SUB THEME 08
Role of Digital Tools in Teaching and Learning: A far cry for Language Learning.

Frustrations And Restrictions on Delivering Online to Foster the Continuation of School Education During the Second Wave of COVID-19 in Sri Lanka

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Abstract

Though the online learning environment (OLE) greatly benefitted from continuing education during the COVID-19 pandemic, adhering to and working with OLE made many challenges for teachers worldwide. This mixed-method research, a part of a major study on MOOCs for teacher training, uses a sample of 71 teachers who worked with the OLE during the second wave of the pandemic to determine the frustrations and restrictions of working with OLE. While the FRAME model (Koole 2009) was used as the theoretical model, Google forms-based questionnaire journal entries and teachers' interviews were used to collect qualitative and quantitative data. Results revealed that information and communication technology literacy had played a vital role in the infrastructure facilities. However, a significant restriction was the unavailability of infrastructure resources due to import delays and cancellations (Dahabiyeh et al. 2022). Unfortunately, the excessive internet access slowed down the connection, hindering the quality of synchronous online sessions where some teachers had to use the off-peak time to solve the matter.

Moreover, some teachers shifted from mobile to home broadband, providing a more stable internet connection. Though there were places where it could not access any mobile internet service due to geographical restrictions, most teachers in the sample have at least one internet service available during their online sessions. Furthermore, the allowances of the private school teachers were restricted as they worked from home while they were overburdened with paperwork on the work they had completed. In contrast, public school teachers were compelled to take a trade union action to claim their allowances and dues.

Key Words: *COVID-19, frustrations, online learning, restrictions, second wave*

Introduction

The COVID-19 pandemic has ushered in widespread disruption across society, with education experiencing profound and unexpected changes on a global scale. These changes have become stark realities during the pandemic, affecting not only classroom teaching but also organisational routines, employment rates, placement rates at educational institutions, and the lives of teachers. Ironsi (Ironsi 2022) underscores that the shift was not to traditional online teaching but to emergency remote online teaching (EROT), characterised by a lack of planning and organisation.

In 2021, Howard (Howard et al. 2021) stated that the swift transition to online teaching has left teachers with limited time to acquire the necessary skills. Given the global landscape and local contexts, this study aims to uncover the causes of teacher frustration and the barriers they face in working with online learning environments (OLE) during the pandemic. This study's research questions seek to enhance our understanding of the situation and offer necessary recommendations for addressing the challenges.

- Do the teachers possess the minimum recommended device, internet connection and a stable app to work with the OLE?
- Do they have enough training and awareness about online learning pedagogy to work with emergency remote online teaching?
- What socio-economic factors frustrate and restrict the teacher from gaining the maximum utilisation of online teaching?

Review of Literature

The sudden shift to online teaching profoundly impacted the teaching-learning process, a sentiment echoed in a study by Howard et al. (2021), indicating that the transition from face-to-face to online teaching has permanently altered the educational landscape. Stress associated with online teaching in Jordan affects teacher tiredness and productivity (Dahabiyeh et al. 2022), with negative emotions impacting both tiredness and productivity. However, a study in India (Kundu and Bej 2021) suggests that teachers with higher efficacy perceive online infrastructure more positively. This implies that improving teachers' efficacy levels could enhance their outlook and involvement in online teaching.

The overall experience of teachers in online teaching is moderately positive, with some teachers having a challenging experience due to technological constraints (Kundu and Bej 2021). Ecuadorian and Uruguayan studies (Burgin et al. 2022) identified job demands and the support provided by school administrators as crucial factors affecting the teaching process during the pandemic. Both countries were encouraged to consider teacher training

programs to address these issues. Lei and So (Lei and So 2021) suggest that their beliefs influence teachers' confidence and motivation in online teaching and its effectiveness. Lack of prior online teaching experience can further affect their confidence, impacting their satisfaction with online teaching (Bolliger and Wasilik 2009).

In the USA, the rapid transition to remote or online learning during the pandemic posed difficulties in keeping students engaged (Martin et al., 2022). A study involving Pakistan and Indonesia (Thaheem et al. 2022) found no significant differences in personal and pedagogical challenges between the two countries' teachers. However, there were notable differences in technological challenges. These studies shed light on the multifaceted challenges and opportunities in online teaching during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Theoretical Framework

This research employs the Framework for the Rational Analysis of Mobile Education (FRAME) to assess various factors influencing online teaching and learning (Figure 1), derived from Koole's work (2009). Effective mobile learning (DLS) enhances the cognitive environment for distance learners, fostering connections with instructors, course materials, peers, and locations. Kundu's study delves into factors impacting the efficiency of emergency remote online teaching (Figure 2).
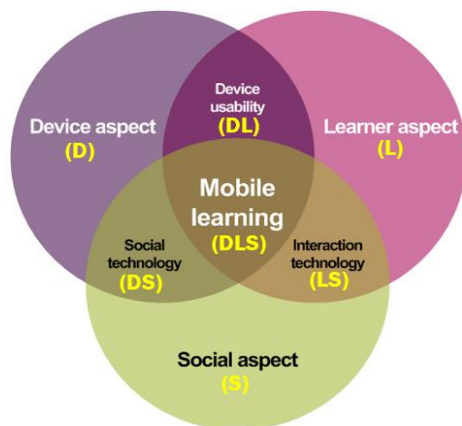

Figure 1: Framework for the Rational Analysis of Mobile Education (Koole 2009:25)
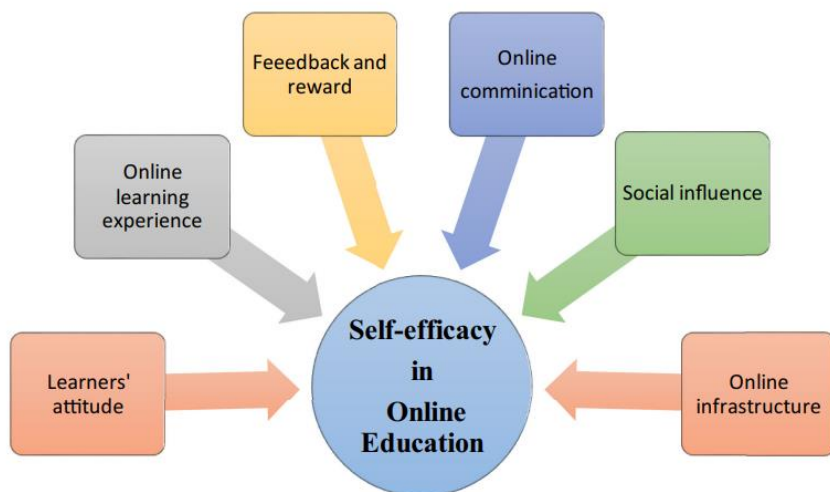
Figure 2: *Factors Influencing Self-Efficacy in Online Education* (Kundu 2020:351)

Research Methodology
Context

In Sri Lankan education, schools encompass government, private, and international institutions, each delivering local or international curricula. Traditionally, most classes have been conducted in a teacher-centric, face-to-face setting. However, the pandemic necessitated a swift transition to online teaching and learning, a mode unfamiliar to most educators. This abrupt change induced stress among teachers, even though they continued with online pedagogy.

Sample

The study's sample comprised 71 teachers from primary and secondary schools in government, private, or international settings aged 25 to 60 years. While utilising social networking and mobile chat-based applications, a random selection method with 100% voluntary participation was employed, resulting in a sample of 45 females and 26 males.

Instrument and data analysis

Data collection involved questionnaires through Google Forms, supplemented by telephone conversations and teacher interviews. Using closed-ended questions and Likert scale ratings, these inquiries addressed device and internet connectivity, digital literacy, software usage, and attitudes toward

online teaching. Email addresses were not collected automatically to ensure anonymity.

Results and Discussion

Do they have the minimum infrastructure facilities needed to work with MOOCs?

Several online teaching studies have underscored the significance of infrastructure facilities in successful online learning sessions. However, the findings reveal that 71.4% of teachers in this study faced issues due to the unavailability of proper devices, while 72% needed help with unstable internet connections. Notably, 98% of teachers supported the idea of schools providing high-speed internet connections, and 92% favoured facilitating teacher access to computers through monthly instalments. Figure 3 illustrates the available infrastructure and tools for the surveyed teachers.

Do they have enough training and awareness about online learning pedagogy to work with emergency remote online teaching?

In addition to infrastructure, teachers' familiarity with online tools is critical. Researchers noted issues related to lack of online teaching experience (Lei and So, 2021) and unfamiliarity with new technology (Kumar and Verma, 2021). Some teachers view online classes as inferior to face-to-face teaching (Bolliger and Wasilik, 2009), citing a lack of social engagement (Ewing and Cooper, 2021) and physical separation from students (Martin et al., 2022). These issues were evident in questionnaire responses. Parallel research on MOOC-based teacher training with the same teachers highlighted the need for training in online learning tools and standard software. Over 55% of teachers stressed the importance of basic skills in word processing and presentations.
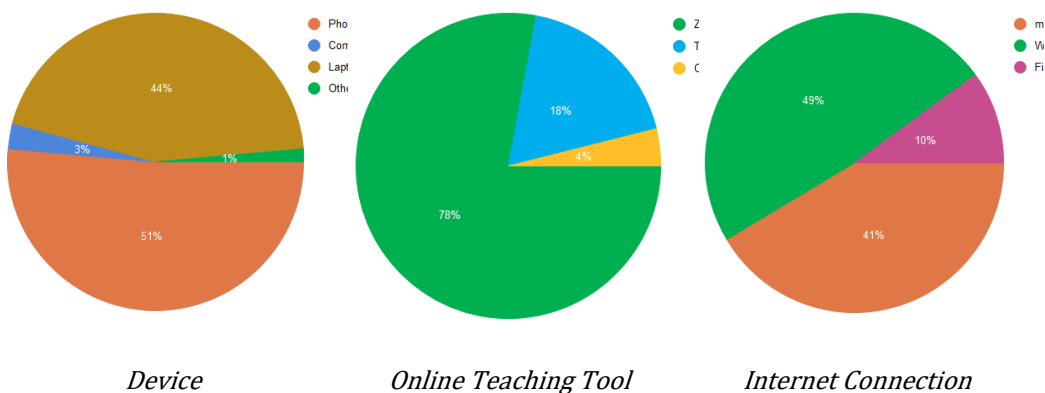

| *Device* | *Online Teaching Tool* | *Internet Connection* |

Figure 3: Teachers' Use of Devices, Online Teaching Tools and the Type of Internet Connection

What socio-economic factors frustrate and restrict the teacher from gaining the maximum utilisation of online teaching?

A recent study (Dahabiyeh et al. 2022) pointed out that stress affects online teaching tiredness and productivity. As the teachers revealed in the telephone conversations, teachers mentioned the stress factors. As (Burgin et al. 2022) mentioned, the excessive workload, especially the paperwork and keeping logs, made the teachers more stressed. Furthermore, the lack of direct intention with the students makes the teacher wonder. That also became stressful as most students either do not have or need to know which one is on the camera. For ease of comparison, some of the restrictions and frustrations the teachers encountered are shown in Figure 4.
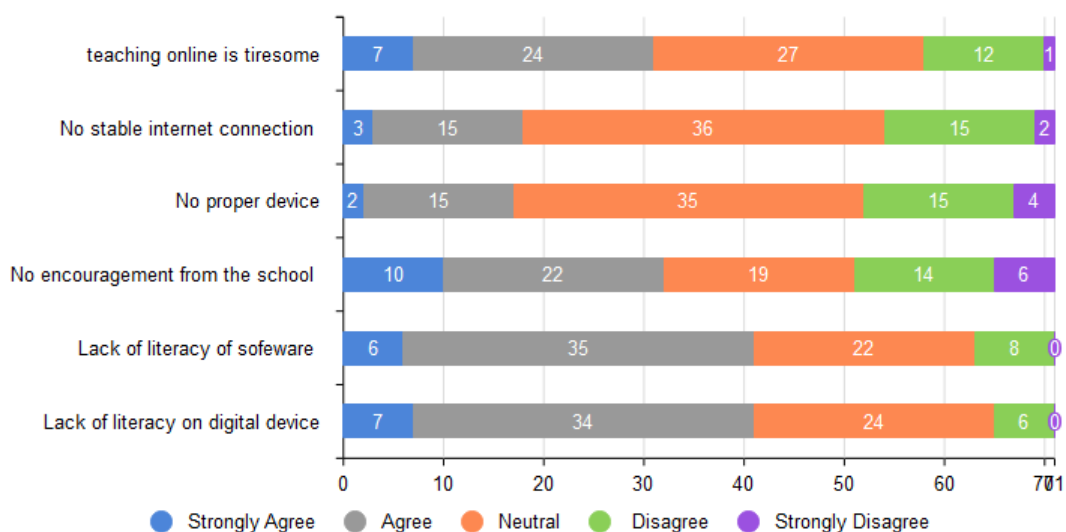

Figure 4: Factors that Frustrated and Restricted the Teachers Using OLE

As most teachers mentioned, there were teacher salary issues as most private schools' management cut off all the allowances as the teachers work from home. However, government school teachers refrained from online teaching and took trade union action until the matters regarding salary were settled.

Conclusions

The results showed that all the teachers had reached the minimum level of infrastructure facilities. However, there was a need to be upgraded, especially the teachers using mobile phones have to upgrade their devices to at least a desktop computer. Other than pure online learning, the Sri Lankan context has to adhere to emergency mobile teaching where the training time was minimal, and in some places, more than training was needed as the teachers had never been exposed to the OLE. Management decisions and especially the

unawareness of the management about the online teaching-learning pedagogy have made the teachers' lives more stressful, affecting the quality of the online sessions and high screen time also contributed to stress factors. Anyhow, teachers were willing to improve their skills. It was necessary to discuss the matters with the teacher and motivate them; otherwise, the success rate of the online session would be less.

Limitations and Recommendations

The major limitation was the sample size (due to the lockdown condition), and the teachers needed to be made aware of the technical terms and the components of the tools and software. On the other hand, the mobile broadband connection kept lagging, and the one who said they have a good internet connection has to say that it was slow in not less than two or three hours. It is recommended to have a more extensive study that can identify the devices separately, which would help decision-making regarding software requirements. However, there is a need to provide a device with at least enough battery life and a special internet data package that can cover the monthly work of the teacher.

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The Use of Smartwatches as a Wearable Device for Learning in Higher Education: Toward an Integrative Theoretical Model

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Introduction

The rapid growth of technology has redefined the way through which the teaching and learning is conducted in higher education sector. Use of technology plays a crucial role in elevating the quality of higher education (Norris, Hossain, and Soloway, 2011), prompting the seamless integration of ubiquitous technological tools in educational practices (Chew et al., 2018). Wearable devices, collectively referred to as sophisticated portable electronics (Dehghani and Dangelico, 2017) such as smartphones, smartwatches, fitness trackers, smart glasses, smart clothing and smart jewelry (Al-Emran et al., 2021; Alexander et al., 2019; Brinson, Eastin, and Bright, 2019), have gained an increasing popularity in higher education sector. Among various wearable technology/devices, there has been an increasing interest for using smartwatches in learning activities (Alexander et al., 2019).

Notwithstanding the growing importance and usage of wearable devices, particularly the smartwatches in education, a little academic attention has been paid to understand what drives learning through the smartwatches (Al-Emran et al., 2021; Al-Emran et al., 2022; Hsu et al., 2022). The past work largely relied on technology acceptance model (TAM) (Al-Emran et al., 2021; Al-Emran et al., 2022; Chuah et al., 2016), protection motivation theory (PMT) (Al-Emran et al., 2021), theory of planned behavior (TPB) (Al-Emran et al., 2022), unified theory of acceptance and use of technology (UTAUT) (Dehghani, Kim, and Dangelico, 2018), communication privacy management (CPM) (Brinson et al., 2019) in predicting users' attitudes and behaviors toward wearable technology. Although technology acceptance models are of importance for understanding users' attitudes and motivations for adopting various technologies, these models may not comprehensively address the evolving patterns of technology usage in the distant future, particularly with regard to novel technologies, such as wearable devices (Dehghani et al., 2018). Smartwatches, as a prominent example of such innovations, are intentionally designed to be physically attached to the user's body, thereby necessitating the consideration of factors beyond the technology acceptance models for understanding users' attitudes and adoption behaviors.

In higher education sector, university students have an increased dependence on technology (Darko-Adjei, 2019), and the advanced features and ubiquity of wearable technology are likely to have a profound effect on student learning in education sector (Hsu et al., 2022), warranting the importance of identifying what drives usage of smartwatches for learning purposes in higher education. Although certain recent work has focused on use of smartphones for learning in higher education (Darko-Adjei, 2019; Iqbal and Bhatti, 2020), there is still a dearth of research concerning the psychological factors (Dehghani et al., 2018) affecting smartwatch use for learning purposes in higher education (Al-Emran et al., 2023). Accordingly, to address the highlighted gaps, this study is expected to present a framework, consisting of drivers of attitudes toward smartwatch adoption and the smartwatch continuation intention in higher education. To do so, this study draws on the uses and gratifications theory (UGT) and social cognitive theory (SCT) to address the call for more papers for identifying the additional constructs affecting the attitude towards smartwatch usage and continuous intention (Dehghani et al., 2018) in higher education in particular (Al-Emran et al., 2021; Al-Emran et al., 2023).

Literature Review

Drawing on SCT and UGT, by identifying linkages between cognitive factors (self-efficacy, outcome expectancy), affective factors (anxiety), gratifications/motivations, attitudes toward using smartwatches and continuous intention, research hypotheses were developed. Self-efficacy reflects a student's beliefs about his or her capabilities to use smartwatches for learning. Outcome expectancy is linked to improvements in performance (efficiency and effectiveness) associated with using smartwatches for learning. Anxiety represents the negative side; the feelings of apprehension that a student experiences when using a smartwatch. Hedonic motive reflects the fun or pleasure derived from using a smartwatch for learning, while information motive reflects the ability to gratify required informational needs in learning. Social interaction motive reflects a student's ability to connect with others.

H1:   Information motive is positively linked to students' attitudes toward using smartwatches for learning.

H2:   Hedonic motive is positively linked to students' attitudes toward using smartwatches for learning.

H3:   Social interaction motive is positively linked to students' attitudes toward using smartwatches for learning.

H4: Self-efficacy is positively linked to students' smartwatch continuous intention.

H5: Outcome expectancy is positively linked to students' smartwatch continuous intention.

H6: Anxiety is negatively linked to students' smartwatch continuous intention.

H7: Students' attitudes toward using smartwatches lead to smartwatch continuous intention.

Methods

A self-administered online questionnaire was administered via Google forms and the link kept open for 10 days. The participation for the survey was completely voluntarily and conducted from 19th to 29th of March 2023. The study sample included undergraduate and postgraduate university students, and respondents were invited to participate in the survey with the Google form link distributed via messaging apps (e.g., Facebook Messenger, WhatsApp). Additionally, respondents were requested to circulate the link among their close undergraduate and postgraduate friends, once completed the questionnaire. In this way, due to convenience advantages and the potential ability of generating merely as reliable as probability sampling results (Sarstedt et al., 2018), the convenience/snowball sampling technique was employed, resulting in a total of 408 valid responses. Participants' eligibility to take part in the survey was ensured with a screening question that asked whether they were using a smartwatch for learning at the university.

In operationalizing study constructs, items with acceptable reliability and validity were adapted from the existing literature and modified to fit the context. All the scale items in the questionnaire were measured with a five-point Likert scale, where 1 stands for 'strongly disagree' while 5 means 'strongly agree'. The information seeking motive (ISM) was operationalized with three items borrowed from LaRose and Eastin (2004) and Al-Emran et al. (2022). To measure hedonic motivation (HM), a three-item scale adapted from Venkatesh, Thong, and Xu (2012) and Dehghani et al. (2018) was used. In operationalizing social interaction motive (SIM), items were borrowed from LaRose and Eastin (2004). Self-efficacy (SE) was measured with a three-item scale, in which the items were adapted from Compeau, Higgins, and Huff (1999) and Al-Emran et al. (2021). Items used to measure outcome expectancy (OE) and anxiety (ANX) were adapted from Compeau et al. (1999). Continuous intention (CI) was measured with three items adapted from Venkatesh et al. (2012) and Dehghani et al. (2018), while the construct of attitude (ATT) was

operationalized with three items taken from Venkatesh et al. (2003) and Al-Emran et al. (2020).

Data Analysis and Results

The partial least squares structural equation modeling (PLS-SEM) with SmartPLS 3.3.3 was used to analyze the data. PLS-SEM enables to test complex models with 6 or more constructs (Hair et al., 2017) while also generating more precise results with a separate analysis of the measurement and structural model (Hair et al., 2019). Additionally, PLS-SEM does not impose any data distributional assumptions (Hair et al., 2019), allowing researchers to employ in situations where normality assumption is violated (Hair et al., 2017), and PLS-SEM is hence more suitable for this study compared to covariance-based SEM. Accordingly, data were analyzed using the two-step procedure that involves the measurement model and the structural model evaluation (Hair et al., 2017; Hair et al., 2019). Moreover, due to all the items used to measure the respective study constructs were centered upon a single unified theme (Ford, 2017), all the study constructs were treated as reflective models.

The hypotheses testing results showed that information motive had an effect on students' attitudes toward using smartwatches for learning (β = 0.222, t = 2.999, p = 0.003), supporting H1. Similarly, the results highlighted that hedonic motive (β = 0.337, t = 4.318, p = 0.000) and the social interaction motive (β = 0.248, t = 2.856, p = 0.004) also had significant effects on students' attitudes toward using smartwatches for learning, supporting H2 and H3, respectively. Moreover, the results indicated that outcome expectancy had an influence on students' smartwatch continuous intention (β = 0.295, t = 2.547, p = 0.011), thus supporting H5. However, as per the results, self-efficacy (β = 0.050, t = 0.908, p > 0.05) and anxiety (β = -0.036, t = 0.871, p > 0.05) had no effects on students' smartwatch continuous intention, leading to the rejection of H4 and H6, respectively. Finally, students' attitudes toward using smartwatches for learning was found to be positively related to smartwatch continuous intention (β = 0.550, t = 4.545, p = 0.000), supporting H7. The effect size of the relationships (F2) was further examined and found that F2 values were ranging from small (between 0.02-0.15) to medium (between 0.15-0.35) (Cohen, 1988) for statistically significant relationships.

Additionally, as self-efficacy and anxiety were found to have no direct effects on smartwatch continuous intention, a mediation test with 5000 bootstrapping resamples was conducted to examine whether the self-efficacy and anxiety had effects on continuous intention through attitudes. In terms of the effect of self-efficacy on continuous intention, neither the direct effects nor

indirect effects were significant, indicating that attitudes had no intervening role between self-efficacy and continuous intention. For the effect of anxiety on continuous intention, however, the results indicated a full mediation effect through attitudes.

Conclusions

Going beyond technology acceptance models, building on UGT and SCT, this study contributes to the literature by highlighting that university students' information, hedonic and social interaction motives lead to their attitudes toward using smartwatches in learning activities, while outcome expectancy was found to have an effect on their smartwatch continuous intention. Moreover, it was observed that attitudes play a significant role in shaping students' continuous intention to use smartwatches.

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Digital Tools in Language Learning: Impact and Challenges

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Abstract

This research study aimed to explore the impact of digital tools on language learning and to address the challenges encountered during their implementation. The proliferation of technology in education has introduced various digital tools that hold promise for enhancing language learning experiences. However, it was essential to investigate the efficacy of these tools and the barriers they presented. The research problem revolved around comprehending the influence of digital tools on language learning outcomes and identifying impediments to their successful integration. A mixed-methods approach was adopted to collect and analyze data. Quantitative data was gathered through pre- and post-assessment tests on language proficiency levels among a diverse sample of language learners utilizing digital tools. Additionally, qualitative data was obtained through surveys and interviews to gain insights into learners' experiences and perceptions of digital tools. The results demonstrated a positive impact of digital tools on language learning, as learners exhibited heightened motivation and engagement. Furthermore, learners reported improved language proficiency and communicative skills because of the consistent use of digital tools. Nonetheless, several challenges emerged, including technical issues, a lack of digital literacy, and potential distractions. The findings emphasized the significance of effective teacher training and support to optimally utilize digital tools for language instruction. Additionally, promoting digital literacy skills among educators and learners was crucial to maximize the benefits of technology in language learning. In conclusion, this study highlighted the positive impact of digital tools on language learning while acknowledging the challenges that necessitated attention during implementation. Recommendations include continuous research and development of user-friendly language learning applications, as well as integrating digital tools into language curricula with a focus on personalized learning experiences. Addressing these challenges and leveraging the potential of digital tools would better

prepare language educators to equip learners for a multilingual and interconnected world.

Introduction

In today's rapidly evolving digital landscape, the role of technology in education has become increasingly vital, particularly in language learning. This research explores the profound impact of digital tools on teaching and learning processes, focusing on their significance in the realm of language acquisition. With the widespread adoption of computers, smartphones, and various interactive applications, traditional language learning methods are transforming. This investigation explores the benefits and challenges presented by digital tools, analyzing their effectiveness in fostering linguistic proficiency, cultural understanding, and communicative competence. By scrutinizing the integration of technology in language education, this study aims to explore how educators and learners can harness the full potential of digital tools to create immersive and engaging language learning experiences for learners of diverse backgrounds and abilities.

Significance

The research study holds immense significance from four perspectives. Theoretical importance lies in exploring how digital tools can enhance educational practices, facilitating engagement and personalized learning. From a policy standpoint, understanding the impact of digital integration can inform educational strategies and funding allocation. Pedagogically, insights into effective digital tool usage can enrich teaching methods, benefitting educators and learners. Most importantly, the transformative perspective highlights the potential to revolutionize education by democratizing access, fostering inclusivity, and preparing learners for a technology-driven world. Embracing this transformative approach empowers educators to adapt and optimize digital tools to maximize their positive impact on education.

Theoretical Perspectives

The theoretical review of the literature for the research study encompasses five key theories. Firstly, the Constructivism theory highlights how digital tools facilitate active learning, encouraging knowledge construction. Secondly, the Technology Acceptance Model explores factors influencing educators' adoption of digital tools. Thirdly, the Connectivism theory emphasizes the role of digital networks in fostering collaborative learning and knowledge sharing. Fourthly, the TPACK framework addresses the integration of technology, pedagogy, and content knowledge, guiding effective digital tool implementation. Lastly, the Diffusion of Innovations theory explains the spread and impact of digital tools, considering factors affecting their successful implementation in educational settings.

Methods and Methodology

The research focuses on undergraduate students engaged in language learning programs. A purposive sampling technique will be employed to select thirty-three participants from different language courses to ensure a diverse representation of language learners. The selection will be based on criteria such as language proficiency levels, prior exposure to digital tools, and motivation for language learning. Quantitative and qualitative data will be collected through pre- and post-surveys, classroom observations, and focus group discussions. Quantitative data will be analyzed using descriptive statistics, such as mean and standard deviation, to assess participants' perceptions of digital tools. Qualitative data will be subjected to thematic analysis to identify recurring themes and patterns in the participants' experiences with digital tools in language learning. The integration of both approaches will provide comprehensive insights into the role of digital tools in enhancing language learning experiences for undergraduate students.

Review of Literature

In recent years, the role of digital tools in teaching and learning, particularly in the context of language education, has garnered significant attention from researchers and educators. This review

synthesizes the existing literature on the subject, focusing on the impact of digital tools on language learning outcomes, pedagogical practices, and student engagement.

Digital tools have been shown to enhance language learning experiences by providing learners with interactive and immersive opportunities to practice language skills. Mobile language learning applications in improving vocabulary retention and oral proficiency among undergraduate language learners have increased (Stockwell & Wang, 2023). Additionally, interactive language learning platforms have been found to foster communicative competence and cultural understanding in students (Tao & Gao, 2022).

Integration of digital tools into language classrooms has also demonstrated positive effects on student motivation and engagement. Increased learner enthusiasm and active participation through gamified language learning platforms and virtual reality simulations (Moorhouse & Yan, 2023). Furthermore, online collaborative tools have been proven to cultivate a sense of community and facilitate peer interactions, leading to enhanced language learning experiences (Moorhouse & Yan, 2023).

However, the integration of digital tools in language learning is not without challenges. Technical barriers and resource constraints may hinder effective implementation (Stockwell & Wang, 2023). Moreover, concerns about overreliance on digital tools and potential distractions were raised calling for a balanced approach to using these technologies (Metruk, 2022).

The role of educators in leveraging digital tools for language instruction is a crucial aspect of this discussion. The significance of teacher training and professional development to empower educators with the necessary digital literacy and pedagogical strategies is needed in the post-COVID contexts (Muhammad, Sheeraz, & Sacco, 2022). Effective integration of digital tools requires thoughtful instructional design to align technology use with specific language learning objectives (Moorhouse & Yan, 2023).

In conclusion, the literature suggests that digital tools offer immense potential in language education, presenting opportunities for improved language learning outcomes, increased student engagement,

and enhanced cultural understanding. However, careful consideration must be given to addressing technical and pedagogical challenges, ensuring that digital tools are seamlessly integrated into language classrooms. This review underscores the importance of continuing research and teacher training to maximize the benefits of digital tools in language learning.

Results and Discussion: Quantitative Analysis

The study investigated the impact of digital tools on language learning outcomes and student engagement among thirty-three undergraduate participants. The results revealed a positive correlation between the use of digital tools and language proficiency improvement. Pre- and post-surveys indicated a statistically significant increase in vocabulary retention ($p < 0.001$) and oral proficiency ($p < 0.05$) after integrating mobile language learning applications into the language curriculum. This finding aligns with previous research by (Lazar, Panisoara, & Panisoara, 2019) and (Refat, Kassim, Rahman, & Razali, 2020), highlighting the effectiveness of such tools in enhancing language learning.

Furthermore, data from classroom observations demonstrated a substantial rise in student motivation and engagement when employing gamified language learning platforms and virtual reality simulations ($p < 0.001$). These interactive approaches fostered active participation and collaborative learning, reinforcing the benefits of incorporating digital tools in language instruction. This finding supports the work of (Muhammad, Sheeraz, & Sacco, 2022) in emphasizing the positive influence of technology on student enthusiasm and participation.

Qualitative Analysis

The qualitative data collected through focus group discussions provided deeper insights into participants' experiences with digital tools in language learning. The themes that emerged from the analysis include improved cultural understanding, increased communication skills, and a sense of belonging within a supportive language-learning community. Participants expressed appreciation for the authentic language practice provided by interactive language learning platforms leading to a better

understanding of cultural nuances and cross-cultural communication (Çelik & Aytın, 2014). However, the analysis also identified challenges associated with the integration of digital tools. Technical barriers and limited access to resources were cited as impediments to effective implementation (Deribigbe, Hamdi, Alzouebi, & Frick, 2022). Moreover, concerns about potential distractions and overreliance on technology were raised by participants (Moorhouse & Yan, 2023). These findings highlight the need for addressing these challenges and offering appropriate support to educators to ensure the successful integration of digital tools in language classrooms.

Discussion

The findings of this research underscore the potential of digital tools in positively influencing language learning outcomes and student engagement. The quantitative analysis demonstrated significant improvements in vocabulary retention and oral proficiency, while qualitative data revealed valuable insights into the experiential aspects of language learning through digital tools. This aligns with existing literature on the subject, affirming the effectiveness of digital tools in enhancing language education.

However, the study also sheds light on challenges that educators and institutions must navigate to leverage the full potential of digital tools in language learning. Technical barriers and resource constraints must be addressed, and educators should be provided with appropriate training and support to design effective instructional strategies that balance technology use.

In conclusion, digital tools offer valuable opportunities to enhance language learning experiences for undergraduate students. Their integration should be approached with careful consideration of both the positive impacts and potential challenges, ensuring a well-rounded language learning environment that caters to the diverse needs of language learners. Further research and continuous professional development for educators are crucial in harnessing the benefits of digital tools and mitigating their limitations in language education.

Moreover, the journey toward enhancing language learning through digital tools has proven to be a multifaceted exploration. The

observed positive impact on language acquisition is tempered by challenges such as the digital divide and the need for robust teacher training. A comprehensive approach that addresses both opportunities and obstacles is crucial for maximizing the effectiveness of digital tools in language education.

In closing, my examination of enhancing language learning through digital tools emphasizes the need for a nuanced and adaptive approach. While digital tools offer unprecedented opportunities for language acquisition, thoughtful consideration of challenges such as data security, technological infrastructure, and the evolving nature of educational technology is essential for fostering a sustainable and effective language learning environment.

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Is using digital dictionaries a far cry for Sri Lankan English language learners?

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Abstract

Using dictionaries is an essential skill required to learn languages. Therefore, English language learners are always encouraged to use dictionaries as a learning tool instead of depending on the teacher or outside assistance. This is a qualitative research which employs a Survey Research design. The basic objective of this study is to find out preferences of using of dictionaries by the modern learners of English in Sri Lanka. Selected group is a purposive sample that consists of 54 respondents following a weekend extension Diploma course in English conducted by a state university. Required data was generated from the target group using a questionnaire composed of open ended and close ended questions. Majority of respondents learn English for educational purposes and almost all of them exhibit real need of improving their vocabulary. At the very outset of the course, they were necessary instructions to use any form of dictionary according to their preference. Software NVivo was used to analyze coded data. It was found that, although they encounter some issues, many of the learners are gradually shifting to digital dictionaries from hard copies of dictionaries due to some obvious common reasons. They prefer digital dictionaries and majority them use English- English dictionaries while half of them at least possess one hard copy of either Malalasekara or Oxford dictionary. In conclusion, as they wish, the learners should be properly guided by teachers of English in order to facilitate their new habit of using digital dictionaries in and outside the classroom in this age Digital Revolution.

The keywords: *dictionary, digital, lexicography, language, technology*

Introduction

Today English has become the language of the world community with the rapid process of globalization. The conceptualization of global village has made the English as the mostly used language among the world community. It is used not only for general communication but also as the language of science, the academic, administration, and professional disciplines. The learners of this

language consider learning English is the basic qualification to enter into the global community. The world communities are keen on learning English to acquire this precious tool and use it fluently and efficiently in the most effective manner. Without any age limit learning English is a passion today among the international community .

With the quick development and spread of the latest digital technology learners and teachers of English strive to update teaching and learning strategies. The learners of the latest generation look for innovative approaches for teaching and learning languages. Learning the basic unit of a language the 'word' appropriately is extremely important for effective communication. To use words effectively the user should be knowledgeable about the particular word. The linguistic vocabulary awareness is extremely important for each skill related to language learning. For the development of lexical awareness the mostly used tool is 'Dictionary'.

The Digital Revolution influenced on the strategies and methodologies used in teaching and learning processes. New generation is equipped with digital know how and try to break the cultural barriers to proceed faster than the earlier generations. The latest is E- generation tends to make use of Digital Technology in English Language teaching and learning. Now 'Digital Dictionaries are in usage in English Language Education. The basic objective of this study is to find out new trends of preference using dictionaries. A hiatus of knowledge exits in the field of using digital dictionaries by English language learners in the context of Sri Lanka.

Literature Review

Nothing can stay stably in this swiftly modifying world. Everything is changing with the changes of its environment. This practice is applicable to language learning as well, the significant and the most powerful, convenient, and effective communicative tools in the world.

If the human body is the world, communication is the heart and global language is the blood circulated through that body. Although over 3000 different languages exist in this world, the English language has become the most powerful dominant global language to break the cultural barriers exceeding the heritage conventions. In this swiftly developing world, while connecting the nations with the concept of globalization, the necessity of a global language is obvious. English, the dynamic language with the challengeable circumstances in this world of technological advances needed as the international tongue (Oliver Bayley, 2023- Oxford University Press).

As the prime tool of communication, language depends on verbal and nonverbal codes. The basic contents of a language such as signs, symbols, and words are the focused points of a language which make it understandable. To have a proper understanding of the rules of the language, the lexicon learning plays an important and vital role. Therefore, lexical awareness has some crucial importance in learning the words in English language. Vocabulary is unlimited in English as it is a dynamic language. So there should be a suitable fast upgrading device to enhance the lexical education to get updated.(Maurice de Schryver- 2019).

How can we get updated in lexical education? Use of a dictionary, is the most common and the easiest way to search words. Samuel Johnson's dictionary published in 1755 is the beginning of the use of dictionaries. That's decades earlier but effective up to date. With the technological revolutions the performance of dictionaries has been improved. As it is a necessity to uplift the standards with related to the development of the world, generational improvements, and technological advancements at the present, the dictionary has developed to highly sophisticated level of digital dictionary. Dictionaries and Digital Revolution- is an increasing focus on users and lexical database International journal of lexicography, (Nicky Hockly- Oxford University e-book 2014).

There is no significant difference between digital dictionaries and printed dictionaries in the use of lexicographical theories. There is no need to rank the theories, lexicographers or the dictionaries to search the best. But should focus on the best which is appropriate for the task at hand. (Aisha Walker and Goodith White Oxford University- online resources, 2013).

Lexicography is always done based on a standardized theoretical framework. But the newest lexicographic approach truly looks out of the box for more user friendliness. The latest users at present do not like to look up to find a word, waste time turning pages and reading texts which is old fashioned. But instead of that they prefer to touch the search icon by the fingertip in an easy holding weightless mobile device, which provides not a text to read but a mindful and colorful, attractive automated audiovisual which fulfills the necessity swiftly in seconds. (Gilles-Maurice de Schryver 2019) Digital Lexicography!'Online, digital, e-dictionary is the latest ongoing preference. The modern passion in the era.

Methods and Methodology

This is a qualitative research which makes uses of qualitative data drawn from a purposive sample. Respondents are the followers of a one year weekend extension Diploma in English course conducted by a national university in Sri Lanka. In the selected sample 51 respondents are from age range between 15 -25. Majority (52) are from NWP and except a few a vast numbers (47) of followers are students after A/L examination. Out of 54 respondents many of them (48) learn English for educational purposes. In the target group, 54 respondents provided their opinions and hence this study falls into the category of a survey research design. At the initial stage of the programme the learners were given necessary specific instructions how to refer to dictionaries to find meaning of new words. This opinion survey was conducted after three months of conducting lectures. Opinions of respondents gathered to find trends of using dictionaries. Necessary data was generated using a questionnaire with open ended and closed ended questions. Questionnaire composed of 4 parts as ABCD. Data was analyzed using the software NVivo. Coded data was analyzed to find trends of using dictionaries.

Results and Discussion

Following preferences were identified in relation to use of dictionaries by the respondents. Many of learners (31) have 2 hard copies of dictionaries, a small number of them have 4 hard copies. Approximately half of them (26) possess at least one digital dictionary while another half (23) of them have 2 digital dictionaries. More than half them use (41) uses .hard copy of the Malalasekara dictionary. A considerable number of users (39) uses hard copy of the Oxford dictionary. More than half (35) use Google Translator and half of them (25) have hard copy of the Oxford dictionary. A remarkable number (43) of participants use English- English dictionaries. But majority (46) of them prefers to use digital dictionaries. A small number (11) of users like to use bilingual dictionaries. However, more than half of them (31) are aware of dictionary abbreviations and lesser than half of them (23) are not aware of them. Almost, all (50) like to improve their vocabularies. A notable majority (45) know about grammatical categories of words found in dictionaries. Except a few, majority (49) know single words have 2 or more meanings .Majority of them (46) not aware of Word Power or Thesaurus dictionaries. More than half of users (39) not aware of collocation. Almost all (50) think that they cannot learn English without a dictionary. Around half of them (24) look for equivalent Sinhala word. All the participants (54) think English- English versions of dictionaries are the best dictionaries for learners.

In addition to the statistical descriptive data , the views of respondents were gathered under the open ended section, part D of the questionnaire. They expressed their free views over using the hard/digital copies of dictionaries. Summary of responses to open ended questions is as follow. Majority of respondents like to use Google Translator to find the details of new or unknown words. They were of the idea that it is easy to use digital dictionaries compared to hard copies. They can save their time as it takes short time to find words. Also it is convenient to learn the correct pronunciation of words from the native speakers. Using digital dictionaries is an efficient way with smart phones. It is easy to carry with the users wherever they go as it is in the hand. Availability of sufficient examples is very useful. All the smart phones have access to all digital dictionaries. However, sometimes available details are unreliable. Users are able to gather a lot of details on words. No need of turning pages to find meaning, grammar and pronunciations. But internet connection issues disturb free continuous learning. As a whole, the respondents think that using digital dictionaries quick and fast.

Conclusion and remarks

After synthesizing results of open ended and close ended questions following conclusions can be drawn. It is recommended to provide digital dictionary users with more uninterruptable internet facilities to during class time. Encourage and allow them to use their smart phones in the classroom as a learning tool. Further, teachers must help them to find more reliable digital resources. It is better to encourage them use digital dictionaries to learn correct pronouncing from native speakers. As a result, learners will score well at international English language examinations like IELT and TOEFL. In conclusion, use of digital dictionaries is on the increase with the Digital Evolution of technology. More infrastructure facilities and guidance to be given to learners to use digital dictionaries in the classroom in this new era of digital technology.

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Work-family Interface, telecommuting and Quality of work-life of female academics in Sri Lanka

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Introduction

To better employ human capital, organisations must prioritize developing interpersonal relationships, provide feasible job evaluations, and ensure proper support from their families and work colleagues (Sirgy et al., 2008). Hence, determining employees' quality of work-life (QWL) should be given significant consideration if organisations are keen to improve their employees' commitment and job satisfaction (Taher, 2013). The interaction between work and family has also been studied extensively in academia as two significant dimensions of life (Chen et al., 2020). In the Asian context, teleworking has drastically increased due to the current pandemic situation. In Singapore, penalties are imposed if employers do not allow staff to work from home for a maximum length of time to encourage teleworking (Lai, 2020). According to the Employers' Federation of Ceylon (EFC), allowing employees to work from home from their distant locations ensures that work-life balance and a modular approach for restructuring still benefit all employers (Daily News, 2020).

However, some argue that teleworking has enhanced pressure on women who struggle to balance their personal lives and work. ANI (2020) reports that according to the International Monetary Fund, many employees (around 100 million) in 35 developed and developing countries may lose their employment due to the unavailability of teleworking. Further, many education institutions have shifted their remote degree offerings to online/dual mode. This shift has made academics to conduct lecture sessions and exams online, thus expanding remote working. According to Moore (2020), in 2017, the proportion of female to male enrolment in tertiary education in Sri Lanka was 1.51:1 (Statista, 2021). Hence, it can be assumed that, in comparison, a significant level of stress and pressure would be built on female academics depending on their household responsibilities.

In 2019, 68.5% of graduates and 64% of enrolments in the Sri Lankan state higher education establishments were female. Further, almost two-thirds

(59.3 %) of the probationary lecturers hired within the same year were females. However, only around 33% of senior female academics were promoted to professorship, while the majority who became professors were male (University Grants Commission, Sri Lanka, 2019). While numerous factors might affect these outputs, assessing whether women academics receive sufficient support from their families and colleagues and their effect on the QWL is essential. Further, it is worthwhile to evaluate whether telecommuting can assist them in achieving the quality requirements of their work, which might facilitate breaking the glass ceiling and contribute to the social/economic betterment of the country.

Literature Review

Davis (1983, p. 80) defined QWL as "the quality of the relationship between employees and the total working environment, with human dimensions added to the usual technical and economic considerations." Therefore, ensuring employees' QWL can deliver mutual benefits for both the employer and the employee. Work and life complement each other by impacting life inside and outside of work in daily physical, social, and administrative setups, making it difficult to distinguish work and life separately. Workplace stress can disrupt the work-life balance as stress can negatively affect one's personal life (Judge et al., 2006). Apart from workplace stress, job-related well-being, reward systems, and performance management as influencing variables have already been assessed by several scholars (e.g., Rose, Kumar & Yen, 2006; Connell & Hannif, 2009) on QWL. Further, workplace best practices such as participative decision-making and problem-solving, job enrichment, high performance and development opportunities, and participation in autonomous work groups might also be considered in QWL enhancement (Gittell et al., 2008).

Work-life is an integral part of every human being. A person's experience in the workplace and the quality of that experience determines their work-life satisfaction, which ultimately affects organisational outcomes. Commonly, employees who feel satisfied with their work would say that they have a high-quality work-life, while those who are unhappy would say the contrary. Providing employees with advanced (quality) work setting plays a significant role in attracting and retaining the talented. May, Lau, and Johnson (1999) stated that if organisations offer quality work-life with supportive work conditions, those organisations will have a competitive edge in high achieving potential. This highlights that if the organisations can bring all the parties

concerned together with a shared social understanding, it results in a positive attitude for better quality work-life and higher productivity.

There are two domains in terms of work-family interface: work-family conflict (WFC) and work-family enrichment (WFE). The conflict presumes that resources and energy are scarce to people (Weer, Greenhaus, Colakoglu, & Foley, 2006). The necessity to satisfy several roles might lead to a dispute (conflict) and anxiety, creating work and life domains unharmonious as per the WFC approach (Allen, Herst, Bruck & Sutton, 2000). On the contrary, the WFC domain (based on the theory of work–personal life enrichment) contends that playing multiple roles and tasks can bring out positive synergy in people to gain better perks by utilising their skills and capabilities to the maximum (McNall, Nicklin, & Masuda, 2010; Greenhaus & Powell, 2006). The argument proposed here is that performing several roles can also be valuable as resources gained in one domain can benefit another. According to the study conducted by Van Steenbergen, Ellemers and Mooijaart (2007), personal life-related consequences of WFE comprise family and life satisfaction and physical well-being (Williams, Franche, Ibrahim, Mustard and Layton, 2006). Further, creating other resources provides stress relief (Greenhaus & Powell, 2006), which would be beneficial in creating and enjoying a quality work-life. Based on these justifications, it can be understood that the work-family interface (conflict and enrichment) impacts QWL.

Further, scholars should investigate the interference of telecommuting among work-family interfaces and QWL. Today, employment work arrangements are significantly influenced by global environmental changes (micro and macro) and different pandemic situations. In the current context, because of COVID-19, employers are obliged to take preventive measures to adhere to social distancing rules while enhancing employee performance. Though telecommuting is not a novel concept to the education sector/business community, it has become a pivotal discussion arena that has dominated the application in organisations (Nishanthi & Gunasekara, 2021). Telecommuting, "working from home, telework, or remote work, refers to a work arrangement where individuals have the flexibility to work from the comforts of their home" (Jamal, Anwar, Khan & Saleem, 2020, p.293). Some studies have looked at how teleworking facilitated employers to balance their employees' work and life requirements and enhance their QWL as effects of teleworking (Aguilera, Lethiais, Rallet, & Proulhac, 2016).

Numerous studies suggest that companies and individuals reap benefits from flexible work arrangements such as teleworking as it provides WFE (Lautsch, Kossek, & Eaton, 2009), enhanced job satisfaction (Kelliher &

Anderson, 2010) and organisational commitment (Kelliher & Anderson, 2010). Nevertheless, these benefits may be outshined by the adverse effects of telecommuting, such as workplace social isolation (O'Driscoll et al., 2003), lack of communication (Whittle & Mueller, 2009), and professional isolation (Whittle & Mueller, 2009). In the education sector, teleworking has heavily changed its demographics worldwide. Developments in information and communication technologies (ICT) enabled home-based telecommuting to provide students with a quality and timely learning experience by enabling online teaching (Li et al., 2014). Apart from meeting teaching responsibilities, academics may benefit from fulfilling their administrative obligations and the comfort of engaging in research activities from home (Weyant & Palmer, 2012). Hence, it is worth assessing how telecommuting would enhance academics' QWL through work-family interface influences.

Moreover, teleworking promotes greater flexibility in work (Laegran, 2008), allowing better work-life balance, and enabling employees to organise life and work harmoniously (Troup & Rose, 2012). Hence, it is worth assessing the impact of telecommuting as a moderator on the relationship between the work-family interface and QWL.

Research Methodology

The current study is deductive and based on the positivistic paradigm. The study focuses on female academics in state universities in Sri Lanka. According to UGC, Sri Lanka (2021), sixteen state universities exist. The female academic population has increased since 2009 (from 39.6%) to 48.2% (2019). The number and percentage have risen from 1,508 in 2009 to 2,883 in 2019 (UGC, Sri Lanka, 2019). The researcher will target senior female academics (senior lecturer and above positions) in those state universities as the study population. The unit of analysis is an individual female academic. Primary data will be collected from a self-administered questionnaire, interviews, and focus group discussions. Using a stratified random sampling technique, the researcher expects to derive a sample of 500 female academics from six state universities in the Western Province of Sri Lanka. Further, ten interviews and three focus group discussions will be conducted using the convenience sampling technique. Multivariate analyses will be used to test the hypotheses. Thematic analysis will be used for interview data and focused group analysis.

Potential contributions of the study

Several studies on QWL (e.g., Rose & Kumar, 2006; Connell & Hannif, 2009) have already investigated the impact of variables such as employee well-being, reward and compensation systems, and performance evaluation (Yeo, 2013). However, it is yet to identify the impact of the work-family interface (conflict and enrichment) on QWL as the dependent variable. Further, it was not examined among female academia by placing the work-family interface as the independent variable. Telecommuting has become quite popular in many industries apart from the education sector. However, identifying the impact of telecommuting on the academic setting, specifically in female academics, has been rare (Tustin, 2014). Further, how telecommuting affects the associations between the work-family interface and QWL as a moderator is yet to be explored theoretically, nationally, and internationally. Additionally, the researcher did not find instances where telecommuting applied as a moderator among these relationships among women in academia.

Furthermore, study findings can be utilised to identify the necessity of promoting telecommuting practices among university academia to enhance their quality of work life and job satisfaction. Policymakers at the national level and university levels will also benefit from the study findings to make better decisions to improve the QWL of women in academia in Sri Lanka.

Conclusion

The study proposes to assess the direct association between the work-family, work-family interface, and QWL. Further, the impact of telecommunication (working from home) as a moderator on the relationship mentioned above is yet to be assessed in local and international literature. Further, these relationships' impact need to be empirically verified by taking an exclusive sample in female academia. Hence, identifying these associations benefit academia and national and international education policymakers as it would enhance the overall education sector performance while ensuring their QWL using diverse mechanisms.

Keywords: *Female academics, Quality of work-life, Telecommuting, Work-family interface*

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Need Analysis to identify the need for Module-Based Teaching: Intervention to Children with Reading Difficulties in Sri Lanka.

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Introduction

Reading, a cognitively intricate process rooted in the human brain, serves as a conduit for deriving meaning from written text (Grabe and Stoller, 2019). Reading is an acquired skill, a craft that necessitates both instruction and acquisition, a milestone often reached during primary school (Lachmann, 2018). However, it's imperative to acknowledge that certain children grapple with the art of reading. Timely identification and targeted intervention, grounded in empirical insights, are indispensable for nurturing the reading capabilities of children confronting these challenges. The objective of this need analysis is to discern the specific requirements essential for enhancing reading fluency among junior secondary students dealing with reading difficulties in Sri Lanka.

Literature review

Reading is a multifaceted cognitive process that holds a central place in our educational, professional, recreational, and social lives. Early identification and intervention play a pivotal role in the reading development of children grappling with these issues. Specifically, reading intervention programs provide a crucial foundation for the academic success of students, particularly those categorized as struggling readers (Auletto and Sableski, 2018). Educational interventions are instrumental in assisting dyslexic students in overcoming these difficulties, preventing the persistence of these challenges into adulthood (Franklin, 2018).

Efficient assessment techniques are vital to pinpoint existing gaps in learners' reading abilities, assess the costs involved in addressing these gaps, and determine which gaps warrant immediate attention. To delve deeper into these areas, needs analysis becomes a pivotal tool. A needs analysis helps analyze the disparities identified

during the needs assessment, outlining the groundwork for effective interventions (Matusky, 2018). Needs assessment essentially documents the research gaps between current outcomes and desired results, offering professionals the insights required to enhance their organization's performance and deliver measurable value (Kaufman and Christensen, 2019). In language teaching, the identification of learners' needs is indispensable for designing courses using a learner-centered approach (Ozdemir, 2018). Thus, a needs analysis is the initial step in ascertaining the necessity for module-based interventions, as demonstrated by our research focus on grade six children with reading difficulties in Sri Lanka.

This need analysis is aimed identify the module needs in reading fluency for junior secondary children with reading difficulties in Sri Lanka. Three objective were used to find out the teachers' awareness of children with reading difficulties, to find out the teachers' perception of module needs for teaching reading to children with reading difficulties, and to find out the teachers' agreement on the need for Smart Reading Module (SRM) development

Methodology

The study utilized a need analysis questionnaire to identify the specific needs for teaching interventions. This questionnaire, adapted and validated from Peries et al. (2021), was translated into Tamil and implemented through a Google Form with clear instructions. The questionnaire comprised four parts: Part 1 collected biographical information, Part 2 focused on general knowledge about reading difficulties, and Parts 3 and 4 examined teachers' perceptions of module needs and their agreement on module development.

The survey was distributed among 164 randomly selected junior secondary school teachers in Tamil medium schools within the Puttalam South Educational Division. The questionnaire was shared via WhatsApp and email, with respondents confirming their participation through WhatsApp. They willingly filled out the online survey, saved it with their contact numbers, and were incentivized with mobile top-up credit. The collected data was analyzed using SPSS version 29. Survey part 1 and

part 2 were analyzed with descriptive statistical methods and part 3 and part 4 were analyzed with cross tabulation.

Results
Background Information
In this study, 164 teachers, with 59.8% being female and 40.2% male junior secondary educators in crowded Sri Lankan classrooms, participated. Primary respondents were Tamil language teachers, while social sciences and other subject teachers also contributed. About one-third held university degrees, and the rest had received training. Furthermore, 39.9% of the teachers had 1-5 years of teaching experience, and 40.1% had 11 years or more.

Teachers' General Knowledge of Children with Reading Difficulties
Part 2 of the need analysis questionnaire is about the teachers' general knowledge of reading difficulties which is also analyzed with descriptive statistical methods. Table 1 shows the teachers' general knowledge about reading difficulties.

Table 1. The teachers' general knowledge about reading difficulties.

		Frequency	Percent
Teachers' Knowledge of Children with Reading Difficulties	Disagree	2	1.2
	Neutral	33	20.1
	Agree	112	68.3
	Strongly Agree	17	10.4
	Total	164	100.0
Teachers' Awareness of Children with Reading Difficulties	Disagree	1	.6
	Neutral	9	5.5
	Agree	98	59.8
	Strongly Agree	56	34.1
	Total	164	100.0

According to Table 1, in the first assessment concerning teachers' knowledge of children with reading difficulties, the majority of respondents expressed agreement, with 68.3% of teachers indicating they "Agree," and 10.4% "Strongly Agree." Only a small proportion, 1.2%, expressed disagreement, and 20.1% remained neutral. In the second assessment regarding teachers' awareness of children with reading difficulties, the responses also predominantly leaned towards agreement. A total of 93.9% of teachers either agreed or strongly agreed that they were aware of children with reading difficulties. Only a small portion, 6.1%, expressed neutrality or disagreement. These results demonstrate that the majority of teachers possess knowledge about and are aware of students facing reading difficulties, highlighting the relevance of addressing this issue.

Teachers' Perception of Teaching Reading

Teachers' views on teaching reading, challenges, systematic modules, and reading skill development were analyzed in relation to gender preferences. Table 2 presents the results of this cross-tabulation.
Table 2 Teachers' perception of teaching reading

		Gender		Total
		Female	Male	
Teachers' perception of teaching reading	Disagree	1	0	1
	Neutral	7	2	9
	Agree	58	40	98
	Strongly Agree	32	24	56
Total		98	66	164
Teachers' perception of challenges in teaching reading	Disagree	1	0	1
	Neutral	13	9	22
	Agree	57	34	91
	Strongly Agree	27	23	50
Total		98	66	164
Teachers' perception of	Disagree	3	0	3

teaching reading skills	Neutral	10	16	26
	Agree	71	43	114
	Strongly Agree	14	7	21
Total		98	66	164

According to Table 2, it is evident that female teachers significantly agree more on teaching reading, with 58 out of 98 (59.2%) agreeing, while male teachers show less agreement at 40 out of 66 (60.6%). In terms of challenges, male teachers exhibit higher agreement (34 out of 66, 51.5%) compared to female teachers (57 out of 98, 58.2%). For teaching reading skills, female teachers show greater agreement (71 out of 114, 62.3%), while male teachers exhibit less agreement (43 out of 66, 65.2%). These results highlight gender-based variations in teachers' perceptions of teaching reading and its related aspects.

Need for Module Development

The teachers' agreement on the need for module development was analyzed with measures of variability to describe the diversity in the distribution of the skills, strategies, and need for teachers' guides and student exercise books in module development. Table 3 shows the Need for module development.

Table 3 Need for module development

		Frequency	Percent
Skills to be considered in Module development	Disagree	1	.6
	Neutral	12	7.3
	Agree	126	76.8
	Strongly Agree	25	15.2
	Total	164	100.0
Strategies to be Considered in Module Development	Disagree	1	.6
	Neutral	18	11.0

	Agree	110	67.1
	Strongly Agree	35	21.3
	Total	164	100.0
Needs for Teacher Guide and Students' Exercise Book in Module Development	Disagree	1	.6
	Neutral	14	8.2
	Agree	99	58.2
	Strongly Agree	50	29.4
	Total	164	96.5

Table 3 highlights the need for module development among teachers. A significant 76.8% of teachers agree that skills should be considered in module development, with 15.2% strongly agreeing. In terms of strategies, 67.1% agree that they should be included in module development, and 21.3% strongly agree. For teacher guides and students' exercise books in module development, 58.2% agree, and 29.4% strongly agree, with only 8.2% neutral or disagreeing. These results underscore the importance of incorporating skills, strategies, and materials in module development to support teaching reading effectively.

Conclusion

The results of this study provide valuable insights into the state of reading education among junior secondary teachers in Sri Lanka. The majority of participating teachers demonstrated a good level of knowledge about children with reading difficulties, as well as awareness of the challenges these students face. However, gender differences were evident in teachers' perceptions of teaching reading, challenges, and reading skills. Female teachers tended to express slightly higher agreement in teaching reading and reading skills, while male teachers displayed more agreement with challenges in teaching reading.

Furthermore, the study highlighted a significant need for module development in the context of teaching reading. A substantial proportion of teachers agreed that skills and strategies should be incorporated into

module development, emphasizing their importance. This finding underscores the relevance of addressing reading difficulties and the necessity of providing teachers with the appropriate tools and materials to support effective reading instruction.

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Mapping the Evolving Landscape of Employability Skills in the 21st-Century Labor Market: A Comprehensive Literature Review

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Introduction

A significant shift in employer expectations has replaced the traditional emphasis on occupation-specific skills in the quickly changing employment environment of the twenty-first century. This research undertakes a thorough literature analysis to highlight the changing workforce dynamics and the pressing need for graduates to have a varied skill set, and to shed light on the critical significance of employability skills as regarded by employers.

In recent years, employability skills—which include a variety of qualities and abilities—have gained importance. The understanding that a graduate's worth to companies goes beyond their technical or academic qualifications is what has caused this transformation. These abilities are now essential for success in the national, regional, and international labour markets, with ramifications felt across a variety of sectors and businesses.

In order to highlight the most important aspects of the employability abilities that graduates are anticipated to bring to the workforce, this review synthesizes the vast body of prior research. As a cornerstone for effective engagement and collaboration, communication skills emerge. Problem-solving and decision-making abilities are equally important, reflecting the need for flexibility and critical thinking in today's complex settings. Teamwork skills are particularly important, reflecting the collaborative character of contemporary projects and tasks.

This study seeks to accomplish a number of important goals. First and foremost, it aims to pinpoint and emphasize the crucial employability skills that companies require in the quickly evolving 21st-century labour market. The study also attempts to explore employability's complex character by synthesizing previous research and highlighting the various qualities that are highly appreciated in Asian contexts. The study delves deeper into comprehending and contrasting differences in the importance of employable skills throughout various Asian nations, taking industry demands and contextual considerations into account. Through a narrower emphasis, the

study aims to investigate Indonesian employer viewpoints, including knowledge from earlier research and adapting to the changing needs of the labour market. Lastly, based on the discovered employability skills and insights from employer expectations, the study aims to offer practical recommendations for educational institutions.

The study will use an extensive methodology in order to accomplish these goals. In order to acquire knowledge about employability skills, workforce dynamics, and shifting employer expectations, the process starts with a thorough assessment of the literature. After that, employability skills in different Asian countries will be investigated through a regional comparative analysis that looks at industry-specific demands and cultural quirks. Employers in Indonesia will be surveyed and interviewed to get primary data, which will be augmented by insights from earlier research on particular talents that supervisors highly appreciate. After that, an analysis of both qualitative and quantitative data will be conducted in order to spot trends and derive conclusions about crucial employability skills in the Asian labour market, with an emphasis on Indonesia in particular. In collaboration with academic institutions, the research will provide useful suggestions for curriculum modifications based on the recognized employability skills, bringing educational programmes into line with the changing demands of the labour market. Validation measures will be put into place during the process to make sure the recommendations meet the needs of educators, business experts, and legislators. With this all-encompassing approach, we hope to add important new perspectives to the conversation about employability skills and how they help shape successful careers in today's labour market.

The term "employability skills" refers to a wide range of human qualities that go beyond the workplace. Graduating students' emotional intelligence, independence, self-assurance, and self-awareness are becoming highly prized qualities. (Singh et all, 2013). Given the constantly evolving nature of modern job tasks, flexibility and adaptability are highly valued skills. Given the challenges offered by demanding work environments, stress tolerance is essential. The value placed on creativity and initiative reflects the drive for innovation in modern organizations. A dedication to lifelong learning, reflective practice, and an openness to learning new things are all considered indicators of a long-lasting and successful career. Last but not least, professionalism encompasses the moral and responsible behavior expected of graduates. (Griffin & Annulis, 2013)

The concept of employability in Asia encompasses a diverse array of attributes and competencies that are instrumental in enabling job seekers to

secure and sustain employment. This concept, as elucidated by a review of literature, underscores the multifaceted nature of employability, emphasizing a range of key skills and qualities that transcend traditional occupation-specific expertise. While the specifics may vary across different countries in Asia, the central findings consistently point to several critical dimensions of employability. (Cassidy,2006).

1. Communication Skills: Effective communication skills are identified as a fundamental pillar of employability. Job seekers are expected to possess the ability to convey ideas clearly, collaborate with colleagues, and interact with stakeholders, underlining the significance of interpersonal aptitude. (Du-Babcock, 2006).
2. Logical, Analytical, and Problem-Solving Skills: The capacity to engage in logical reasoning, analytical thinking, and adept problem-solving is highly prized. In a dynamic work environment, the ability to dissect complex issues and devise innovative solutions is invaluable.
3. Personality, Confidence, and Integrity: Beyond technical competence, personal attributes such as personality, self-confidence, and integrity play a pivotal role. Employers place a premium on individuals who exhibit strong character, trustworthiness, and a positive demeanour.
4. Flexibility and Adaptability: The ever-evolving nature of contemporary job roles necessitates flexibility and adaptability. Job seekers are expected to swiftly adjust to changing circumstances, learn new skills, and seamlessly integrate into diverse work environments.
5. Innovation and Creativity: The fostering of innovation and creativity is recognized as essential for both individual and organizational success. Employability in Asia extends to the ability to generate fresh ideas, pioneer solutions, and contribute to the growth and competitiveness of enterprises.
6. Team Spirit: Collaboration and teamwork are highly valued attributes. The capacity to work harmoniously within a team, share knowledge, and contribute synergistically to collective goals is a hallmark of employability.

It is important to note that the prominence and emphasis placed on these skill groups may vary across different Asian countries. Context-specific factors, cultural nuances, and industry demands contribute to the variation observed in the employability landscape. Nevertheless, the overarching message is clear: employability transcends mere technical competence, encompassing a comprehensive set of skills and qualities that empower job

seekers to thrive in diverse and dynamic work settings. This recognition of employability's multifaceted nature underscores the importance of holistic approaches to education and workforce development across the Asian continent.

When considering the employers' perspective in Indonesia, it becomes evident that a diverse set of skills and attributes are highly valued to facilitate the smooth transition of graduates into the world of work. The outcome drawn highlights the comprehension and understanding of the abilities and skills that are essential for the success on the employment market in Indonesia.

The following are the most crucial employability abilities and talents in the eyes of employers:
1. Communication Skills: Employers place a high value on candidates who can articulate ideas clearly and participate in fruitful debates.
2. Teamwork Skills: Collaboration and the capacity to successfully collaborate with others to achieve shared objectives are crucial abilities in the workplace.
3. Integrity: Employers respect people who behave ethically and honestly in work-related situations.
4. Intellectual Capacity: It is essential to have a strong intellectual capacity, which includes critical thinking, the capacity to pick up new ideas quickly, and the comprehension of difficult concepts.
5. Self-confidence: Having self-confidence is viewed favourably since it enables people to handle difficulties with fortitude and poise.
6. Personality/Individual Character: Personal characteristics that foster a healthy workplace climate, such as a pleasant demeanour and a proactive attitude, are highly valued.
7. Planning Abilities:Strong organizational and planning skills are necessary to efficiently manage tasks and projects.
8. Writing Skills: It's important to be able to communicate clearly in writing, particularly for communication and documents.
9. Computer Skills: In our digital age, basic computer skills are becoming more and more crucial and are seen as a minimal necessity for productivity.
10. Analytical and Problem-Solving Skills: Complex issue analysis and problem solving are crucial in many jobs.

11. Additional Skills: Employers value a broader skill set that may include technical, interpersonal, and practical skills. This depends on the industry and position.

Additionally, provided insights from previous studies conducted in Indonesia, which highlight specific skills highly valued by supervisors in the Indonesian context. These include workplace health and safety skills, self-management skills, technology skills, learning skills, and problem-solving skills.

It is important to understand employer expectations and the evolving job market demands for educational institutions and policymakers, citing relevant sources (Suarta, 2010; Kozlowski & Ilgen, 2006).

This study emphasizes the necessity for educational institutions to review their curricula and instructional practices as the world of work continues its fast evolution. Employability skills are becoming more and more necessary for graduates, as evidenced by the changing demands of businesses. Institutions can equip graduates to successfully negotiate the complexity of the contemporary labour market by recognizing, promoting, and integrating these qualities into their educational programmes. By doing this, graduates will be in a better position to start fulfilling careers and successfully meet the varied demands of employers in a job market that is always changing.

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