of labor among the members of the organization (Zhang, 2008). Theodore Baird states that 'the Organized Crime Model involves a control structure where a centrally placed 'smuggler' dishes out commands and enforces the rules in a social hierarchy' (Baird, 2011).

Alternatively, certain studies indicate that there are loose networks that have no clear command structure, working with flexibility and are united on an ad-hoc basis (Kung, 2000). These groups sign agreements/contracts when and if necessary and finish their task

(UNODC, 2011). Once they finish the tasks the groups dissolve. Kung (2000) also verifies that criminal groups are undeniably far more cellular in structure with loose connections made and broken all the time with more subtle hierarchies.

Organized criminal groups involved in human smuggling are active in other serious crimes such as human trafficking, document fraud, money laundering, drug trafficking and corruption, smuggling of firearms, drugs, stolen vehicles and other illicit goods (Salt & Stein 1997,). Another study (Myrianne Coen (ed.), 2011) too postulates human smuggling as a criminal act committed by well-organized networks with links to other transnational crimes. Examples are the Hungarian based criminal group, 'Snakeheads' based in China; mafia groups in the United States and Italy; Big' coordinating agent in Pakistan; and the Chinese 'Fuk Ching'. These are well established criminal networks facilitating human smuggling with other transnational organized crimes (Kung, 2000). The scope of this research paper is however limited to human smuggling.

Another notable feature of these OCGsis that they have and use ethnic, religious and social links to achieve their tasks. These ties are important to establish working relationships in illegal activities (Smith & Papachristos, 2016; Von Lampe & Johansen, 2004). The United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) states that smugglers are often ethnically linked to the territories where they operate or share ethnic or linguistic ties with the migrants they smuggle. Some other authors too favored the notion of social ties. Zhang (2008)in his book, titled *Chinese Human Smuggling Organizations, Families, Social Networks, and Cultural Imperatives* argues that social networksplay a big role in the entire human smuggling operation.

Herman (2006) also supports this aspect and has added the familial model to the Criminological, Organized Network Model. In her view, smuggling networks operations are facilitated by family, friends and relative circles. Although both Zang (2008) and Herman (2006) agree with the point that the social network play a significant role they differ in one aspect. The former claims that social networks facilitate the journey in terms of payment and provide amenities in the destination, whereas the latter finds that social networks act as the middleman helping the smugglers to search out prospective clients.

The EU also points out that the members of the OCGs have casual association through social and family contacts. These ethnic, religious and social networks are scattered in the transit and destination

countries. They support the operation by paying the necessary fee or down payment, and by providing food and shelter.

Naylor says that smuggling OCGs are different to other criminal groups as they have a special knowledge about the business and are a durable hierarchical structured organization. He further notes that these groups use violence and corruption. They also contribute to the global economy (Naylor, 2002).

Terrorist groups also engage in criminal activity like drug trafficking and human smuggling to finance their operations (Lanzante, 2009). For example, in Sri Lanka, the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) have been involved in human smuggling (Berry et al., 2003). Another example is that of the Mexican drug cartel an OCG which engaged in human smuggling had connections with terrorist organizations.

Objective of the Organized Criminal Groups

The main objective of the OCGs is gaining profit out of the human smuggling venture. Many studies prove this fact. Salt and Stein identify Criminological, Organized Network Model (CON model) as an example and theorize human smuggling as a business composed of legitimate and illegitimate markets in which actors pursue profit and commercial gain (Salt & Stein 2000). Veronika Bilger (2006) also agrees that the human smuggling operators make profit out of this transnational service industry. The main beneficiaries of the business are the destination country employers, smugglers and officials from source countries (Kung, 2000). As per Bilger, the smugglers are perceived as service providers and the migrants as clients. As a European Commission study (2015) on migrant smuggling states: 'smuggling is a supply and demand driven businesses. The International Organization for Migration (IOM) states that for organized crime groups, smuggling people across borders is a *"low-risk, high-profit"* business.

Close to 50 million persons across the globe have been smuggled, with financial returns of beyond $3.5 billion per year. In 2015, human smuggling criminal networks had an estimated turnover of between €3 and €6 billion. Furthermore, migrant smugglers made an estimated €190 million in revenues in 2019 on the western, central and eastern Mediterranean routes alone (Europol, 2019). Although many studies found that the objective of the OCG is profit making, some studies have found that family members, relatives and social networks provide different services to the smugglers and migrants free of charge. (Herman 2006; Zhang 2008).

Tasks of the Organized Criminal Groups

The OCGs assign their tasks among the members of the group. In human smuggling groups there are three grades or divisions. These three categories can be further divided as permanent and non-permanent members. Generally, the top-level leaders are the permanent members. The intermediaries and low- level members are ad-hoc or non-permanent. They include public officials, family, friends, social networks, and in few instances, other terrorist groups.

The Australian Institute of Criminology points out ten different categories of people that are engaged in a single smuggling process (Bajrektarevic, 2000). One study by Zhang (2008) proves that the Chinese organized criminal group called 'Snake Heads 'assign the tasks among the recruiter, document vendor, payment collector, coordinator, transporter, arranger of fraudulent business delegation, securer of deposit, escort, fraudulent marriage arranger, guard, arranger of travel, guarantor, leaser of boats, receiver of clients, corrupt officials, arranger of stowaways, and student visa fraud organizer. These are described as the important parties of the groups as bridge builders and service providers (Zhang, 2008), Edward Kleeman (2007). The bridge builders build territorial and social bridges and operate at a global and inter-ethnic level, accept a key role in organized crime. The facilitators are service providers who give a wide range of important services such as, enrolling potential migrants, collecting cash from them, and arranging forged documents, transporting migrants to the other borders, taking care of the migrants during the voyage (in the case of maritime smuggling; this is important), sorting out the organizing tasks and coordinating the sub procedure between them. This group includes safe house administrators, overseers, and debt collectors both in the source country and in the destination.

Public officials from source, transit and destination also have major tasks in the human smuggling process. As stated above, these public officials are ad-hoc members in the OCGs. The process of human smuggling cannot be smoothly executed without the support of the law enforcement officials. According to the UNODC, the public official in some countries have also been implicated in facilitating irregular migration and enabling their stay (2011). The same view has been supported in some other studies as well. For example, Law enforcement officials at different points assist human smuggling by performing different tasks connected to their role.

The law officials include border control officials, police forces, soldiers, immigration officials, embassies or consulate employees (Zhang,

2008). They are well paid for their work. The UNODC also notes that certain public officials of the highest-level and politicians also take part in maritime smuggling (2015).

Criminological, Organized Network Models of Human Smuggling, United Nations Convention on Transnational Organized Crime and the Protocol against Smuggling of Migrants Via Air, Sea and Land

The UNCTOC and the Protocol are the major developments that seek to handle the issue of human smuggling. According to Article 37(4) of the UNCTOC:

> *'any protocol to this convention shall be interpreted together with this convention taking into account the purpose of that protocol'.*

In this context the analysis of relevant provisions of the Protocol directs focus on substantial provisions of the UNCTOC.

The CON model indicates that smuggling networks are present in multiple states and they commit transnational organized crimes (Salt & Stein 1997; Zhang 2008; Herman, 2006). Regarding this point, it is to be noted that although the convention is titled as the Convention on Transnational Organized Crime and the objective is criminalizing Transnational Organized Crime (TOC), the term TOC is not defined in the convention. There was a serious discussion on agreeing upon a universal definition on TOC. However, considering the diverse legal traditions and systems of the world, it was difficult to agree on a universal definition on TOC. This is seen as a drawback of this convention.

Article 2 (a) defines the term OCG, for the purposes of this convention, as:

> *"Organized Criminal Group" shall mean a structured group of three or more persons existing for a period of time and acting in concert with the aim of committing one or more serious crimes or offences established in accordance with this convention, in order to obtain, directly or indirectly, a financial or other material benefit."*

Article 3(a) of the Protocol defines human smuggling as follows:

> "Smuggling of migrants" shall mean the procurement, in order to obtain, directly or indirectly, a financial or other material benefit, of the illegal entry of a person into a State Party of which the person is not a national or a permanent resident;

Article 2(a) of the UNCTOC and Article 3(a) of the HS protocol should be read together. Thus, human smuggling should be viewed as being committed by an OCG. With this backdrop, the following sections will analyze how far the above definitions in the UNCTOC and the HS protocol reflect the elements of the CON Model.

The term structured group

The foremost element in the definition is a "structured group". Article 2 (c) UNCTOC defines the term structured group as follows:

"Structured group shall mean a group that is not randomly formed for the immediate commission of an offence and that does not need to have formally defined roles for its members, continuity of its membership or a developed structure".

The definition fails to provide clarity regarding the meaning of what is a structured group. As per the definition, OCG should be a "structured group". The above discussion on the nature of CON model asserts that organizational patterns of human smuggling groups vary. As per the said model there are different typologies of groups engage in human smuggling activities. Hence, there is an uncertainty in definition whether all these types of criminal groups would fit within the definition of structured group.

The Phrase 'period of existence'

The second important aspect in Article 2 (a) of the UNCTOC is the period of existence. Article 2 states that in order to be categorized as an OCG, the group should exist for a period of time. However, the provision has failed to explain what the period of existence is. This is also seen as a shortcoming in the convention. The CON model reveals that there are some groups which operate for a long time (Example: The Chinese Snakeheads which originated in 1980), and some are ad-hoc groups. In 2009 four persons had arranged a smuggling operation from Thailand to Canada to illegally transport around five hundred (500) Sri Lankans (Appulonappa v Canada 2015, SCC.). This is an illustration to assert than ad-hoc criminal groups also succeed in the areas of criminal operation. In this context, it is understandable that many groups do not fulfill the requirement of period of existence as per the UNCTOC.

Financial or other material benefit is a significant feature

The third element in both Article 2(a) and 3(a) of the protocol is "financial or other material benefit." The objective of the OCG is gaining profit. The financial element is a core factor to prove the offence of human smuggling. (Kathirgamathamby, 2016) The

inclusion of financial motivation in the HS Protocol achieves two important tasks, (a) it does not punish facilitating illegal entry for humanitarian purposes (b) it opposes the deception that all border crossings are clearly lawful or unlawful. However, the Protocol does not provide a clear solution to acts based on humanitarian aspects. The UNODC has explicitly stated that the protocol does not 'criminalize family members, non-governmental or religious groups that facilitate the illegal entry of migrants for humanitarian or non-profit reasons'.

The CON model emphasizes that the objective of the criminal groups is profit making. The profit makers are smugglers, employers, immigrant agents, and the corrupt public officials. Part one of this paper reveals that the smuggling operations are assisted by family, friends and relatives free of charge.

The analysis of the UNCTOC and the protocol discloses two distinct points. On the one hand article 2 of UNCTOC emphasizes that 'OCG' does not contain groups that do not seek to gain any 'financial or other material benefit'. On the other hand, based on humanitarian grounds, the protocol does not aim to punish the people who helped the migrants. As required by article 37(4) of the UNCTOC, article 2(a) and article 3(a) of the protocol should be read together. In doing so it is unclear whether people involved in smuggling operation on humanitarian grounds will be guilty of human smuggling or not.

Terrorist Groups and human smuggling

Preamble of the UNCTOC notes that there are links between transnational organized crime and terrorist crimes. However, UNCTOC does not intend to include the terrorist and insurgent groups in the definition of OCG as that their aims are entirely different (UNODC, 2011). Yet the CON model reveals that OCGs have links with terrorist groups and some terrorist groups commit human smuggling. Hence, it is not clear as to whether human smuggling operations carried out by a terrorist organization is a transnational organized crime as per the convention.

Conclusions

The purpose of the of the research study was to find out how far the UNCTOC represents the views expressed under the CON model that are in the UNCTOC and the Protocol. The study reveals that the UNCTOC does not define the term TOC and, also the definition of OCG. Article 2(a) fails to cover various types of groups that commit transnational crimes including human smuggling. It therefore fails to be comprehensive. Also, Article 2(c) the UNCTOC does not answer what a structured group is. Furthermore, article 2(a) fails to specify

what the period of existence of an OCG is in order for it to be categorized as one. Moreover, both the UNCTOC and the protocol fall short of giving a clear answer as to whether intermediaries who take part in the human smuggling operation on humanitarian grounds willbe guilty of the crime of human smuggling. These findings can contribute to establishing a comprehensive definition of an OCG and to setting out a clear demarcation between people who act with profit- making motives, and sympathetic supporters. Taking into account, all these findings, this paper suggests that the international community has to work towards formulating more comprehensive provisions consistent with the different facets of the CON model.

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Healthcare Provider Responses and Preparedness towards Caring for Females who have Experienced Intimate Partner Violence in Sri Lanka

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Abstract

Females who experience intimate partner violence have frequent and repeated contact with healthcare providers whose ability to provide care and support is contextual and often problematized by gendered attitudes and beliefs. This cross-sectional study examined healthcare providers' responses and preparedness to care for females who reported intimate partner violence in hospital and community care

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settings in Sri Lanka. In total, 405 healthcare providers from four provinces completed a questionnaire. Data were analyzed using descriptive and analytical statistics. Of the 177 nurses, 145 doctors, and 83 midwives who participated in the study, most (76%) had met females living with intimate partner violence, but the types of violence reported to them, and their responses varied among the three professions. A range of factors operating at the individual, institutional, and community levels shaped healthcare provider responses and preparedness to support females reporting intimate partner violence (IPV). These results have implications for the training of healthcare providers and for putting in place adequate institutional resources in order to improve the health sector response to IPV.

Keywords: Healthcare provider preparedness, healthcare provider responses, health sector response, intimate partner violence

Introduction

The World Health Organization (WHO) defines intimate partner violence (IPV) as "any behaviour within an intimate relationship that causes physical, psychological or sexual harm to those in the relationship" (WHO, 2012). A large and growing body of evidence shows that IPV can have short- and long-term consequences, including physical, mental, sexual, and reproductive health issues (García-Moreno et al., 2015; WHO, 2013). Research from different countries also shows that females who experience IPV have frequent and repeated contact with healthcare providers (HCP) (WHO, 2012; Bair-Merritt et al., 2014; Ellsberg et al., 2008; Fulu et al., 2013; Campbell, 2002). It is also evident that HCPs can help females living with IPV in various ways: providing them with opportunities to talk about the abuse, offer counselling, get information about other services and resources, become less tolerant of abusive behaviours, and, eventually, encourage a survivor to leave abusive relationships (Kothari & Rhodes, 2006; Nguyen et al., 2016; Thomas, n.d.; Boeckelet al., 2017; Change et al., 2010; Hegarty et al., 2012). However, there are many barriers to providing IPV-related care in healthcare settings. Some of these barriers relate to HCPs' lack of knowledge and skills about how to respond to females experiencing IPV and/or negative attitudes and beliefs about IPV, and others relate to the availabilityof institutional supports and resources (Crowe & Murray, 2015; Nguyen et al., 2016; Boeckel et al., 2017; Morse et al., 2012).

Much of the research on HCPs' role in IPV-related care provision is from high-income countries. The knowledge base from low and middle-income countries (LMIC) is growing, and research conducted in different settings in Asia reports that while 40–90% of females have experienced IPV (Colombini et al., 2017), only a small proportion sought help from HCPs (Nguyen et al., 2016; Norris et al., 2017; Sheehan et al., 2011). The literature is limited on HCP preparedness and responses to provide IPV-related care in Sri Lanka, the setting for this study. Twenty-two percent (22%) of 653 females who participated in a recent survey in Sri Lanka had experienced IPV from a male partner during their lifetime (de Mel et al., 2013). In the same study, nearly 40% of participant men (n=1658) reported perpetrating IPV in their lifetime. A scoping review of studies published from 1980 to 2015 (Guruge et al., 2015) found that IPV rates vary across Sri Lanka. More females in the Northern and Eastern Provinces who were affected by the 25-year long civil war reported IPV than in the other provinces.

Since 2002, specialized one-stop crisis centres (called Mithuru Piyasa) have been designated in Sri Lanka to provide IPV-related services to females have been institutionalized into the health sector (Guruge et al., 2015). Supported by the Ministry of Health, these centres aimed to integrate hospital-based services such as treatment of injuries, reproductive care, counselling, and psychological and other care, treatments, and supports with out-of-hospital resources, such as the Police, women's shelters, legal aid, and social services. The Ministry of Health also delivers IPV-related training to HCPs who work in hospitals or community-based primary healthcare units across the country (Family Health Bureau, n.d.). However, there is limited knowledge about whether and how HCPs respond and feel prepared to provide IPV-related care to females who seek their services.

As noted earlier, barriers to providing IPV-related care in healthcare settings have been documented in different countries and include HCPs' limited preparedness, lack of access to relevant knowledge and skills, inadequate support from colleagues, and heavy workloads (Kamimura et al., 2014; Paul, 2016; Parvin et al., 2016). In Sri Lanka, a few studies have focused on different HCP groups and students (e.g., nurses, midwives, and medical students) (Guruge, 2012;

Jayatilleke et al., 2015; Seneviratne, 2020; Wijewardene, 2016). A 2012 study of nurses from across the country reported that they were inadequately prepared to care for females subjected to IPV (Guruge, 2012). A more recent study found that nursing diploma and degree programs do not adequately prepare nurses to identify or provide care to females experiencing IPV (Seneviratne, 2020). Surveys of university students and male medical students also revealed victim-blaming attitudes towards female survivors of IPV and, in general, gender inequitable attitudes towards females (Haj-Yahia & de Zoysa, 2007; Wijewardene, 2016). However, there is relatively little comparative information about HCP preparedness as part of the health sector response to IPV. This study aimed to examine nurses, doctors, and midwives' responses and preparedness to care for females experiencing IPV in the Sri Lankan context.

Materials and Methods

The Study Settings and Data Collection Methods

The study focused on government hospitals and community health centres in the Western, Southern, Central, and Northern Provinces of Sri Lanka. The research team developed a questionnaire based on literature as well as the findings of a series of key informant interviews with HCPs, researchers, and educators in Sri Lanka. This self-administered questionnaire had 34 questions organized into seven sections to gather basic demographic information, information about experiences with females who reported IPV, perceptions and attitudes towards IPV, and the preparedness to provide services including specific training and knowledge about related laws. The survey instrument was checked for face validity by a panel of five academics and educators in Sri Lanka and pre-tested among a small sample of HCPs not included in the study. Six (06) research assistants (RAs) trained in health sciences, social work, psychology, health promotion, and fluent in local languages (Tamil and Sinhalese) were recruited and trained to conduct participant recruitment and data collection. After obtaining approval from relevant research ethics boards and the hospitals involved, nurses, doctors, and midwives who have worked in a government hospital or a community-based primary healthcare centre for at least six months were invited to participate in the study. The expected sample size (388) was calculated assuming that 30% of the HCPs will have contact with a female reporting abuse (based on community prevalence of IPV), a

95% confidence level, 5% margin of error, and a 20% non-response rate (Dhand & Khatkar, 2014).

Data Collection and Analysis

Potential participants received information about the study through posters or word of mouth. Those interested in learning more about the study were invited to meet with one of the RAs at a hospital or community-based primary healthcare centre to receive information. Individuals interested in participating in the study signed the study consent form and received a survey questionnaire in their language of choice (Tamil, Sinhala or English). They returned the completed questionnaires to the RA on the same day or within the week. They received an honorarium to cover the time spent and travel costs related to participating in the study. The completed surveys were identified by a numeric code and were not linked to any personal information.

The data were entered into an SPSS program (version 32) and analyzed using descriptive and analytical statistics; Cross-tabulations and chi-square tests were used to assess the relationships' magnitude and reliability when comparing responses among different HCP groups.

Results

Study Participants

In total, 405 HCPs (177 nurses, 145 doctors, and 83 midwives), participated in the study. All the midwives, most nurses (89%), and almost half of doctors (48%) were female. Participants' ages ranged from 24–60 years; and most (83%) were married. Sixty-one percent (61%) had worked as HCPs for five years or less.

HCPs' Encounters with Females who have Experienced IPV

In total, 398 HCPs (98%) reported having had at least one female reporting IPV to them in their lifetime, while 302 (76%) of the participants (81% of nurses, 77% of doctors, and 64% of midwives) said that at least one female reported IPV to them in the last six months. On average, HCPs said five females (range= 1-150; SD=15.7)

reported IPV to them during the six months prior to their participation in this study. Doctors encountered more reporting on average (mean=9.8, SD=25.2), compared to nurses (mean=2.3, SD=4.4) and midwives (mean=2, SD=2.2). Healthcare providers who said they had met a female experiencing IPV (142 nurses, 111 doctors, and 50 midwives) were asked about the location of the most recent encounter. Most respondents physically met the females who reported IPV in the wards (56%), outpatient departments (23%), and clinics (28%). Only eight percent (8%) reported meeting a survivor at a One-stop Crisis Center.

Types of Abuse Reported to HCPs

The most frequent type of abuse reported to the HCPs was physical abuse. Overall, (82%) of the HCPs surveyed said that females reported physical violence (see Table 1 below). This was highest among doctors (93%) and lowest among nurses (73%). The second most frequent form of abuse reported to HCPs was emotional abuse (60%). A higher proportion of midwives (82%) reported meeting females experiencing emotional abuse compared to doctors (60%) and nurses (51%) ($p<0.05$). Only 29% of the HCPs said that females reported experiences of sexual violence (29%). However, this proportion was significantly higher for midwives (51%) than for nurses (30%) and doctors (20%). When reporting was examined by gender of the doctors(the group with the most gender diversity, as noted earlier), a significantly higher proportion of female doctors (30%) than male doctors (12%) ($p<0.05$) reported meeting a female who experienced sexual violence. Overall, midwives encountered more reporting of all types of abuse except physical abuse and controlling behaviours.

Table 1. *Types of abuse reported to the HCPs*

HCP group / Type of abuse	Nurses	Doctors	Midwives	Total#	
Physical Abuse	102/139 (73.4%)	103/111 (92.8%)	25/31 (80.6%)	230/281 (81.9%)	p= 0.17
Emotional Abuse	77/139 (55.4%)	66/111 (59.5%)	27/33 (81.8%)	170/283 (60.1%)	p= 0.41
Sexual Abuse	42/139 (30.2%)	22/111 (19.8%)	18/35 (51.4%)	82/285 (28.8%)	P= 0.03*

Financial Abuse	34/139 (24.5%)	26/111 (23.4%)	20/35 (57.1%)	80/285 (28.1%)	p= 0.01*
Controlling behaviour	14/139 (10.1%)	21/111 (18.9%)	5/29 (17.2%)	40/279 (14.3%)	p= 0.21

#Multiple responses, percentages based on different numbers that responded to the question. *Chi-square test for reliability testing, significance level p<0.05

HCPs' Responses to the Females

Most nurses and midwives reported that they offered befriending services (82%) – a term used mostly by nurses and midwives in Sri Lanka to differentiate supportive listening from the formal counselling offered by doctors. Of the 302 HCPs who had met at least one female experiencing IPV in the last 6 months, 50% said they provided treatment and care for injuries, including wound care and medication to control pain or infections. The proportions varied by HCP category: highest among doctors (68%), followed by nurses (50%)and midwives (6%). Only 30% of the HCPs said they documented IPVin the clinical records, and only 34% of the nurses, 38% of the doctors, and 46% of the midwives said they worked with survivors to develop a safety plan. Furthermore, only 20% of nurses and doctors and 25% of midwives said they provided IPV-related information to them. About half (47%) of the HCPs said that they considered whether the female's life was threatened by IPV and inquired if they wanted to report the abuse or take any other action.

Referral to Other Services

Among the 302 HCPs who said they met a female who had experienced IPV during the last six months, only 33% reported making referrals within the hospital to the psychiatric ward or clinic, the Judicial Medical Officer (JMO), or the Police station located within the hospital. Only 22% reported referring females to the Police station outside the hospital. The rest (45%) did not refer them to any services.

HCPs' Perceptions about IPV

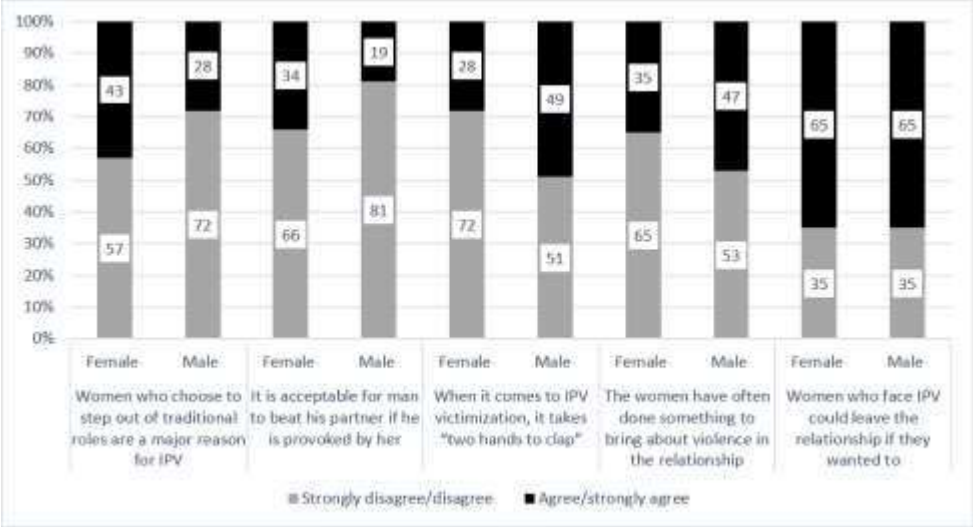

Figure 1. HCPs' Perceptions about IPV

As shown in Figure 1, HCPs' responses varied with the type of statement asked. For example, about 43% of the female HCPs agreed that females stepping out of traditional roles is a major reason for IPV,

and 34% of the female HCPs believed that that it is acceptable for a male to abuse a female if he is "provoked" by her, while 35% believed that the female has "done something" to bring about the abuse. About 50% of the male HCPs agreed with the statement about males and females being responsible for IPV victimization equally, and almost 50% of the male HCPs agreed with the statement that females have often done something to bring about violence. Sixty-five percent of both male and female HCPs agreed/strongly agreed with the statement that female victims of IPV could leave an abusive relationship if they wanted to.

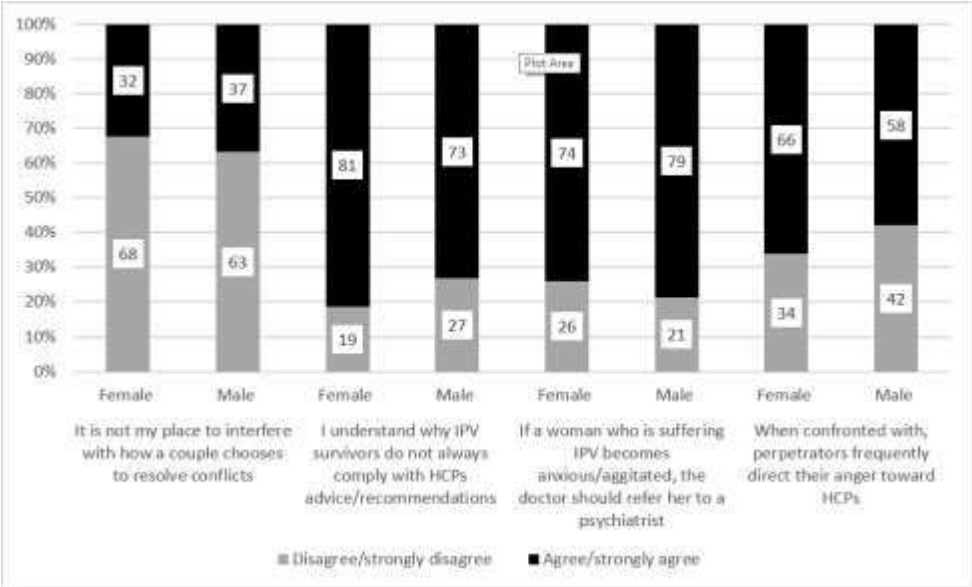

Figure 2. HCPs' Perceptions about Providing IPV-related Care

HCPs Perceptions about Providing IPV-related Care

As shown in Figure 2, most HCPs, both female and male, disagreed with the statement that it was not their place to intervene in IPV situations. Most of them also understand why IPV survivors may not always take their advice. They also believed that the abusers may direct their anger towards them if confronted. Most male and female HCPs also agreed with the statement that doctors should refer females who experience IPV-related anxiety or agitation to a psychiatrist.

HCPs' Perceptions of Laws Related to IPV

As shown in Figure 3 below, out of the 363 HCPs who responded to the questions about the laws related to IPV in Sri Lanka, 77% of females and 67% males agreed/strongly agreed that existing laws fail to adequately protect females who experience IPV, however less males than females (50% compared to 74%) agreed that laws were not harsh enough to deter males from committing such acts of violence. More than 70% of female and male HCPs disagreed that the laws make it "too easy" for a female to bring charges against males.

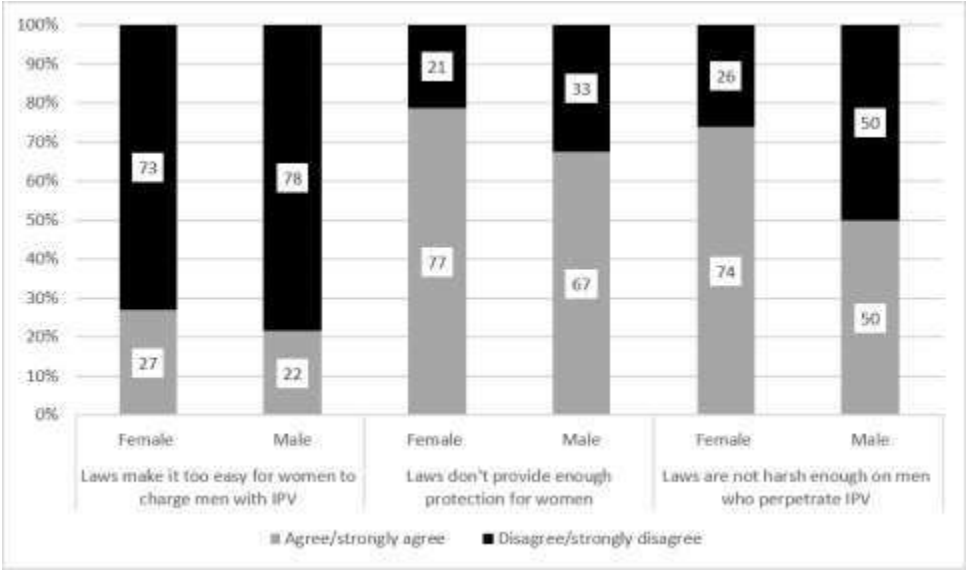

Figure 3. HCPs' Opinions about Laws Related to IPV

HCPs' IPV-related Training and Preparedness

Of the 363 HCPs who responded to the question about IPV-related training, only 30% of the doctors, 42% of the midwives, and 17% of the nurses reported having received such training. Most participants who had received training reported attending workshops or seminars (66%), followed by specific training programs (26%), as part of their undergraduate (10%) or graduate training (6%), but only 60% of them felt prepared to respond to females who report IPV to them. More doctors (65%) than nurses and midwives (56% and 57%, respectively) reported feeling that they were prepared after the training ($p>0.05$). Most HCPs (81%) reported that they need more training to work with females experiencing IPV: the proportion of HCPs who reported this was highest among the midwives (90%), followed by nurses (80%) and doctors (77%) ($p >0.05$).

Discussion

Intimate partner violence is a serious and prevalent issue in Sri Lanka. However, despite various stakeholders' efforts to raise awareness and change attitudes, it remains challenging for most affected females to seek care, supports, and services for IPV and leave abusive relationships. Previous studies have shown that females are more likely to seek help from informal networks than formal ones

(Guruge et al., 2015). In Sri Lanka, some hospital-based IPV-related services such as befriending and referral to counselling, Police, and outside shelters have been offered since 2002, and more recently, investments were made to set up hospital-based one-stop crises services type centres and to train HCPs to provide services in those centers (Seneviratne, 2020).

The present study is one of the largest conducted in Sri Lanka to gather insights from HCPs to understand the opportunities and barriers to providing care and services to females experiencing IPV. It included nurses, midwives, and doctors working in hospital settings and a sample of midwives working in community settings in four provinces.

With more than 75% of the HCPs across the country reporting that females had disclosed IPV to them at the healthcare setting where they worked, all HCPs must receive the necessary training to be prepared to better respond to females disclosing IPV. More doctors and nurses working in hospital settings said that they met females reporting IPV than midwives who work in a hospital or community setting. Although investments have been made to create specialized centres for IPV-related care, the results of this study show that doctors and nurses mostly met females during routine care in wards, outpatient departments, and clinics. Most midwives also received reports of IPV at clinics (and not in the home or other community settings).

Community settings represent some of the earliest IPV-related services in Sri Lanka that have provided essential support to females for decades before the institutionalization of services (Guruge et al., 2015). These results may indicate why surviving females may be reluctant to access care at centers specifically set up for IPV because of stigma or fears about safety if they are seen visiting those centres. These results also highlight the need for HCPs to be prepared to provide IPV-related care in all settings as the ideal scenario. A review of health sector responses in various settings and countries has also shown that the choice of service entry point is less critical than a well-coordinated and connected systems-level response for IPV (Colombini et al., 2017).

More nurses and midwives than doctors said that females reported sexual violence to them indicating a higher level of comfort in reporting sexual abuse to female HCPs. Also, more midwives who work in the community said that females reported emotional and financial abuse to them than did nurses and doctors. This may be because females are likely to report these forms of abuse to HCPs with whom they have built long-standing relationships rather than those they meet in a hospital during a short visit. Overall, HCPs' encounters with females and the type of abuse reported to them may be determined by their gender, the setting they work in, and the nature of their contact with affected females.

The Ministry of Health guidelines for responding to IPV within hospital settings recommends befriending or supportive listening as one of the first-line services offered by all HCPs (Wijewardena, 2016). Most HCPs, but more nurses and midwives than doctors, reported providing supportive listening to females. On the one hand, this may indicate adherence to the guidelines. However, on the other hand, it could also indicate a reluctance by HCPs to characterize the services they offered as counselling and their lack of preparedness to provide such counselling. As what is considered 'formal counselling' in Sri Lanka is limited to the services provided by trained psychiatrists or psychologists, the former being the more common category of staff in government hospital settings, nurses and midwives were less likely to report the services being offered as counselling. This may explain why most HCPs refer females who are 'unable to cope' to the psychiatry unit in Sri Lanka. Although the primary goal of referral to a psychiatry unit would be to access the support of mental health specialists, this practice may prevent females from reporting IPV for fear of being 'committed to' a psychiatry unit and facing the stigma associated with mental illness in countries like Sri Lanka.

Only about one-third of HCPs, primarily doctors, reported that they documented the injuries or the IPV, and the number of HCPs who said they made a safety plan for the victims was even lower. These responses also indicate a lack of specific protocols for dealing with IPV in healthcare settings (Jayatilleke et al., 2015; Guruge et al., 2015). In other locations, such responses have correlated with HCPs' workload and lack of clear practice guidelines and protocols (Colombini et al., 2017). Conversely, clear guidelines and protocols

have supported well-coordinated health systems responses(Colombini et al., 2017). In addition, HCPs may be reluctant to take on additional responsibilities with IPV-related care as it creates more paperwork and involvement in legal proceedings.

Unlike in the past when gender inequitable attitudes toward females were strongly evident among medical students (for example, Haj-Yahia & de Zoysa, 2007), most HCPs in our study, regardless of gender, could recognize stereotypical ideas about IPV. They rejected survivor/female-blaming statements as well as ideas that justified or rationalized male perpetration of IPV against females. However, male and female HCP responses tended to differ for the statements that revealed slightly less overt ideas and attitudes about gender inequality (e.g., the deficiencies in the laws to punish men who abuse females or laws making it too easy for females to charge males with IPV). Given that people, in general, hold more negative, stereotypical, or stigmatizing attitudes than they are willing to disclose to others, especially to a team of health researchers, these stereotypical negative beliefs and attitudes may likely be higher in reality than reported here.

Previous research has revealed that HCPs have cited personal discomfort and lack of training as reasons for reluctance to ask about and document IPV (Nguyen et al., 2016; O' Doherty et al., 2014; Waalen et al., 2000; Sprague et al., 2012). Most of the HCPs surveyed in this study, and more nurses and midwives than doctors among them, reported that they need more training to help females experiencing IPV. Although most in-service trainingprograms focus on IPV-specific training for HCPs, Colombini et al. (2017) found that nurses trained in medico-legal responses and counselling had more confidence in their ability to be part of a comprehensive health systems response.

In addition to lack of training, HCPs reported fears about facing abusers when providing IPV-related services and may have reflected the setting in which the HCPs provided services, i.e. routine care settings such as wards and clinics rather than in specialized care centres. The lack of space and privacy is consistent with the healthcare infrastructure in Sri Lanka, where patient care settings tend to be busy and overcrowded. Most HCPs also reported that

although they possess some knowledge, they have limited access to information detailing appropriate management of IPV disclosure in healthcare settings. This is not surprising as most training so far on this subject has been ad hoc. Thus, despite the demands on HCPs and other stakeholders to improve IPV-related care and services, the knowledge and clinical skills needed for HCPs to provide such care and services have not yet become an integral part of undergraduate and graduate HCP education in Sri Lanka.

Limitations

Because of resource limitations, the sampling method used in this study was non-random. After purposefully selecting hospitals in four provinces, details about the study were shared widely within hospitals. However, most participants were recruited through word of mouth. This may have attracted participants who are more likely to have had similar experiences or hold the same attitudes towards IPV and gender-based violence. However, the results of this study still provide insights into HCPs' perceptions about and preparedness to provide IPV-related care and services in a setting where such information is largely missing.

Conclusions and Implications

Healthcare providers' encounters and experiences with females who reported IPV in healthcare settings in Sri Lanka depended on a range of factors. Some of the factors are related to individual characteristics, such as the HCPs' gender and nature of contact and connections with the females affected by IPV; others are related to institutional supports and training. Preparing all HCPs to provide IPV-related services is an important step in the Sri Lankan health sector response; it will improve HCPs' confidence and provide clarity about their roles. Nurses and midwives who already play an important role in supporting females reporting IPV in hospital and community settings need to feel well-equipped, trained, and given clear guidelines for counselling IPV survivors.

As only a small proportion of HCPs sampled reported having met IPV survivors at the one-stop crisis centres, this raises important questions about the availability and accessibility of these specialized services. The Ministry of Health policy of further IPV training the

HCPs attached to these specialized centres may not be effective since most females seem to report IPV in routine clinical settings. Because of the stigma attached to IPV and how it shapes surviving females' willingness to access services in hospital or primary healthcare settings, building their trust and confidence in HCPs is key to creating an effective health sector response to IPV. While HCPs who can build long-term trusting relationships with females may be most effective in improving females' access to care, they may not be able to do so without a strong community support system. To effectively support HCPs, the underlying stigma attached to IPV should be addressed in both clinical and primary healthcare settings.

Healthcare providers need institutional leadership and specific investments into IPV-related programs. Creating the infrastructure and support needed to provide IPV care in a safe setting will improve the HCPs readiness and raise both service provider and survivor confidence to more readily communicate with each other and openly discuss IPV. Institutional investments into specialized IPV-care centres must be accompanied by allocation of resources to other support units in hospitals and the community, specifically to improve counselling services and place them outside general psychiatric units or wards. Improving HCPs' responses and preparedness to provide IPV-related care must happen as part of a coordinated inter-sectoral response that involves educators, hospital administrators, policymakers, as well as HCPs and service users. Gathering HCPs' perspectives in providing care to females who report IPV, as we have done in this study, must be part of that response as such information is critical to identifying gaps in training and resources in different parts of the country.

Abbreviations

GBV – Gender Based Violence
HCP – Healthcare Provider
IPV – Intimate Partner Violence
JMO – Judicial Medical Officer
RA – Research Assistant
SPSS – Statistical Package for Social Sciences
WHO – World Health Organization

Declarations

Ethics approval and consent to participate
The study protocol, instruments, and consent forms were reviewed and approved by the Sri Lanka Medical Association Ethics Review Committee (ERC/15-001) and the Ryerson University Research Ethics Board (REB 2014-379). Informed consent was obtained from all participants in the study.

Consent for publication
Not applicable.

Availability of Data and Material
The datasets generated and/or analyzed during the current study are not publicly available as they are being analysed for manuscripts in preparation. When ready, they could be made available from the corresponding author on request.

Competing Interests

The authors declare that they have no competing interests.

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Air Mobility, Ten Heads and Universal Authority: Constructing Ravana in the Folk Imagination of Sabaragamua -- A Folkoric Study

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Abstract

King Ravana has already attained a cult status in modern Sri Lanka owing to a resurgence of texts about the legendary king that suddenly flooded the bookshops as well as the mass media. Yet, unseen by this phenomenon, a folktale collection focusing on Ravana was released for public consumption by Gunasekera Gunasoma under the titled *Sabaragamuwa Ravana Jana Katha* (Ravana Folktales of the Sabaragamuwa Region). This study undertakes a re-reading of these folktales using the folkloric postulate of 'folk ideas' in order to locate the modes of construction of the personality of 'King Ravana' and the insights such constructions might offer into the material conditions of the story creators/tellers/listeners. Folktales tend to carry cultural

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assumptions, as well as cultural prejudices, of common folks through the implicitly embedded 'folk ideas' in their narratives and this study intends to locate such 'silent' articulations and analyse them to understand a group of people's own perceptions about the notions of leaders and leadership.

Keywords: Folktales, Folk Ideas, Silences, Cultural Prejudices, Cultural Assumptions, Construction, Personality

Introduction

King Ravana, the antihero in the epic Sanskrit poem *Ramayanya,* a text believed to have been composed between 500 BCE and 100 BCE by a sage named Valmiki, shares one common aspect with Paris, the son of the Trojan King Priam, the antihero of Homer's epic poem *Iliad* (possibly written in 750 BCE): both have abducted the legitimate wives of powerful kings and the subsequent events brought forth war and violence upon their subjects and territories. In the text *Ramayanaya*, King Ravana is the 'demon king' of Lanka who is depicted as imprudent, impetuous and vicious. Yet, in his mother land, and in a region called *Sabaragamuwa*, where his ancient seat of power was supposedly located, this antihero of *Ramayanya* is remembered differently. In the orally-transmitted folktales of *Sabaragamuwa*, a province located in the south-central region of Sri Lanka, he is recast as a just ruler known for his compassionate and respect for nature; in those tales he is also an efficient ruler who combined aggression and benevolence to offer his subject a much-admired form of leadership. This image of an all-powerful Lankan king at the summit of a powerful kingdom also inspired a recent debate on the historicity of Ravana. The present discussion, owing to its own objectives and scope, does not intend to locate itself in this debate. Instead, the focus of this paper is modest in the sense that the study attempts to understand the mode of construction of Ravana's personality in the folktales narrated in a specific region of Sri Lanka through a parallel reading of the tales. The folktales under focus here are from a collection titled *Sabaragamuwa Ravana Jana Katha* (Ravana Folktales of Sabaragamuwa), which is a compilation of 56 folktales collected from that region by the renowned folktale collector Gunasekera Gunasoma

who has published over 20 collections of Sri Lankan folktales from different geographical regions as well as ethnic groups.†
This study undertakes a close reading of his Ravana folktales to locate and analyse the modes of construction of Ravana as well as is the limits of such endeavours using a folkloric re-reading of the tales.

Folkloric speech acts are usually considered essential constituents of a nation's heritage as well as a mirror of its cultural traditions—in the words of a folklorist, they are "autobiographical ethnography" ~~(Dundes, 2007)~~ of a group of people, or a group of people's description about themselves. At the same time, time and space play essential roles in the meaning of a folktale. As Thompson (1977) suggests, a folktale is a "story which had been handed down from generation to generation either in writing or by word of mouth" (Thompson, 1977). He goes on to argue that a story teller would hold his/her ability to preserve a tale as an act of immense pride: "He usually desires to impress his readers or hearers with the fact that he is bringing them something that has the stamp of good authority…" (Thompson, 1977). Another researcher posits folktales as narratives with a close connection to their material reality: ~~Kirk (1986)~~ assumes that owing to the high "factual content" (Kirk, 1984) of folktales they tend not to be "practical or emotional and intellectual applications" (Kirk, 1984). The thinking offered by these three folklorists about the close bonding between a folktale and its creators/tellers/listeners and the material reality of its creation/telling/hearing would form the backdrop for this study as it attempts to re-read the Ravana folktales of Sabaragamuwa. Why would the tales under focus in this study opt to construct an alternative image of Ravana? What do such constructions tell us about the imagination of the people of the region under consideration? If these tales are a reflection of the people who create/narrate/hear them, then what insights do the tales offer about the people of Sabaragamuwa of a specific time and space? By focusing

†His collection of folktales from the Muslim ethnic group of the eastern province of Sri Lanka has been previously studied by this writer under the title *Folk Ideas' and 'Worldview' Inscribed in a Selection of Folktales Attributed to the Muslim Community of the East Coast of Sri Lanka.* See OUSL Journal, 2017, Vol. 12, No. 2, (pp. 5-17).

on the modes of construction of the King Ravana in the selected tales, this study would attempt to answer these questions.

Ravana folktales of Sabaragamuwa by Gunasoma have not come under academic scrutiny; thus, the present study would serve the purpose of fulfilling a gap in scholarship in the area of folklore in Sri Lanka.

Folkloric Introduction to Folktales of Ravana

Folktale collector Gunasekera Gunasoma's Ravana folktales from the *Sabaragamuwa* Region feature 56 folktales and was first published in 2016. The book has gone for a second edition in 2019 suggesting its popularity among the Sinhala reading public. Gunasoma's initiative has been sponsored by the provincial administrative divisions of *Sabaragamuwa* with the objective of preserving the folk heritage of the region. The tales have been narrated for the compiler by storytellers, and he has recorded these speech acts. They have been transcribed in the spoken language of the tellers and the compiler has taken the initiative to offer an extremely short biography of the teller as a footnote at the endof each tale. While this researcher appreciates Gunaskerea's efforts to collect his tales scientifically (only because such attempts are not so common among folktale collectors in Sri Lanka), there are gaps in his methodology. For a folkloric endeavour that received state patronage, Gunasoma does not offer his readers the socio-cultural context required to gain an in-depth understanding of the tales. For instance, he does not offer details about his mode of collection of the tales: How did he locate the narrators? Why are his tale teller's mostly male octogenarians and members of the clergy? What about the others beyond these social categories who might have offered him Ravana folktales? From whom did the present narrators originally hear the story? Were the stories he heard narrated from one location or many? Gunasoma in his short Introduction to his book has not attempted to answer such concerns. Folkloristics encourages tale collectors to improve the authenticity of their tales by offering extensive background information as well as biographies of the tellers and listeners. As the folklorist Weerasinghe (1986) asserts, the entire context of the tale being told needs to be documented: the setting, biographical details of the tellers/listeners; the facial gestures/voice intonations of the teller; the response of the audience. Gunasoma has largely neglected these aspects. The biographies he offers of his narrators are sparse to say the least. At the same time, he does not place his collected tales within the cultural

structure of the region, nor does he attempt to locate its function in that social setting. Yet, in spite of these shortcomings, the collector has collected and compiled interesting folk tales about King Ravana from a specific region, an event a reader would have missed had Gunasoma not undertaken the endeavour in the first place. At the same time, Gunasoma's collection is the first such collection of Ravana folktales from one geographic location and deserves academic focus.

King Ravana, a Short Introduction as he appears in the version popularized in North India[‡]

Ramayanaya is an epic poem of in classical Sanskrit which followsevents of the life of King Rama, considered to be a reincarnation of God Vishnu, who is one of the most powerful and celebrated gods known as the world preserver in the Hindu pantheon. In this poem, King Ravana is identified as the king of Lanka who has 10 heads and 20 arms. He is known for his extreme asceticism which earned him a boon from the Brahma allowing him invincibility from mortal threats posed by gods, demons or spirits. Yet, Ravana violated those powers and embarked on a violent expansion of his territory. God Vishnu incarnates as King Rama to defeat him. When Ravana obsessed by the beautiful wife of Rama, known as Sita, and abducts her Rama declares war on him. Assisted by an army of monkeys and bears Rama engages in a prolonged battle of wit and ferocity with his enemy before slaying him.

Methodology

One of the important characteristics of a folktale is the notion of 'folk idea.' Folk idea is an implicit unit of narrative which demonstrates the assumptions and conjectures a story creators/narrator/listener commonly agree upon. According to the folklorist Dundes, 'Folk Ideas' are "traditional notions that a group of people have about the nature of humanity, of the world, and of life in the world". However, Dundes also argues that 'folk ideas' need not be openly apparent in folkloric material and they could be "unstated premises" which could underlie thought and action of individuals— the present study takes this argument into consideration when re-

[‡] This summary extracted from R.K Narayan's rendering of the *Ramayanaya*. See References for details.

reading the Ravana folktales tales for embedded 'folk ideas.' The objective is to isolate and locate the postulations that construct Ravana in the folktales. Dundes' idea about 'unstated premises' is also a notion that is somewhat reflected in the work of the literary critic Pierre Macherey, specifically in his recommended mode of reading literary texts. All speech, according to Macherey "envelopes in the unspoken in order to reach utterance" (Macherey, 2016), and this "silence" (Macherey, 2016), informs us of the "precise conditions for the appearance of an utterance,…its limits…real significance" (Macherey,2016). The entrenched 'silences' in the folktale sample under consideration in this study would be read for what they state about King Ravana. What are the silent premises woven around Ravana? What is the composite image of Ravana created through those premises? What do such oral/textual constructions reflect of the mind-sets of the tale creators/tellers/listeners?

Results and Discussion

For ease of analysis and reading, the 'folk ideas' found in the Ravana folktales have been listed and discussed separately. There are five recurring 'folk ideas' extracted from the tales which help construct a narrative around King Ravana. They are, a) Royal lineage of Ravana b) Political unification of ancient Lanka c)Multiple intelligences d) Air power e) Skilled administrator.

a) Royal Lineage of Ravana

The folktales from Sabaragamuwa posit Ravana as originating from a royal lineage with firmly established roots in both Lanka and India. Across the tales, Ravana's royal lineage is considered as common knowledge though one specific tale, titled *Ravana's Birth*, offers an extensive account of his lineage. According to this tale, Vishravas, who is an India sage and his wife Idadevi had a son named Vaishravana who ruled a minor domain in ancient Lanka called Vessagiri. When his mother Idadevi died, Vaishravana negotiated with another minor king in Lanka called Sumali to offer one of his daughters, Pushpoththakata, as a bride to his father in India. Two other females, Raka and Malini joined the bride's entourage. The sage ended up marrying all three females. Pushpoththakata bore him two sons, Ravana and Kumbhakarna; Raka,

two sons, Dhara and Dushana and a daughter Suparnaka; and Malini one son named Vibhishana.

Interestingly, the folktale creators have combined the royal lineage of ancient Lanka with the priestly stock of India to offer Ravana a powerful blood ties to royalty and priestly sects. Since bloodline is an important aspect of ancient Lanka's monarchism, the tale creators have seemingly taken every effort to ensure that Ravana possesses bloodline which could contest, not only leadership in Lanka, but India as well. Ravana is posited as an 'emperor' in the folktales, suggesting that he had power over jurisdictions beyond the land of Lanka. Setting up of significant blood between a prominent personality and respected groups of people is not an unaccustomed narrative strategy for Lankan story tellers. The writer of the historical chronicle *Mahavamsa,* achieves similar ends by connecting the founding kings of ancient Lanka to the Shakya clan of the Buddha, thus aiding his objectives to celebrate the kings who promotedBuddhist values in the ancient nation. In the eyes of a listener/reader this royal lineage of Ravana establishes the authority of the king as a rightful leader of the people. At the same time, by offering Ravana a royal lineage of Lankan-Indian origin allows a story creator/teller the means to neutralise the 'demon' identity connected with Ravana in the Ramayanaya.

b) Political unification of ancient Lanka

The folktales under focus in this study make some interesting assumption about the ancient land of Lanka, which was Ravana's seat of power. Politically, the stories suggest that, Lanka was a land of seven domains, namely: Chandragiri (Sabaragamuwa), Indragiri (Kuragala), Mahedragiri (Ruhuna), Sigiri, Mulagiri (Tangalle), Malayagiri (Kandy) and Helagiri (Devundara). Each was an independent principality governed by a regional king. For unknown reasons King Vaishrvana's—the founder of the Ravana lineage—domain Vessagiri is omitted: a 'silence' that needs attention. Notice that each of these domains is associated with a geographical sign—a rock outcrop (giri). Majority of the rulers of this period, the tales claim, were of local origin belonging to the Yaksha or Naga tribes. The only ruler of Indian origin was Vaishrvana. Ravana had married a princess named Mandodari, who was the daughter of the king of Chandragiri (Sabaragamuwa) called Dumakshaka. That was how

Ravana laid claim to Sabaragamuwa as his seat of power. After this marriage Ravana raised a secret army, aided by his father-in-law King Dumakshaka, and conquered all the seven domains. He unseated the king Vaishravana, his blood relation, and expelled him along with his relations, from Lanka—he "chased them to India" (Gunasoma, 2016, pg.20). Ravana was educated in ancient Lanka because "those days the globally reputed educational institutes were situated in our country—not in India," (Gunasoma, 2016, pg.14) as one storyteller says. After unifying the ancient land of Lanka, it is suggested in sparse syntax that Ravana became a 'chakravarthi' and a 'sakvithi' king. Both these terms suggest universal power as well as righteous governance—though the stories or the tellers do not offer further details.

These stories seemingly admire the bloody wars initiated by Ravana to unify the land of ancient Lanka under one strong ruler—and they pay specific attention to the expelling of rulers of Indian origin from Sri Lanka. In the folk imaginations, one powerful ruler with one seat of power seems to be the preferred form of governance. At the same time, the narratives are careful to purge all Indian influences from Lanka. The silence over the Vessagiri domain governed by a ruler of an Indian origin when naming the seven domains of power in Lanka is an omission deliberately introduced to ignore an achievement by a foreign ruler who invaded and governed a part of Lanka. The event of 'chasing' this king by Ravana is obviously used to counterbalance Vaishravana's invasive initiatives in ancient Lanka.

c) Multiple intelligences

One of the striking physical attributes of King Ravana is his ten (10) heads. The folktales posit this as a representation of the ten types of intelligence possessed by the king. "Ravana is a highly intelligent person with 10 types of intelligence. What are they?" (Gunasoma, 2016, pg.31) asks one narrator and goes on to name nine (09) of them: universal energies, language, law, military, astrology, music, medicine, techniques of flying and landscaping. The tales go on to suggest that despite such skills, Ravana was a man of "humility, practical ideas and keen intelligence" (Gunasoma, 2016, pg.31). It is evident from this folk idea that the common folks of Sabaragamuwa saw kingship as a site of keen and wider intelligence, combining both practical and bookish knowledge as well as art and engineering. They expected their king to be a man of

many skills and facets. He should effortlessly combine the opposite attributes: thus, Ravana is a king who combined aggression and compassion; art and engineering; rationale thought and mysticism. These attributes work towards the countering the 'demon' narrative implanted on Ravana by *Ramayanaya*.

d) Air mobility

Air mobility is the key attribute for which Ravana is remembered in the imagination of Lankan public—though in a setting where his enemies (eg. Hanuman, Rama's commando-styled soldier) could also perform aerobatic abilities these skills would not amount to anything significant. Ravana rode his own version of an aircraft called *Dandu Monraraya* or the wooden peacock. The folktales, unusually, attempt to offer some detailed information about this peacock-styled aircraft—unusual because folk speech acts tend not to explain away their events involving magic or unbelievable phenomena. Accordingly, the *Dandu Monaraya* is made from wood and consists of two flexible wings that perform the motions of an actual bird's wings. "The wings go up and down just like the motions of a real bird" (Gunasoma, 2016, pg.31) explains one storyteller. The flying mechanism this aircraft did not involve science, says a teller, and explains that the specific 'magic' that could make this machine fly was only known to Ravana. One story suggests the use of Mercury combined with Ravana's magic to achieve the flying mechanism. This aircraft had the ability to land on a flat ground and Ravana had his own landing locations in Sabaragamuwa. Despite the confidence with which the story tellers locate the air power of Ravana, they themselves seemingly doubt that ability as seen by their deliberate attempts to explain away the flying mechanisms of the *Dandu Monaraya*. Also, the narrators' efforts to compare this ancient flying machine to a modern aircraft with wings and landing sites is motivated by their need to justify the use of magic against rationale science—or even a contest between science and tradition. The flying machine operated by Ravana once again counters the 'demon' narrative—and establishes the king as someone who could imitate modern futuristic science by using 'magic.'

e) Skilled administrator

Like any emperor, Ravana began his battle for supremacy over a large swathe of land with a smaller confederate in ancient Lanka: he fought a prolonged and a brutal war to expand his territory thereby creating a unified kingdom. In this unified Lanka, King Ravana, as the folktales suggest, was a skilled administrator and a compassionate king who was adored by his subjects. After the unification of Lanka, Ravana conquered the region beyond Lanka (additional details not offered) and went on to become a universal monarch with serious concern for environment and the well-being of his subjects. He was famed for meting out severe punishments for those who destroyed forests anywhere in the world. Even the kidnapping of Sita was an event that was initiated only as a response to an injury and insult caused to Ravana's sister by Rama and his friends. Abduction of Sita was an act to motivate Rama to reflect upon and remedy this insult. The Lankan stories go on to suggest that Ravana's demeanour and dignity had a powerful effect on Sita leading to a romantic bond between them during her captivity. The final battle with Rama was an event which Ravana could have won had his own camp did not betray him. Ravana's attachment to Lanka is such that his protective influence exists in the Sabaragamuwa province even after his death.

The king who could wage successful military campaigns to achieve a political objective and then expand his power beyond the Lanka's oceans is far cry from the 'demon' image attributed to him in the *Ramayanaya*. At the same time, here is a king who could create and execute a fair administrative system with special concern for the natural environment. The creation of Ravana in these narratives is obviously motivated by the creation of Ravana in the *Ramayanaya*.

These 'folk ideas' embedded in the folktales have offered Ravana a much human and endearing profile, and thus offers him an alternative voice against the classical Indian version of *Ramayanaya*.

Conclusions/Recommendations

The Ravana folktales of Sabaragamuwa have offered oral/textual resistance to the original Ramayanaya by subverting the Ravana found therein. They have offered an alternative voice to King Ravana and had neutralized the negative characteristics attributed to him. This act of

owning Ravana and offering him redemption through counter narratives is a reflection of how foreign influences are negated by people of a specific region in Sri Lanka. In these narratives the Indian (or foreign) influences in Lanka were a result of the lack of political initiative spearheaded by a strong leader. The moment such a leader arrives, the foreign influences are neutralised as seen from the 'chasing' of Vaishravana from Lanka. Interestingly, the notion of unification of the nation under one powerful ruler is an idea that seems to have occupied the imaginations of the story creators/tellers/hearers of Sabaragamuwa. In fact, the Ravana folktales have valorised this idea and have also extended it beyond the shores of the nation into an empire driven by a Lankan personality. Perhaps, in the folkloric imagination of the people of Sabaragamuwa, Ravana is a metaphor for a successful nation which also has the capability to extend its controlling arm to the region. In this metaphoric success, the ruler is compassionate, righteous, intelligent and also a preserver of the environment. This same metaphoric ruler possesses intelligence and is able to manipulate technology to achieve his own ends. One could hardly say that this formula of success of a ruler suggested by the folk narratives exists in the material sphere of the story tellers. Thus, Ravana of Sabaragamuwa is a people's projection of a metaphoric solution to an ailment that is affecting their lives—abuse and corruption of power. And the tales might be a cathartic response to a situation that is too obvious in their social setting. One of the specific instances where this concern is quite obvious is the event of deforestation: Ravana was harsh on those who harmed forests. This could be a narrative solution to the environment damage that is perceived as taking place at an alarming rate in the Sabaragamuwa area owing to gem mining and industrialisation. The storyteller created a narrative to punish such offenders immediately through the intervention of King Ravana—an event that might not be so swift in their material sphere. The Ravana of Sabaragamuwa is thus more than a counter narrative aimed at neutralising foreign influences in Sri Lanka, it is also a narrative that expresses people's wish fulfilment for a leader who could offer meaningful administration for the nation: in the words of a story teller, "a universal king who is admired by all his subjects."

This study is only a preliminary exploration of the Ravana tales, and it has its own short comings specifically in its analysis of the social context

of the tales. In the second stage intends to fill those gaps and expand its scope.

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Can Gender and Location Create Career Indecision among the Undergraduates of Management Studies in State Universities of Sri Lanka?

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Abstract

Career indecision that refers to the inability to make a decision about an occupational field one wishes to pursue has been a focus of academic research over the last few decades. Career indecision, especially among university undergraduates, is a dynamic phenomenon that is being vicariously explored presently. Research has drawn attention to explore the determinants and consequences of career indecision among undergraduates. However, little is known about whether there is a significant difference of career indecision particularly among state university management undergraduates in Sri Lanka based on their gender and location. Thus, the purpose of this study is to explore whether there is any significant differences in

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career indecision among state university management undergraduates in Sri Lanka, when it comes to the segregation of the target population based on the gender as well as the geographical location of the state universities. A sample of 153 final year management students were selected using stratified sampling techniques from two metropolitan and two rural state universities. Both physical on online self-administered questionnaires were used to collect the data. Independent sample t-test was used to test the hypotheses. As per the key findings of the study, it was revealed that career indecisiveness was higher among males and the difference in career indecision between male and female management undergraduate is significant. Moreover, this study found that there are no significant differences in career indecision between students studying in peripheral or urban universities. These findings would be beneficial to undergraduates, policy makers and government institutions as well as for the society at large, when it comes to devising human resource development programs, related policies etc. As this study found empirical support for significant differences in career indecision between male and female management undergraduates, the authorities who design career counseling interventions need to pay attention on this. As male undergraduates experience relatively high degree of career indecisiveness, separate strategies are required to address the differences.

Keywords: Career indecision, Management Undergraduate, State University, Gender, Location

Introduction

Career indecision which refers to the inability to resolve on a chosen profession (Feldman, 2003) is recognized as a noteworthy issue among many university graduates. With increased choice of courses at universities, and more opportunities and options to pursue tertiary education, in addition to expanding work opportunities globally, the career decision-making process has become more complex, and as such, more challenging for students (Winderman, Martin, & Smith, 2017; Jordaan, Burger, & Smithard, 2009). Making an appropriate career decision is critically important and it has been a pressing issue especially for young students (Ukil, 2016). This phenomenon has been explored by many researchers throughout several decades mainly to identify key factors contributing to career indecision among various individuals (Pesch, Larson, & Seipel, 2017; Lee & Woo, 2016; Germeijs & Boeck, 2001; Osipow, 1999; Taylor & Betz, 1983).

Most of the previous studies on career indecision were aimed at exploring significant factors influencing career indecision among college students and were conducted in the West. No such studies

have been conducted among university students in a Sri Lankan context. Further, it is challenging to generalize the findings of these studies that were based on students in developed economies, to the Sri Lankan context. This lack of compatibility would be due to the vast differences in the cultural settings, demographics, and economic aspects, disparities in financial situations and so on of the developed and developing contexts (Yeager, 2018; Mueller, 2004).

In Sri Lanka, entering state universities is highly restricted owing to the GCE Advanced Level (A/L) examination being competitive. Approximately 20% of those who are qualified at the A/L examination gain entrance to the universities. At the same time, according to statistics released by the University Grants Commission, it is evident that the intake of students to state universities has gradually risen, especially in the management field, during the past few years. This is yet another factor, for deriving the target sample out of final year students. Graduates passing out from state universities could be considered as a major asset for uplifting the country's economy (Ukil, 2016). Their contribution towards the enhancement of the educated workforce is immense. Their knowledge at the managerial level is a key factor in the growth of state as well as private institutions. However, the issue at hand is, at present the economy of the country has not expanded in order to create more employment opportunities for graduates. Thus, the graduates are unable to make correct decisions about their career prospects. This leads to underemployment which is a deterrent as far as gainful employment is concerned. It is imperative to have a high-growth trajectory in terms of the country's economy. Thus, the objective of the present study is to explore whether there is any significant differences in career indecision in light of state university management undergraduates in Sri Lanka, when it comes to the segregation of the target population based on the gender as well as the geographical location of the state universities.

Research problem

Graduates passing out from state universities are considered as a significant resource, which would benefit the overall economy of the country in the long run (Brown et al., 2013). Career indecision is a complex issue which affects the overall growth of an economy. There are over 400,000 unemployed persons in Sri Lanka. According to the Department of Census and Statistics, the unemployment rate was 4.2% at the end of the first quarter of 2016. Career indecision hampers not only the personal advancement of the job seeker, but also undermines the expansion of

the national economy (Jordaan, Burger & Smithard, 2009). Unemployment is the most significant, immediate consequence of being career indecisive.

The overall unemployment figures for the past few years are depicted in Table 1. When analyzing these statistics, it is apparent that the unemployment rates have either varied insignificantly or risen. This too could be considered as proof of an impending issue about career indecision among young adults, which then leads to the economic development of a country. The number of graduates who are engaged in vital professions are far less than the number of graduated who are engaged in unimportant professions i.e. Development Officers and Management Assistants. These posts were created in order to find solutions to the problem of graduate unemployment. The country's economy gains very little from them whereas the other professionals' contribution is immense.

Table 1.

Statistical Data on Unemployment Trends

Unemployment rate by Gender	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016
Male	2.7	2.8	3.2	3.1	3.0	2.9
Female	7.1	6.3	6.6	6.5	7.6	7.0
Unemployment rate by age group						
20 – 29	12.4	11.3	13.1	13.6	14.2	14.2
20 – 24	17.7	16.7	19.3	19.9	19.7	19.9
25 – 29	7.7	6.6	7.6	8.2	9.4	9.2
Unemployment rate by education (OL and AL)						
Male	5.4	4.6	5.7	5.4	4.8	4.9
Female	13.2	10.8	11.8	11.1	13.5	11.9

Note: *Annual Bulletin (2016), Department of Census and Statistics*

Many students are indecisive when it comes to generating the initial occupational preferences (Brown et al., 2013). Arriving at a career decision is a difficult and anxious task for many students. It has been estimated that more than 25% of all students entering universities do so without having decided on a career (Rogers & Westbrook, 1983). Thus, career indecision can be cited as a complex issue which affects the overall growth of an economy (Lent & Brown, 2006).

In order to identify the prevalence of the issue among management undergraduates in a Sri Lankan context, a mini survey was

conducted, comprising of twenty Management undergraduates of the University of Ruhuna. As statistical sample is not required to conduct a pre-study (Zikmund et al, 2010), the final year and third year undergraduates were selected for this mini survey by means of convenient sampling technique. Interviews were conducted with the selected respondents using an interview checklist. Out of them, 66 percent indicated that they were undecided on a clear-cut career path to embark on, once the degree was completed while only 34 percent precisely stated that they have specifically decided on their career. Though Hackett & Betz, (1995) contend that career/occupational decisions are among the most powerful decisions that influence people's lives, the findings of the mini survey was inconsistent.

People must make occupational decisions over their entire lifespan (Porfeli, Hartung, & Vondracek, 2008). Hence, inappropriate decisions regarding the career could bring about many negative consequences to both the employee as well as to the employing organization. Being undecided can hinder people from taking control of their careers (Savickas, 2013). An employee entering a particular profession in an indecisive nature would become dissatisfied, demoralized and de-motivated easily. On the other hand, the organization in which individual is employed could also face losses due to lower productivity, efficiency and effectiveness, wastage of hiring, induction and training costs, extensive grievance handling (Greenhaus, Callanan, & Godshalk, 2010). Furthermore, the employee will not be in a position to use his or her full potential. Employee has to confront serious limitations in terms of gaining professional achievements. His/her skills will not be fully utilized in the job market.

In boosting the economic growth, the contribution of the educated youth cannot be underestimated. When a graduate faces impediment in choosing his/her career, invariably it negatively affects the socio-economic development of the country. Unemployment of state university graduates is considered a national issue as billions of rupees are invested each year to provide free university education to the students who obtained the highest score in each stream and thus returns of these investments are worth investigating at institutional level and national level (Liyanage, Kumara, and Withanawasam, 2017). Graduates should be able to reach their full potential. However, there are multitudes of challenge faced by them in selecting their career paths. More pathways should be made, and more and more opportunities should be provided.

Many differences can be cited among males and females generally, especially when it comes to cognitive skills. Their thinking processes are also quite different to each other (Reber, & Tranel, 2017). Likewise, decision making skills and abilities too would differ based on the gender. Cognitive or mental abilities could vary among males and females perhaps due to the genetic, biological and hormonal differences, along with the discrepancies in cultural and environmental backgrounds. The processing speed and the perception about certain facts and figures too tend to vary among males and females. Moreover, significant variances have been identified when it comes to attention to detail and accuracy, responsiveness to sensory stimulation, reasoning skills, probability measurements, reading comprehension skills etc. based on the gender (Powell, & Ansic, 1997). Basically, it has been established through previous studies that the manner in which individuals process, store and apply information, when it comes to various social situations, tend to differ based on either masculinity or femininity.

The poor female labor force participation rate in Sri Lanka does not necessarily mean that it is attributed due to the indecisive nature of making career decisions. It could be mostly due to other, more pressing social and cultural constraints. But then again, it is a well-documented fact that there are some discrepancies when it comes to career related choices and decision making, among males and females.

With regard to the geographical location of the state universities, it is a commonly held perception that the provision of all sorts of facilities is higher within the universities located at close proximity to the city center. Table 2 depicts the ranking of state universities in Sri Lanka. Highlighted are the four universities which the researcher based this study on. The researcher categorized University of Colombo and University of Sri Jayewardenepura as metropolitan universities and University of Ruhuna and Sabaragamuwa University as rural universities purely based on the proximity to the city center. When analyzing the rankings, it is apparent that the two metropolitan universities are ranked much higher, when compared to the two rural universities.

These rankings are done based on various criteria such as the teaching and learning environment, research volume and reputation, research influence based on the number of citations, international outlook on staff and students, student retention rates, the level of knowledge transfer, academic reputation held, graduation rates, level of faculty resources, the average class size, the student – faculty ratio, number of students admitted per academic year, financial resources per student and so on. Thus, based on the assumptions given above,

the problem statement of the study is whether there are any significant differences in career indecision in light of state university management undergraduates in Sri Lanka, when it comes to the segregation of the target population based on the gender as well as the geographical location of the state universities?

Table 2.
University Rankings

Rank	University
1.	University of Peradeniya
2.	University of Colombo
3.	University of Kelaniya
4.	University of Moratuwa
5.	University of Ruhuna
6.	University of Sri Jayewardenepura
7.	University of Jaffna
8.	Rajarata University
9.	General Sir John Kotelawala Defense University
10.	Eastern University of Sri Lanka
11.	Open University of Sri Lanka
12.	Sabaragamuwa University
13.	Wayamba University of Sri Lanka
14.	Sri Lanka Institute of Information Technology
15.	South Eastern University of Sri Lanka

Note: *Web Ranking (2017), Webometrics.info*

Review of Literature

Career Indecision

Emphasizing the unfavorable aspects of the phenomenon, the traditional definition conceptualized career indecision as a barrier in career development. Scholars offer mixed ideas in their definition of career indecision as a wavering, pause, or hesitation in career development (Savickas, 2011), an openness to alternative career pathways (Krumboltz, 2009), and a state of adaptive uncertainty (Krieshok, Black, & McKay, 2009; Phillips, 1997). Due to the dynamic nature of the phenomenon a comprehensive literature review was

carried out on theoretical definition of the 'career indecision'. The definitions of career indecision have evolved over decades and most widely used definitions in the extant literature are listed down in the Table 3. As illustrated in the Table, there are certain inconsistencies as well as similarities in the definitions of career indecision. "Inability" and "Uncertainty" seem to be the widely used terminology in describing this phenomenon. Thus, after reviewing extant literature, the present study defines career indecision as a state of being undecided about one's career-related path as it covers the necessary dimensions of the phenomenon.

Table 3.
Evolution of the definition of career indecision

Author and Year	Definition
Maree (2016)	Inability to make a decision about the vocation one wishes to pursue.
Penn (2016)	Difficulty or inability to learn about the self, learn about careers and integrate both sources of information to make a career decision.
Lam (2016)	A normal developmental phase that many individuals go through as they make career decisions.
Hartley (2009)	A serious, possibly detrimental, multi-faceted attribute, which may persist throughout an individual's lifespan.
Lopez and Ann-Yi (2006)	Inability or feeling of higher extent of perceived uncertainty to choose a specific career goal.
Germeijs and Boeck (2003)	Denotes problems during the career decision-making process.
Guay, (2003)	The inability to make a decision about the vocation one wishes to pursue.
Osipow (1999)	Repeatedly having trouble making career decisions to the point where closure is not reached in time to implement appropriate behavior.

Drivers of Career indecision

Career indecision has become one of the most vital considerations in career counseling program and counselors who intend to design initiatives to reduce the career indecisiveness. In this concern, they mainly aim at two parameters of career indecision such as levels of career indecision and sources of career indecision (Osipow, 1999).

First parameter refers to whether a person is undecided or decided to pertain the career field while the second parameter focuses on drivers/determinants/sources of one's career indecision. Most of the previous studies on this phenomenon aimed ataddressing the second parameter and embarked studies to explore the determinants of career indecision in many contexts. In order to identify those determinants, an extensive literature review was carried out covering the empirical studies conducted during last decades. By reviewing extant literature on career indecision, it is quite evident that the particular phenomenon is being discussed and looked into over the span of many decades until most recent years (Ukil 2016; Atli 2016; Lee & Woo 2016; Thomas & Feldman 2009; Hartley 2009; Salami & Aremu 2007; Guay et al 2003; Germeijs & Boeck 2001; Taylor & Betz 1983). However, relatively fewer studies have been conducted to identify the sources of career indecision particularly among Management undergraduate of the Sri Lankan context (Liyanage, Kumara, & Withanawasam, 2017; Ariyawansa, 2013).

By reviewing previous literature, the researchers found certain similarities as well as inconsistencies with regard to research methodology used, independent variables specified to determine career indecision and the findings. As far as the determinants of career indecision is concerned, previous studies explored the influence of many individual level and societal factors on career indecision. Most widely used factors include parental interest, impact from the university, financial support, national shortage of jobs, career counseling, career education, lack of information, lack of personal ability and political and social reference, personality traits, interpersonal relationships, internal locus of control, positivism, Parental attachment and psychological separation, role of peers, self-efficacy and autonomy (Ukil, 2016; Atli, 2016; Lee & Woo, 2016; Thomas & Feldman, 2009; Hartley, 2009; Salami & Aremu, 2007; Guay et al., 2003; Germeijs & Boeck 2001; Jones 1989; Taylor & Betz 1983, Kumanayaka & Galhena, 2017).

Asdiscussed above, depending on the second parameter of the career indecision most of the studies focused on identifying the sources of career indecision among different respondents' groups. However, the researchers observed that no adequate studies have been undertaken by the scholars to deal with the first parameter of the career indecision, i.e. different level of career indecision among different groups such as gender (Male/female) and location (Urban/rural). Thus, to fill the gap in the literature this study aims at exploring whether there are any significant differences among such groups.

Hypotheses

In general, decision making is quite a complicated process. It includes so many steps such as identifying the problem, developing alternative solutions, evaluating alternatives, selecting the best solution, making a decision, evaluating the results and following up (Robins, 2000). Thus, career related decision making is also a similarly complex process. That too would have to pass through so many stages such as career exploration, determine career goals, evaluating career strategies (Greenhaus, et al. 2010).

Decision making among individuals, especially when segregated gender-wise, has so many discrepancies (Reber, & Tranel, 2017). According to previous research work, it has been revealed that there are significant differences among males and females, when it comes to focusing on various aspects related to decision making. Males tend to be high risk takers when it comes to decision making, they are said to be more independent, analytical, goal - oriented as well as more lenient towards quick decision making (Francis, Hasan, Park, & Wu, 2015). Assertiveness, competitiveness, confidence and aggressiveness are much more prevalent with regard to decision making among males (Koch, D'Mello, & Sackett, 2015).

On the other hand, females are said to be more risk-averse, dependent, rational and empathy based, emotionally biased etc. when it comes to decision making (Sovet, & Metz, 2014). Collaboration and compassion are visible within decision making done by females. Intuitive, flexible and long-term oriented decision-making patterns are said to be more apparent among females (Greenhaus, et al., 2010).

Likewise, it is clear that there is a significant difference among various traits of decision making, between males and females. Similarly, the same differences and discrepancies apply to career decision making among males and females. Accordingly, the researcher built-up the below hypothesis:

H 1: There is a significant difference in career indecision among male and female management undergraduates

University systems can be categorized based on so many factors such as staff size, the degrees offered, number of faculties and so on (Dill, & Soo, 2005). One such factor is the location of the university, which can be further categorized as rural and metropolitan. Based on this classification, students are said to be exposed to different opportunities.

The differences in the exposure of opportunities arise due to various factors such as the availability of resources differ between rural and urban state universities, the access to information is somewhat curtailed when it comes to rural universities, the ability to network and direct access to employment opportunities is higher for students studying at metropolitan universities, availability of facilities such as career counseling and the organization of related workshops is much more prevalent within urban universities (Johnston, & Huggins, 2016).

Therefore, it is quite apparent that there is a difference in terms of the access to these resources and facilities, between the two types of universities and it is safe to say that more support is being given to career decision making for students of metropolitan universities and the level of opportunities that they are exposed are much higher. Thereby, such students would be at a much more advantageous position when it comes to making precise career related decisions. Thus, the following hypothesis was developed:

H 2: There is a significant difference in career indecision among management undergraduates studying in rural and urban locations

Methodology

The aim of the present study is to identify whether there is a significant difference in career indecision, based on the gender of the target population and the physical location of state universities. Hence, out of the three research designs of exploratory, descriptive and causal, the current study is to be categorized under descriptive research designs (Zikmund et al, 2010). The research question of the study is to identify whether there is any significant differences of career indecision based on the gender and the geographical location of the state university. Thereby, the respondents to the survey research would ideally be final year, university undergraduates. Thus, the unit of analysis for the present study is "individual".

The research was carried out in a Sri Lankan context as no previous scholarly works had dealt with the career indecision phenomenon in a local context (Kumanayaka & Galhena, 2016). The tertiary education sector was selected as it held the most probable segment to become career indecisive. Ultimately, final year, management students were focused upon due to applicability of the phenomenon interested in this study. At the same time, by reviewing the annual intake and university admission data released by the University Grants Commission of Sri

Lanka, it can be observed that there is a steady growth in the Management stream. Thus, it is apparent that this segment of students would be quite viable when it comes to measuring career indecision.

The target population of the study includes all undergraduates in state universities in Sri Lanka. The exact sample which was derived from this population was 153 final year, management undergraduates from the state universities of Ruhuna, Sri Jayewardenepura, Colombo and Sabaragamuwa; with approximately 30 participants from each university. As shown in Table 4, the stratified sampling technique was used to draw the sample. The main purpose of the study was to explore the significant differences of the career indecision among management undergraduates studying in state Universities located in different locations in Sri Lanka. Thus, respondents from the university of Sri Jayewardenepura and University of Colombo were selected as they were located in the Colombo which is the capital of Sri Lanka. On the other hand, University of Ruhuna and Sabaragmauwa were selected as they are located away from the capital of Sri Lanka. As indicated in Table 4, stratified sampling technique employed to draw the sample as the study focused on final year management undergraduates of the four state universities in Sri Lanka. From each strata 10 percent were selected for data collection altogether sample size was determined as 218 management undergraduates.

Table 4.
Sampling

University	Batch size	10% of the target population	Actual no. of respondents
University of Colombo	421	42.1	39
University of Sri Jayewardenepura	1089	108.9	33
University of Ruhuna	315	31.5	44
Sabaragamuwa University	352	35.2	37

Note: *University Grants Commission*

Non-interactive methods were used in the data collection procedure. Under that, self-administered survey questionnaires were used. This method was adopted due to its advantages such as the cost effectiveness, anonymity of the respondent, absence of any interviewer bias, ability to use standardized, structured and undisguised questions (Hair, Money, Samouel, & Page, 2007). The questionnaire was designed with the guidelines suggested by Churchill & Iacobucci, (2002) in a manner where the first section dealt with the demographic

variables and general questions, section two included questions raised on the dependent variable of career indecision. The questionnaires were distributed both as internet survey questionnaires and physically distributed questionnaires. The word format questionnaires were converted into Google Forms using the Google drive, and the link was shared among the targeted group of undergraduates. On the other hand, with the help of lecturers and students of some of the respective universities, the questionnaires were physically distributed after taking printouts of the word format. As a result, 98 responses were received from the internet survey questionnaires and the rest of the 55 responses were obtained via the physically distributed questionnaires. The previously established and empirically tested scale was extracted from Germeijs & Boeck (2001) consisting of 22 items, as well as the scale by Callanan & Greenhaus (1990) consisting of a total of 32 items, which were adjusted and appropriately used for the present study.

Data collected thorough questionnaire survey were feed into the SPSS and were consequently examined for outliers and missing values. Frequency distributions were used to analyses the sample profile of the mk,respondents and Coronbach alpha test run to confirm the reliability of the construct. Independent sample t-test was performed to test the hypothesis as the two hypotheses of the present study aims at explained the significant differences among the two groups that is Male – Female and Urban - Rural (Hair, Black, Babin, & Anderson, 2010).

Findings and Discussion

Respondent error, which results from some respondent action or inaction (Zikmund et al., 2010), leads to distorting the results of survey research. In the present study, two major types of respondent error—nonresponse error and response bias—were considered. Nonresponse error is viewed as "the statistical differences between a survey that includes only those who responded and a perfect survey that would also include those who failed to respond" (Zikmund et al., 2010, p. 190). Nonresponse error was assessed by comparing early and late respondents in terms of all variables of the study. In order to find whether there is a significant difference, t-tests were run first between early and late respondents of the e-mail survey; second, between early and late respondents of the personal survey. The findings of the t-test indicated that there was no significant difference in the responses between early and late respondents. Further, to find out whether there is a significant difference of the responses among

respondents of the two data collection medium, t-test was carried out for the study variables. T-rest revealed that there were no significant differences of the responses of the study variables among two data collection mediums: e-mail survey and direct contact survey. This leads to the conclusion that nonresponse bias is not a serious concern in the present study.

In order to ensure the face validity, the present study used pre-established scale by reviewing previous literary work (Zikmund et al, 2010). In order to establish the reliability of the data, the Cronbach Alpha values were tested, and results confirmed that career indecision (0.872) that is the key construct of the study met the threshold values of 0.6 confirming the reliability of the measures. Independent sample t-test was conducted to test the pre-established hypotheses of the research. When observing Table 5, the mean value of career indecision for males is 2.62, while the mean value for females is only 2.15. Thus, the mean value of males is greater than 2.5, which is the mid-point of a 1 – 5 scale, and it is much closer to five. At the same time, when reviewing Table 6, the significance values depicted are less than 0.05. Thus, it reveals that the output received can be interpreted in a manner where career indecisiveness is said to be higher among male undergraduates. This means that there is a significant difference in career indecision among male and female management undergraduates.

Table 5.

Impact upon Gender

Gender	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
Male	2.62	.991	.075
Female	2.15	.664	.044

Table 6.

Independent Samples Test (Gender)

	t-test for Equality of Means					
	Df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	Std. Error Difference	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference	Df
Career Indecision	394	.000	.465	.083	.301	.629
	283.3	.000	.465	.087	.292	.638

With regard to the segregation of the four selected state universities based on their geographical location and the proximity to the city center, it was revealed that being a metropolitan university or a rural university is immaterial upon being career indecisive. This conclusion

was arrived at by first reviewing the mean values depicted in Table 7. Upon initial observation, it seems as if career indecision is higher among peripheral universities; since the mean value for peripheral universities is 2.49, while the mean value for metropolitan universities is only 2.31. But this observation should continue to the next table, which is Table 8, where both the significant values are exceeding 0.05, therefore proving that the above observation is insignificant. This means that there are no significance differences in career indecision among management undergraduates studying at the urban and peripheral universities.

Table 7.
Impact upon Region

	Region	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
Career Indecision	Peripheral	2.49	.973	.095
	Urban	2.31	.803	.046

Table 8.
Independent Samples Test (Region)

	t-test for Equality of Means						
	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	Std. Error Difference	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference	
						Lower	Upper
Career Indecision	1.83	394	.068	.178	.097	-.013	.370
	1.67	153.63	.097	.178	.106	-.032	.389

Hypothesis 1 claims that there is a significant difference in career indecision among male and female management undergraduates. Hypothesis 1 was supported through the t-test analysis (F= 119; df =283.30 p = 0.000). This means that level of career indecision is significantly different between male and female management undergraduates. This further supported that the career indecisiveness is higher among male management undergraduates. Through previous studies conducted on this regard, it was well established and documented that, certain cognitive and behavioral patterns such as inattentiveness, restlessness, impatience, aggressiveness were observed among males (Koch, D'Mello, & Sackett, 2015). Females are said to be more focused and alert when making serious decisions (Sovet, & Metz, 2014). Consistent with the previous work this study found empirical support for this hypothesis.

Hypothesis 2 postulates that there is a significant difference in career indecision among management undergraduates studying in rural and

urban locations. Hypothesis 2 was not supported through the results obtained via the T-test findings. This means that whether the university is in urban or peripheral location is not a significant factor differentiating the degree of career indecision among management undergraduates. This finding is inconsistent with the previous work of Johnston, & Huggins, (2016) who argued that career counseling opportunities are prevalent in the universities located in urban areas compared to universities in peripheral locations. The possible reason for these inconsistent findings would be that even though the physical location of each university might differ from each other, the student body in any given university comprises of students from all over the country. Therefore, a university would not hold an exclusive cultural setting, but it would be an amalgamation of so many. Also, it proves that fact the level of resources and facilities available within a given university does not account to a student being career indecisive.

Implications

The aim of the study was to identify whether there was any significant impact on a student being career indecisive or not, based on his or her gender as well as the geographical location of the university to which the student is attached to. Based on the T-test findings, it was revealed that there is a significant difference in career indecision of the male and female management undergraduates while the physical location of the university was an immaterial factor when it comes to being career indecisive. As indicated in the literature section the career indecision phenomenon was explored mostly in line with the second parameter that is the source of career indecision. As no adequate studies were conducted addressing the first parameter that is the level of career indecision among different groups, the findings of this study would be significant on filling the gap in the literature in this respect.

From a practical perspective, there are various contributions that could be drawn from this study. The research findings could be applied in providing government sponsored career guidance programs within state universities, career counseling facilities and career guidance units established at school levels and so on. Various institutions such as National Human Resource Development Council of Sri Lanka, Vocational Training Institutes (VTIs) and even non-governmental organizations (NGOs) would benefit from the research findings when designing human resource development programs; especially if they are to focus on and emphasize on the development of various facets in terms of cognitive discrepancies between males and females.

Employers as well as the management of various organizations would be in a beneficial position in identifying how to appropriately

disseminate and delegate the decision-making authorities within a workplace, yet again by recognizing the level of indecisive nature between the two genders. Government institutions and related policy makers too would be able to identify drawbacks and to rectify errors when formulating relevant policies. As this study found empirical support for significant differences among career indecisiveness among male and female management undergraduates, the authorities who design career counseling workshop and interventions should pay attention on this matter. As male undergraduates experience relatively high degree of career indecisiveness, separate strategies are required to address the differences.

Limitations and Future Research

Major limitation of this research is the limited sample size of respondents. Though the researcher intended to collect responses from a sample size comprising of at least 200, due to the poor response rate, was forced to settle for only 153 responses. If the sample size could have expanded beyond this, more vigorous results could have been obtained, which could have been generalized in a broader manner. Regarding the context of the sample derived, the researcher was limited to using only four state universities out of a total count of thirteen state universities within Sri Lanka.

Major issue in terms of the research design was the cross-sectional data collection carried out by the researcher. That is, the data was collected only during one instance. Career indecision is a phenomenon that could change over time. Theories dealing with social sciences have a tendency of changing with the progress of time. Ideally, in order to get a reliable output, the collection of data should have done over the expanse of a particular time span. Yet another similar limitation was in terms of the data collection tool used by the researcher. Only self-administered survey questionnaires were used to collect data from the sample group. If multiple tools were used to collect data, it would have been easier to statistically prove the findings. At the same time, the very same survey paper was used to collect data on both the dependent variable as well the independent variables.

The classification of the universities as metropolitan and rural was done on an arbitrary basis, purely based on the proximity to the city center. The rankings of the universities is also a very dynamic fact, since it keeps on altering on a yearly basis.

As future research implications and directions, impending researchers could expand the sample size, as a start. With the expansion of the

target population size, it would be easier to generalize the findings and the output received would be much more vigorous. At the same time, a greater number of universities could be included to derive the sample. So as to further elaborate this point, if geographic-wise the impact on career indecision is to be measured, more number of both rural as well as metropolitan universities could be selected, rather than being limited to only two from each.

Without limiting to only survey questionnaires, future researchers could use multiple data collection methods such as coupling the self-administered questionnaires with interviews and focus-group discussions, so as to derive much more in-depth information from the sample set. Different modes and methods could be appropriately applied to collect data on the dependent variable and the independent variables separately. Even through from a practical perspective it could be a bit challenging, it is always advisable to opt for longitudinal data collection methods rather than sticking to cross-sectional data collection. That is, the data could be collected at various points in time so that the changes in the responses over time could be identified.

Future researchers could opt for a more appropriate basis of categorizing universities as metropolitan and rural. Facts and figures could be gathered on the provision of specific facilities within each university, and identify whether there are underprivileged universities, when compared against each other. Such information would be helpful in further establishing the categorization of state universities within Sri Lanka.

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Online Learning during the COVID–19 Outbreak: Undergraduates' Perspective – A Case of the Faculty of Agriculture, University of Ruhuna, Sri Lanka

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Abstract

In view of the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic, the mode of online learning has assumed an impactful role, especially in the field of higher education. The bulk of educational institutions have switched to online learning platforms for the continuation of academic programs. However, in the current literature on education, the perceptions of state university students on their engagements with this mode of learning have not yet been thoroughly examined.

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Therefore, this research was undertaken to investigate the perception of agricultural undergraduates towards online learning during the pandemic. The research examined the preferences of students for various characteristics of online classes, the perceptions of online learning and the benefits and disadvantages encountered by students engaged in online learning during the pandemic through an online survey of 334 students. Independent samples t-test revealed that there is a significant difference ($t(332) = 2.120$, $p = 0.035$) in the choice of the duration of online classes between male ($M=3.55$, $SD=0.948$) and female students ($M=3.81$, $SD=0.913$). Interestingly, results of the two-way ANOVA revealed that there is a statistically significant interaction between the effects of gender and academic year on students' interest in online learning, $F(3, 326) = 3.788$, $p = .011$. However, the majority of the students (41 %) faced connectivity/Network issues as their main problem during online learning. The homogeneity of the student group and the subject area limits the generalization of the findings to the vast majority. The study results can play a key role in developing future online classrooms with effective learning experiences.

Keywords: COVID-19, Online learning, Undergraduates

Introduction

COVID-19 and the Sri Lankan Education Sector

The deadly virus COVID-19 was first detected in Wuhan, South China in November 2019 and dispersed across the globe swiftly. The 22 million population of Sri Lanka had to deal with many consequences that were brought about by the Corona virus. The workforce from public and private sectors, self-employed people, large migrant workforce, country's daily wagers, school children as well as university students were forced to stay at home or at their respective staying places due to the lockdown restrictions imposed by the government. Although the schools and universities had to be shut down, the Sri Lankan government did not allow students to shut down their education. Accordingly, students were encouraged to engage in online learning strictly adhering to self-distancing, in order to continue the academic calendars. Most interestingly, a gazette was released on the subject by the Sri Lankan government. In line with this, all the Vice Chancellors were informed by the University Grant Commission (UGC) to switch and adjust to online

platforms of education by giving free access to online services for all university students and faculty members.

However, the universities and other education institutes faced a bigger crisis to cover-up the predefined syllabi in a stipulated time frame to go on par with their respective academic calendars. Moreover, more than 100,000 students are studying in the national universities in Sri Lanka according to the UGC, and there accessibility to digital devices like smartphones and other applications have not yet identified with official surveys. On the other hand, for the purposes of entertainment and communication, students often use technology. They lacked experience in studying, creating and developing information using technology (Suraweera, 2020). Therefore, the COVID-19 pandemic was a huge eye-opener for most of the stakeholders in the education sector to come up with creative digital solutions and adapt to online platforms like Zoom, Microsoft Teams, and Google Classroom etc. for the teaching-learning process in a short period of time after shelving traditional face-to-face lectures in institutional-based classrooms. This sudden shift of teaching (and learning) from a one mode of dissemination to another make it imperative to study the student perception of online learning in order to evaluate the system for better outcomes. Hence, this the online survey which was carried out to explore the perception and preferences of the undergraduates of Agriculture towards online learning and the attributes related to online classrooms. The study will be helpful in designing future online classes with a productive and effective learning environment.

This research study was conducted to achieve the following objectives:

1. To study the perception of university students during the COVID-19 pandemic towards different attributes of online learning.

2. To explore students' perception towards online learning during the COVID- 19 pandemic.

3. To examine the constraints faced by students while adopting online learning during COVID-19.

Review of Literature

Different Approaches to Online Learning

According to Bączek & Wożakowska-Kapłon (2020), two different approaches were used in online education to deliver the contents of course module to university students. The primary mode used by educators is the self-directed learning approach, which allows the students to cope with their learning activities independently. Through instructor-led learning, educators facilitate the study resources and explanations through electronic learning. According tothe University of Fordham website, there are three different types ofonline learning. One is asynchronous online learning where teaching and learning do not happen in real-time. The content and the tasks are provided earlier, and students are given a time period to complete course work and exams. Teacher-student interaction typically takes place via message boards, blogs and wikis. Hence there is no meeting time for classes and students with time constraints or busy schedules would find asynchronous online learning advantageous. The second type is synchronous online learning. The teacher and all enrolled students are expected to communicate concurrently online with these types of platforms. Participants communicate through email, video or audio chat, similar in some respects to a webinar. Synchronous learning environments allow students in real-time to take part in a course from a distance. The third option is hybrid learning. Hybrid learning environments allow a blended mix including in-person and online interaction. Hybrid learning allows students and instructors to usually meet multiple times in person during a semester and provide computer-based contact between those face-to-face sessions.

Benefits and Drawbacks of Online Learning

Electronic learning is a feasible and cheap method that is used to improve the quality of university education during the pandemic situation. (Agarwal & amp; Kaushik, 2020). A recent finding by Bączek et al., 2020 disclosed that online education increased the convenience of learning during the COVID-19 pandemic period as the students can easily access the learning resources at anytime and from anywhere. The flexible nature of online learning is emphasized by several other researchers as the main strength of online learning (Chizmar & Walbert, 1999; Petrides, 2002; 2003; Kim et al. 2005). Moreover, the study materials can be delivered quickly and they can be easily standardized and updated. Introductions given through

videos are more prominent in teaching practical skills rather than utilizing text-based resources. By engaging in electronic learning, students can be engaged in their learning continuously while improving their IT literacy. Additionally, online learning can cut the cost of accommodation due to the students' ability to learn at a convenient location. It also leads to the reduction of transport cost and the lack of carbon dioxide emission leads to low air pollution. Therefore, the success of an online classroom depends on many significant factors such as using advanced technologies, well preparation of instructors, well-designed course structure (Sun and Chen, 2016).

The success of online education may heavily depend on the readily available and strong internet connection and proper IT skills. Availability of these requirements cannot be guaranteed from all the participants. Another critical issue of online learning is the cost of an effective internet connection. Even though some students have the ability to understand a given guidance via an online medium quickly and easily, some students need more instructions from their lecturers. Therefore, these students miss the direct explanations and communication within the conventional classroom which might reduce their learning opportunities. (Agung & amp; Surtikanti, 2020). Online classes also have time limitations for learners who have troubles with self-discipline. Online education drives students to social isolation that will discourage their social competencies and learning skills. (Bączek et al., 2020)

Online learning during the COVID-19 Pandemic in Sri Lankan

During COVID-19 pandemic, LEARN's (Lanka Education and Research Network) position as an internet service provider enabled the whitelisting of university web servers for access to online tertiary education. According to a report made by the Asian Development Bank (ADB Brief, 2020) 13 million activities (e.g., accessing reading materials, following lecture slides, taking online quizzes) were done by university students as well as lecturers by August 23, 2020.This approach benefited both students and lecturers greatly. This report further described that about 87 per cent of university students from the agriculture field had engaged in online learning during the COVID-19 pandemic. This is a positive sign in continuing online learning for agriculture students.

Methodology

Participants

The present study focused on the undergraduates' perception of online learning during the COVID-19 outbreak. Hence the undergraduates of the Faculty of Agriculture, The University of Ruhuna were selected as the respondents of the study where their academic curriculum ranges from social sciences to life sciences and their practical components range from lab to land. Furthermore, the participants were from three different degree programmes: BSc. Agriculture Resource Management and Technology, BSc. Agribusiness Management and BSc. Green Technology, and from four different academic years. Altogether 334 undergraduates participated in the research study.

Procedure

Initial the questionnaire was prepared with the help of a literature survey and pre-testing was done with five respondents and their feedback was considered in designing the final questionnaire. To assess the demographic features of the undergraduates the questionnaire was designed to assess preferences and perception of undergraduates towards online learning and digital devices and technical aids used in online learning. Furthermore, the advantages and drawbacks faced by the undergraduates during the pandemic when engaging in online learning were also assessed. The link for the Google form was sent to all the students of the faculty via their academic emails. The link was disabled after 14 days of circulation and 334 responses were obtained from three different degree programs and four different academic years at end of the process. Secondary data were collected from research paper articles, annual reports from the department of census and statistics, newspaper articles, UGC and other web sites etc.

Data Analysis

Data Analysis was done using the SPSS software. Descriptive statistics were used to analyze the students' perception of different attributes of online learning. A two-way ANOVA was conducted to examine the effect of gender and academic year on the perception of students for online learning. Descriptive statistics and independent-sample t-test were used to analyze the students' perception of the benefits of online learning. Students' satisfaction towards online

learning and the drawbacks they faced during online learning were assessed using descriptive statistics.

Results and Discussion

Demographic Details of the Respondents

Considering the majority of the sample comprised of females who were 80 percent, the males accounted for 20 percent of the sample. Taking the degree programme into account, 51 percent of the sample comprised of undergraduates of the BSc. Agriculture Resource Management and Technology degree programme. The BSc Agribusiness Management Degree programme accounted for 36 percent of the respondents whereas the lowest number of respondents were from BSc. Green Technology degree programme (13 percent). Majority of the respondents were from the first year and they represented 42 percent of the sample. The second-year students represented 24 percent of the sample whereas third-year students accounted for 19 percent. The lowest respondents were from the final year and represented 15 percent of the total respondents. Average monthly income of the respondents' families was Rs. 41,060.

Table 1.

Demographic details of the respondents.

Variable	Categories	Percentage (%)
Sex	Male	20
	Female	80
Degree	BSc. Agriculture Resource Management and Technology (AT)	51
	BSc Agribusiness Management (AB)	36
	BSc. Green Technology (GT)	13
Academic Year	1st Year	42
	2nd Year	24
	3rd Year	19
	Final Year	15

Objective 1

To understand the perceptions of university students towards different attributes of online learning during the COVID19 pandemic.

Attendance in Online Classes during the Pandemic

98 percent of the respondents have attended online classes during the outbreak and only 2 percent of the sample did not attend classes (Figure 1). Those who attended allocated an average of 16.7 hours per week on online learning. Lack of internet facilities in the village/area and lack of a suitable mindset for a continuous learning engagement via the online mode were the main reasons that were highlighted by the students for not attending online classes during the pandemic.

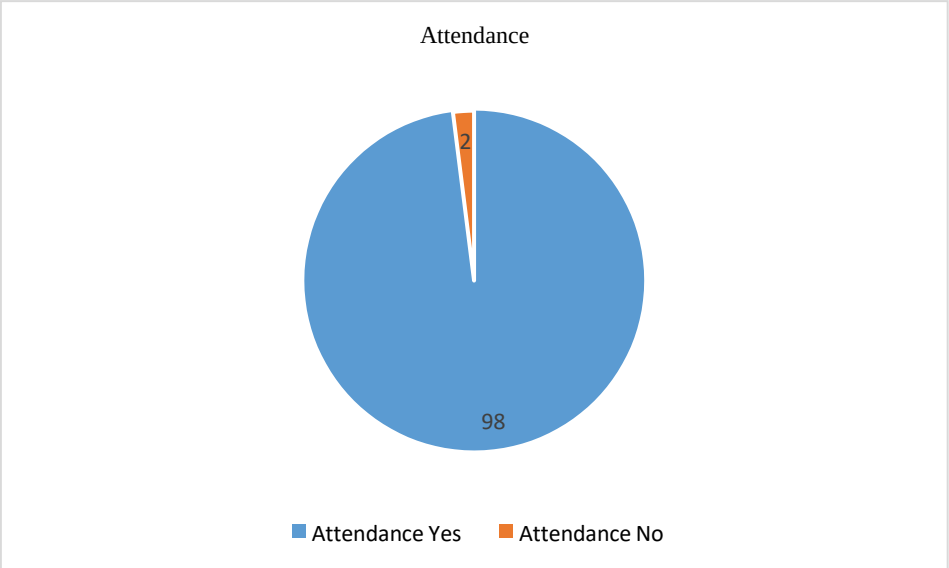

Figure 1. *Attendance in online classes during the pandemic*

Technical Facilities used for Online Learning

Majority of the respondents used mobile data as their main source of internet and it accounted for 63.8 percent of the sample. 20.4 percent of the respondents used both Wi-Fi and mobile data for their internet sourcing purposes. However, only 12.3 percent of the respondents have used their own Wi-Fi facility to browse the internet. Majority of the students accounting for 56 percent of the respondents ranked the laptop as their first choice of the devices used in online learning. However, our analysis proved that though the laptop was their first choice the majority of the respondents have actually used their mobile phones to engage in online learning accounting for 74 percent of the sample. 31.7 percent of respondents' ranked mobile phone as their first choice to engage in online learning. According to our results, although the laptop was ranked by the majority as their first choice, only 23.3 percent of the respondents have actually used it as their device to engage in online learning. This may be due to the problem of financial resources to purchase/hire IT devices. 2.1 percent of the respondents used tablets and only 0.6 percent of the respondents used domestic computers to engage in online learning (Table 2).

Table 2.

Technical facilities used for online learning.

Variable	Categories	Percentage (%)
Source of internet	Mobile data	63.8
	Wi-Fi	12.3
	Wi-Fi and Mobile data	20.4
	Free internet sources from government	3.3
	Other	0.3
Device (Preference)	Laptop	56.3
	Mobile phone	31.7
	Desktop	1.8
	Tablet	4.8
	Other	0.6
Device (Actually used)	Mobile phone	74
	Laptop	23.3
	Desktop	0.6
	Tablet	2.1

Structure and Learning Materials of Online Classes

Table 3 depicts the structure and learning materials of online classes. Online classes with only theory lessons were ranked as the first choice of class type by the majority of the students accounting for 62.6 percent of the sample. Only 26.6 percent ranked online classes with both theory and practical lessons as their first choice of class type.

The majority of the respondents preferred having live online classes that can be recorded, which accounted for 51.8 percent of the sample whereas another 22.8 percent selected only live classes. 20.7 percent of the respondents wanted, recorded classes to be uploaded to the (Learning Management System) LMS without having live classes.

Regarding the nature of the course material majority of the respondents accounting for 78.4 percent of the respondents wanted video content with reading materials to be uploaded to the LMS. 15

percent of the respondents wanted only reading material to be uploaded to the LMS.

Considering the nature of the video content of online classes, 77.5 percent of the respondents wanted both PowerPoint presentation and whiteboard as their video content of online learning. However only 21.3 percent of respondents wanted only PowerPoint presentation and the lowest number of respondents wanted (0.3 percent) only the whiteboard.

Table 3. *Structure and Learning Materials of Online Classes.*

Variable	Categories	Percentage (%)
Online class type	Only theory lessons	62.6
	Both theory and practical lessons	26.6
	Giving quiz and assignments without conducting online classes	4.5
	Only practical lessons	0.9
	Other	0.6
Online class format	Live classes that can be recorded	51.8

	Live classes only	22.8
	Recorded classes to be uploaded to the LMS without having live classes.	20.7
	Reading materials to be sent to without conducting online classes.	3.9
	Other	0.9
Nature of the course material	Video content with reading materials to be uploaded to the LMS	78.4
	Only reading material to be uploaded to the LMS	15
	Only video content to be uploaded to the LMS	2.4
	Only video content to be uploaded to the YouTube	2.7
	Any other	1.5
Nature of the video content of online classes	Both PowerPoint presentation and whiteboard	77.5
	Only PowerPoint presentation	21.3
	Only whiteboard.	0.3
	Any other	0.9

Frequency and Time Attributes of Conducting Online Classes

Table 4 summarizes the results of the frequency and time attributes of conducting online classes. According to the results revealed by the study majority of the respondents, accounting for 41 percent of the sample, preferred having online classes as per the schedule tocomplete the semester. 25.7 percent chose alternate days as theirmost preferred frequency to conduct online classes.

Considering the time of conducting online classes different attributes were assessed in this study. The majority of the respondents, accounting to 87.4 percent of the sample, wanted their online classes to be held on weekdays whereas only 12.6 percent of the respondents wanted the classes held on the weekend.

Late morning was the most preferred time of the day (49.4 percent) to conduct online classes as selected by a majority of the respondents. 37.1 percent, 6.9 percent and 4.5 percent, of the respondents, have chosen early morning, evening and night respectively as their most preferred time of the day to conduct online classes. The lowest number of respondents (2.1 percent) have chosen the afternoon as their favorite time of the day to conduct online classes.

Most preferred time slot to conduct online classes for both theory sessions and practical session was 8-10 am as selected by the majority of the respondents accounting for 54.5 percent and 47.3 percent of the respondents respectively.

1.5 hours was selected as the best duration for an online class by the majority of the respondents (38 percent). However independent samples t-test revealed that there is a significant difference ($t(332) = 2.120$, $p = 0.035$) in the choice of the duration of online classes between male ($M=3.55$, $SD=0.948$) and female students ($M=3.81$, $SD=0.913$). 31.7 percent of the respondents also selected 1 hour as their most preferred duration for an online class. A break of 15 minutes between online classes was preferred by the majority of respondents (29 percent). The majority (48.5%) wanted to spend 2-4 hours on online classes per day.

Table 4.
Frequency and Time attributes of conducting online classes.

Variable	Categories	Percentage
Frequency	As per the schedule to complete the semester.	41
	Alternate days	25.7
	Daily	18.3
	Weekly twice	8.4
	Weekly once	5.1
	Any other	1.5
Time of the week	Weekdays	87.4
	Weekend	12.6
Time of the day	Early morning	37.1
	Late morning	49.4
	Afternoon	2.1
	Evening	6.9
	Night	4.5
Time slot (Theory)	6am- 8am	26.3
	8am-10 am	54.5
	10am-12 pm	8.7
	1pm-3pm	1.2
	3pm -5 pm	2.1
	5pm- 7pm	3

	7pm- 9pm	4.2
Time slot (Practical)	6am-8am	16.8
	8am-10 am	47.3
	10am-12 pm	19.2
	1pm-3pm	3.6
	3pm -5 pm	6
	5pm- 7pm	4.2
	7pm- 9pm	3
Duration	30 min	1.2
	45 min	6
	1 hour	31.7
	1.5 hours	38
	2 hours	22.5
	More than 2 hours	0.6
Break between two online classes	15 min	29
	30 min	26.3
	45 min	4.8
	1 hour	26.6
	1.5 hours	13.2
Time spent on online classes per day	Less than 1 hour	2.1
	1-2 hours	21.6
	2-4 hours	48.5
	4-6 hours	24.9
	6-8 hours	3

Objective 2

Perception of Students towards Online Learning during the COVID-19 Pandemic

Respondents' perceptions were assessed using a five-point Likert scale. The analysis revealed that the 34.1 percent of the students were neutral about their love and interest in online learning and that they participated in it because they had no other options to cover lessons (31.7 percent). Interestingly, 36.2 percent of respondents stated that online learning provides great enthusiasm for them to learn. However, 34.1 percent of the students liked to learn new technology and they highly recommend online teaching and learning

to other students disagreeing with the fact that online learning is a boring event. Furthermore, 34.1 percent of the respondents disagreed that online teaching and learning discouraged their interest in learning, implying that students are interested in learning with the online system.

A two-way ANOVA was conducted that examined the effect of gender and academic year on the perception of students for online learning. There was a statistically significant interaction between the effects of gender and academic year on the students' love and interest of online learning, $F (3, 326) = 3.788$, $p = .011$. Simple main effects analysis showed that females were significantly more interested in online learning than males in the 2nd year ($p = .042$) and third-year ($p= .015$), but there were no differences between gender in the first year ($p = .165$) or the final year ($p = .440$). Furthermore, the analysis showed a statistically significant interaction between the effects of gender and academic year on students' preference for learning new technologies and recommending online learning for others, $F (3, 326) = 4.793$, $p = .003$. Simple main effects analysis showed that females were significantly more interested in online learning than males in 3rd year ($p = .001$), but there were no differences between the genders in the first year ($p = .580$), 2nd year ($p= .140$) or the final year ($p = .440$). There was a statistically significant interaction between the effects of gender and academic year on students perceptions on the ability of online learning to increase their enthusiasm to learn, $F (3, 326) = 3.074$, $p = .028$. However simple main effects analysis showed that there were no differences between gender in the first year ($p = .536$), 2nd year ($p= .063$), third year ($p=.093$) or the final year ($p = .108$) regarding the ability of online learning to increase the student's enthusiasm to learn. Furthermore, the analysis showed a statistically significant interaction between the effects of gender and academic year on students' perception that online learning could discourage their interest in learning, $F (3, 326) = 3.832$, $p = .010$. Simple main effects analysis showed that females were significantly more interested in online learning than males in the 2nd year ($p < .001$), but there were no differences between the genders in the first year ($p = .946$), third year ($p= .941$) or the final year ($p = .364$). There was not a significant interaction between the effects of gender and academic year on students perception on attending online classes, because they had no other alternative during the pandemic, $F (3, 326) = 2.610$, $p = .052$. Moreover, there was a statistically significant interaction between

the effects of gender and academic year on students' perception on the uninteresting nature of online classes and recommending/not recommending it to others. Simple main effects analysis showed that females were significantly more interested in the nature of online learning owing to its engaging nature and were most likely to recommend it to others than males in the 2nd year (p = .019), but there were no differences between gender in the first year (p = .254), third year (p= .539) or the final year (p = .237).

Table 5.

Perceptions of students towards online learning during the COVID-19 pandemic

	Strongly disagree (%)	Disagree (%)	Neutral (%)	Agree (%)	Strongly Agree (%)
1. I participated in online classes with a great interest as I love online learning	6	9	34.1	32.9	18
2. I like to learn new technology and I highly recommend online teaching and learning	5.4	8.1	30.8	34.1	21.6
3. Online teaching and learning give me great enthusiasm to learn	4.8	12	29.6	36.2	17.4

4. Online teaching and learning discourage my interest of learning	24.3	34.1	26.6	11.7	3.3
5. I participated in online classes with low interest as I have no any other alternatives to learn my courses	21.3	29.9	31.7	13.5	3.6
6. Online learning is so boring that I will never recommend it to anyone	29.9	30.2	28.1	9.9	1.8

Perceptions of Students towards the Benefits of Online Learning during the COVID-19 Pandemic

The study assessed the perception of students towards the benefits of online learning. 38.9 percent of the respondents stated that online learning gives a flexible schedule and convenience to them. 30.5 percent of the respondents stated online learning is more comfortable for them implying that students prefer online learning compared to traditional classrooms.43.1 percent of the respondents agreed that online learning helped them improve their technical skills implying students are more enthusiastic about learning new technology. Furthermore, 34.1 percent of the respondents agreed that online learning gave them greater ability to concentrate implying that students are more considerate about achieving self-discipline in their academic work. 30.8 percent of the respondents were neutral about the interactive nature of the online classes compared to traditional classes implying that students are not comfortable about the learning environment and steps need to be taken to enhance the interactive nature of online classes. 36.2 percent of the respondents stated that online learning enhanced their self-discipline and responsibility of learning indicating online learning has paved the path for students to be more responsible

about their academic work. Furthermore, independent samples t-test revealed that there was a significant difference (t (332) = 2.267, p =0.024) in the perception of male (M=3.06, SD=1.162) and female students (M=3.4, SD=1.053) towards the ability of online learning to enhance their self-discipline and responsibility of learning.

Table 6.

Perceptions of students towards the benefits of online learning during the COVID-19 pandemic.

	Strongly disagree (%)	Disagree (%)	Neutral (%)	Agree (%)	Strongly Agree (%)
1.Online learning gives a flexible schedule and convenience	3.9	7.8	26.9	38.9	22.5
2. Online learning is more comfortable for me	5.1	9.3	30.5	30.5	24.6
3. Online learning helps to improve my technical skills	3	5.1	24.3	43.1	24.6
4. Online learning gives me greater ability to concentrate	4.8	11.7	32.9	34.1	16.5

5. I feel online learning is more interactive than physical classroom lectures	12	25.7	30.8	18.6	12.9
6. Online learning enhances my self-discipline and responsibility of learning	7.2	11.7	36.2	30.8	14.1

Satisfaction expressed of students towards online learning during the COVID-19 pandemic

The study assessed the satisfaction of respondents who faced the online classes conducted by the faculty during the pandemic. Overall, a majority of 45 percent and 50 percent of respondents have stated that they are satisfied with audio facilities and video content of the online classes respectively. Regarding the overall satisfaction about online classes majority of respondents (49 percent) have stated that they are satisfied with online classes that were conducted by the faculty. 45 percent of the respondents have recommended online classes for others and 87 percent of the respondents stated online learning should be made a part of the academic curriculum in the future.

Objective 3

Constraints that Affected Students when Adapting to Online Learning during COVID-19

The study assessed the constraints and limitations which affected the students in adapting to online learning during the pandemic (Table 7). Accordingly, majority of the students (40.7 percent) faced lack of connectivity/network issues as their main problem. Another 31.4 percent of the students faced data limitations and data speed issues. 8.4 percent of the sample stated that not having a personal internet connection is a barrier for them to engage in online learning.

Table 7.

Constraints the students faced when adapting to online learning during COVID-19.

Barrier	Percentage
Lack of connectivity/network issues	40.7
Poor digital skills	2.7
Data limit and Data speed	31.4
Lack of device	3.9
Poor electricity	5.7
No face to face interaction	8.4
Any other (Please specify)	7.2

Conclusions

To keep up with the academic calendars, colleges, universities and institutions are switching to online channels. It could be too early to tell how online learning is perceived by students who are reorienting themselves to a newer mode of learning. However, understanding the preparation and perceptions of students is an important objective of this research. The results of this analysis revealed that the majority of the students showed promising results in the wake of COVID-19 towards online learning. Most of the students were satisfied with online learning and they wanted to recommend it to others and make online learning a part of the academic curriculum in the future. The laptop was the first choice of device for the majority of students for online learning. The majority of the students wanted to arrange the online classes as per the schedule to complete the semester on weekdays during the late morning from 8:00 to 10:00 am, with duration of 1.5 hours. However, the majority of the students faced lack of connectivity/network issues as their main problem during the pandemic. Therefore, these variables should be taken into consideration when developing an online course to make the teaching-learning process more successful.

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