



14TH INTERNATIONAL RESEARCH CONFERENCE

“ Security, Stability and National Development in the New Normal ”

09TH - 10TH SEPTEMBER 2021

MANAGEMENT, SOCIAL SCIENCES AND
HUMANITIES

ABSTRACTS



GENERAL SIR JOHN KOTELAWALA DEFENCE UNIVERSITY



14TH INTERNATIONAL RESEARCH CONFERENCE

**SECURITY, STABILITY AND NATIONAL DEVELOPMENT
IN THE NEW NORMAL**

MANAGEMENT, SOCIAL SCIENCES AND HUMANITIES

ABSTRACTS



General Sir John Kotelawala Defence University
Ratmalana, Sri Lanka

This book contains the abstracts of papers presented at the Management, Social Sciences and Humanities Sessions of the 14th International Research Conference of General Sir John Kotelawala Defence University, Ratmalana, Sri Lanka held on 9th and 10th of September 2021. No part of this publication may be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system or transmitted in any form, without prior permission of General Sir John Kotelawala Defence University, Ratmalana, Sri Lanka.

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Message from the Chief Guest



It is with great pleasure that I send this message to the publication of selected conference papers, under a theme that seems more relevant today than ever.

Throughout the history, security has always been the central notion of our existence as a nation. It will continue to be, as long as the geographical realities that define the country's location remains so. This centrality causes our development paradigm to always have a nexus with security, undeniably linking itself to the overall stability of the country.

As the world was compelled to enter into a 'new normal' with the COVID-19 pandemic, the traditional focus on maintaining the hard component of security was overshadowed by the need to replenish its soft component. The world has recently witnessed struggles of global powers with the highest military might, to maintain and uphold their health security. The less-talked about soft security has emerged to overshadow its counterpart, calling us to re-think and re-define the security-development nexus.

COVID-19 posed an unprecedented challenge to Sri Lanka and all developing economies, calling those States to experiment with new ways for achieving national development while managing the novel challenges to their security and stability. In this backdrop, I am delighted to see that the KDU has made allowance for this paradigm shift and hosted its International Research Conference - 2021 along the theme, 'Security, Stability and National development in the New Normal'.

I congratulate all scholars who have contributed to the conference, in particular, those who have shared their research and findings. My heartiest appreciation goes to the Vice Chancellor, Faculty and the staff of KDU whose undying commitment has made this event a reality, even during the pandemic situation.

Steering a country forward in turbulent times is a task that needs meticulous inputs from the country's intellectual body. I am certain that the KDU Research Conference - 2021 has made its mark in this endeavour.

Mr Lalith Weeratunga

Principal Advisor to His Excellency the President of Sri Lanka

Message from the Secretary, Ministry of Defence



It gives me immense pleasure to forward this message on the occasion of the 14th International Research Conference of the General Sir John Kotelawala Defence University (KDU). At the outset, I must appreciate the leadership and guidance which the Vice Chancellor has rendered to maintain the continuity of this highest academic event of the University despite times of great national and international challenges due to the COVID-19 pandemic which has devastated the world.

This year's conference theme: 'Security, Stability and National Development in the New Normal' has taken the current realities of our time into the consideration and how to achieve security and development in times of instability. In this context, I strongly feel that this is an important and commendable approach with innovation demonstrated by the KDU in focussing the attention towards a timely pertinent theme.

The national developments reiterate the importance of a Defence University especially when our motherland is facing unprecedented challenges due to the pandemic. Therefore, I must highlight that our ministerial guidance and blessings, have given the potential for the KDU to actively dwell on a developmental approach to research with Security and Stability as core drivers. This approach will enable the KDU to reach a leading position to guide and influence policy decisions through the knowledge and insights gained from its expansive research programmes.

Furthermore, I believe that the great minds that will lead research deliberations at this conference should actively contribute to aid the great endeavour of steering our beloved motherland towards greater heights in the security and economic spheres, as it is the ultimate responsibility of all Sri Lankans at this time of concern. Finally, I wish that the KDU IRC 2021 will provide a sheer guidance and lead the way towards national development mitigating all current and emerging challenges posed by this devastating pandemic situation. As I extend my sincere well wishes towards the Vice Chancellor, his team and all the participants of this conference for its successful execution and for their future endeavours, I would like to assure that my blessings and support will be with KDU at all times.

General Kamal Gunaratne (Retd)

WWV RWP RSP USP ndc psc MPhil

Secretary

Ministry of Defence

Message from the Vice Chancellor



As the KDU celebrates its 40th anniversary, the International Research Conference is entering its 14th year and adapting to the new normal conditions and unprecedented challenges that have forced many programmes to be called off indefinitely. The evolution and continuity of the research conference into the successive 14th year adapting to challenges bears testimony for the success of the KDU as a seat of learning that can withstand any challenge national or international in nature.

The sheer number of papers that the conference received this year demonstrates the enthusiasm shown by presenters both locally and internationally even at a time of a grave crisis that has put educational institutions under severe stress, and it affirms the faith scholars have had on KDU. As the only defence university in Sri Lanka, KDU has been committed to research and knowledge production that will influence and shape the policy deliberations of security and development. These are core pillars of the stability and existence of any society, and it is our national responsibility to provide such insights through the organization of premier research dialogues.

This year's theme 'Security, Stability and National Development in the New Normal' bears witness to the civil military fusion that KDU has created and its commitment to achieving balance and resilience in times of global crises to safeguard and advance the security and developmental interests of the motherland.

KDU IRC is a platform of cooperation and diplomacy, and it encourages academic collaboration across Sri Lanka's higher education institutions. Research conferences are the ultimate networking events, and we are proud to provide these spaces of engagement where Sri Lankan and international scholars can present their findings and deliberate on the way forward for the nation and for the global community to thrive at a time humanity's resolve is tested by the pandemic. I wish all the very best for the academics, practitioners and policy makers who want to showcase their research and experience at our research conference.

Finally, I appreciate the dedication and hard work of all those who worked tirelessly over the last several months contributing in diverse ways to make the KDU IRC 2021 a reality under the trying circumstances, especially the IRC Chair, the Secretary, and the organizing committees headed by the Deputy Vice Chancellor (Defence and Administration).

Major General Milinda Peiris

RWP RSP VSV USP ndc psc MPhil (Ind)

Vice Chancellor

General Sir John Kotelawala Defence University

Message from the Conference Chair



KDU International Research Conference in its 14th iteration is held amidst celebration of its 40th anniversary and situated in local and global environment that is challenged by a new form of microbial security threat in the form the Covid19 outbreak. KDU stands strong and unbowed to maintain the continuity of this apex academic event this year on the theme, Security, Stability and National Development in the New Normal.

Challenged with the most potent wave of the pandemic, we remain undeterred thanks to the leadership of the Vice Chancellor. The organizing committee has put their heart and soul into adapting and evolving the conference formats that could withstand and confront the new normal conditions in organizing the international research conference.

Academic communities in the world are beacons of hope and resilience and given the sheer number of research papers that were submitted to the conference this year is a testament that KDU remains a space of hope for such communities and a sacred ground where research is encouraged even at trying times.

The theme of this year was a conscious decision to confront the realities that Sri Lanka and the world had to encounter since March 2020, that Covid 19 was a harbinger for a new reality. Universities are centres of resistance and renaissance and the KDU in Sri Lanka sets an example to all other institutions to emphasize the will to confront any challenge.

In this context KDU research conference is nourished by the presentations and deliberations of esteemed plenary speakers and research presentations that will provide vital insights into the key themes of security, stability, and national development. I extend gratitude and best wishes to all presenters who believe in the research culture evolved by the KDU and may you be treated to the finest KDU hospitality that transcend from physical to the cyber space and may you all be contributors to a greater cause for the sake of all humanity.

Dr Harinda Vidanage

PhD (Edin)

Conference Chair

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ORAL PRESENTATIONS

Competitive Edge Through Automation: A Study on the Sri Lankan Apparel Industry

A De Silva#, S Gunathilake, H Munaweera, D Perera and L Gunathilake

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The Sri Lankan Apparel Industry is one of the significant contributors to the country's economy as it generates considerable amount of export income. Tasks in the apparel industry which involve a higher amount of labour involvement have been replaced by automated technologies such as Robotics, Computer Aided Designing and Computer Aided Manufacturing technologies in order to achieve a competitive position in the industry. The objective of the study is to examine the impact of automation on achieving a competitive edge in the Sri Lankan apparel industry. Process automation, intelligent manufacturing and the global customized production were used in this study to achieve the objective by using cost advantage as the mediator. This study employed the deductive approach, and quantitative data were utilized to achieve the objectives. A questionnaire was distributed among 65 respondents selected to gather quantitative data. An exploratory research was conducted by the researchers conducting three interviews with industry experts, which helped to design the overall study. The researchers analysed the effect of the mediator through the Sobel test. As per the data analysis conducted in this study, it was found that there is a correlation between process automation, intelligent manufacturing, and customised production with competitive advantage, and there is a strong relationship between cost advantage and competitive advantage. The qualitative findings of this research conclude that apparel companies should invest in automation to gain a popularity in the global market. Thus this study proves that automation should exist in a developing country like Sri Lanka to achieve a competitive advantage.

Keywords: *automation, competitive advantage, apparel industry, cost advantage*

A Study on the Relationship Between Employee Perceived Autonomy and Job Satisfaction of Remote Employees

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The extant literature on the determinants of job satisfaction of the employees working from home/remote employees has mainly discussed from a strategic perspective, with little research exploring employee perceived autonomy and its relationship with the remote employees' job satisfaction. Perceived autonomy is considered to result in higher levels of job satisfaction. In consistence with this stream of research, this study aims to identify the relationship between perceived autonomy and the job satisfaction of remote working employees. For this purpose, data were collected through a five-point Likert scale measurement survey questionnaire from a sample of 92 employees of a leading organization in the financial services providing industry in Sri Lanka. The correlation coefficient was applied to understand the relationship between variables. A positive relationship between employee perceived autonomy and job satisfaction of remotely working employees was identified from the findings. Hence the study contributes to the literature by providing a differentiated insight into the relationship between perceived autonomy and job satisfaction. Theoretical and managerial implications followed by limitations and recommendations for future research have also been discussed in this paper.

Keywords: *job satisfaction, perceived autonomy, remote working*

Fuelling the Start-ups: Nexus of Crowdfunding Awareness, Parental Influence, and Internet Familiarity on Start-up Intention

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Lack of initial capital has long been reported as a prominent barrier for blooming entrepreneurial start-ups. Contrary to that, crowdfunding is treated as a “magic hand” for solving numerous financial demands of netizens. Yet, knowledge on crowdfunding has not tested for its capacity to affect start-up intentions. Based on Theory of Planned Behaviour (TPB), the present study primarily aimed at assessing the impact of Awareness of Crowdfunding (ACF) on Start-up Intention (SI). Furthermore, the study intended to ascertain the empirical evidences for the Parental Influence (PI) and Internet Familiarity (IF) to drive start-up intentions. Deductive reasoning hypothesized a positive influence of ACF, PI, and IF on SI. A quantitative inquiry tested the assumed causality by deploying a field survey. Four dimensions (security, service quality, convenience, and personal network) measured the ACF, while two dimensions each measured the PI (Parent’s profession, & family background) and the IF (Frequency of internet usage, and experience of using internet). A sample of management interns was randomly drawn based on a management faculty of a state university of Sri Lanka (N = 236). A self-administrative questionnaire served as the data collecting tool in which a five-point Likert scale ranked the responses. Results of structural equation modelling confirmed the claims. Respondents’ awareness of crowdfunding and parental influence were significantly predicting the start-up intention of interns. Theoretically, findings imply the potentiality of modelling awareness of crowdfunding as a predictor of start-up intention. Further, findings empirically confirmed the predictive role of paternal influence towards start-up intention.

Keywords: *crowdfunding, entrepreneurs, Sri Lanka, start-ups, start-up intentions, structural equation modelling, theory of planned behaviour*

University Students' Intention of Continuous Use of Zoom for e-Learning

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During the COVID-19 pandemic, many institutions find it difficult to maintain students' engagement with e-learning systems. However, successful use of an e-learning system is dependent on users' perceptions about the systems used for e-learning. Recognizing the factors influencing the intention of continuous use of the system is a major problem faced by universities and higher educational institutions that implement e-learning for conducting academic activities. There is a lack of knowledge on the essential issues and elements that influence the student intention for continuous use of e-learning systems during the COVID-19 pandemic. Thus, the purpose of this study is to investigate the factors that influence Sri Lankan university students' intention for continuous use of government introduced zoom applications for e-learning during the COVID-19 pandemic. The questionnaire survey approach was used to collect data and a sample of 200 was selected from undergraduates of the Faculty of Management and Finance, University of Ruhuna. In this study, an empirical analysis was done by using the SPSS 25 version. Results of the study found that performance expectancy, hedonic motivation, effort expectancy, work-life quality, and internet experience are the most influential factors that have an impact upon Sri Lankan university students' intention for continuous use of zoom applications in e-learning. The study's findings provide important recommendations for policymakers, designers, developers, and researchers, allowing them to get more familiar with the main factors that influence upon the continuation of the use of zoom for e-learning during the pandemic.

Keywords: *COVID- 19, e-learning, intention of continuous use, undergraduates*

Flexible Working Arrangements and Job Satisfaction of Public Sector Employees with Reference to Post COVID- 19 Situation in Sri Lanka

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Due to the COVID-19 (Corona Virus Disease 2019) Pandemic, Flexible Work Arrangements (FWAs) have become a timely need. The emergence of the constructs of FWAs (Part time work, Work sharing, Flextime, Compressed work week, Home-based working) resulted from technological development. This study utilizes quantitative method and a qualitative approach. The purpose of this study is to examine the influence of personal attributes on employee satisfaction with reference to the mediating effect of the intention of public sector employees towards FWAs. Theory of Reasoned Action and Theory of Planned Behaviour models are utilized and the variables such as attitude, subjective norms, perceived behavioural control (Independent Variables), employee satisfaction (Dependent Variable) and intention towards FWAs (Mediating Variable) are used in the study. The population of the study comprises of public sector workers of the Western Province. Convenient sampling method is used to select 100 employees in the public sector. Data are collected through a survey method using an online questionnaire. The study concludes that the attitudes and perceived behavioural control have a positive influence on the intention of public sector employees towards flexible working arrangements while subjective norms do not influence on the intention of public sector employees. The study finds it significant that employees are more interested in FWAs in order to have more satisfaction in their career life.

Keywords: *Flexible Work Arrangements (FWAs), job satisfaction, intention, public sector*

Exploratory Study in Conceptualizing Individual Work Performance (IWP) Construct in Three Different Industries in Sri Lanka

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This research attempts to explore the conception of Individual Work Performance (IWP) construct among construction, IT, and manufacturing industries in Sri Lanka. Focus group discussions using 50 respondents, 5 interviews, and 108 responses for a brief questionnaire were used for the analysis. The majority was found conceptualizing IWP as the capacity to keep producing desired results where capacity was interpreted as future potential with predictive nature. Behaviours were preferred as performance in both construction and manufacturing industries while results were regarded predominantly as performance in the IT industry. Indifference towards multidimensionality of IWP in conceptualizing the said construct was observed, which could be a potential reason for methodological deficiencies in designing and executing performance management systems in Sri Lankan organizations. Performance was mainly viewed as a static phenomenon as over 75% measured performance annually or bi-annually. IWP was viewed as a predictive measure in the selected industries while the composite criteria of measuring performance were mostly found inadequate and far from global standards. Performance measuring mainly serves as a feedback mechanism than developmental or administrative purposes. The author presented a simplified model of the IWP construct using the existing literature while at the end proposed a model to conceptualize the meaning of IWP using research findings. It was revealed how we perceive IWP, and the instruments used to measure the same are mutually inclusive. More inclusive research on the multidimensionality of IWP, appropriate composite criteria, and the right mix of behaviour and result could be considered as future research areas.

Keywords: *individual work performance, behaviour, capacity*

The Impact of Supply Chain Visibility on Consumers' Purchase Intention of Organic Food

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In the current world, information about food supply chains is demanded by consumers. The lack of information shared in the food supply chain is considered a significant issue faced by consumers. Driven by the need for supply chain visibility, this study was conducted to identify the impact of supply chain visibility of organic food on consumers' purchase intention. The study gathered and fulfilled information on the influence of visibility in the organic food supply chain information on consumer's purchase intention in Sri Lanka. The study adopted factors such as supply chain visibility, the quantity of information shared, accuracy of information shared, timeliness of information shared on consumers' purchase intentions. Based on this, a quantitative approach was taken to analyse data. The study shows that an increase in the quantity of supply chain information provided on organic food has a severe impact on the consumer's purchase intentions. It is identified that an increase in the quantity of information that consumers possess allows them to make well-informed decisions when it comes to purchasing organic food products. Furthermore, the study found that there is an increase in the timeliness of the information as a major impact on consumers' purchase intention, and even the availability and the ability to access necessary information can influence consumers' purchase decisions.

Keywords: *organic food, supply chain visibility, purchase intentions, quantity of information shared*

Studying the Issues Faced in Commercial Bank Branch Operational Related Fraud Management

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Bank Branch Operational Related Frauds are common to any Commercial Bank. This study therefore focused on studying the issues faced in Branch Operational Related Frauds with special reference to Internal Controls, Operational Risk Management, Internal Audit Methodologies, and Staff Ethical Behaviour / EOHR. Accordingly, the study has been conceptualized by identifying the Branch Operational Related Fraud Management as the Dependent Variable and four independent variables as Internal Controls, Operational Risk Management, Internal Audit Methodologies, and Staff Ethical Behaviour / EOHRM. Further, this study adopted a mixed method approach with quantitative and qualitative analysis. Under the quantitative chapter, univariate, bivariate, factor, reliability, sample adequacy and parameter analyses were done. The macro view of the Parameter estimate established that the Operational Risk Management is the most Significant Independent Variable to the Dependent Variable of Branch Operational Frauds. Also the macro level second most Independent Variable to the Dependent variable is Staff Ethical behaviour and EOHR. Besides, the micro view of the parameter findings established that RCSA process and HR Efforts are the most significant indicators which could minimize Frauds. On the other hand, the bivariate analysis has evidenced that the relationships between the Branch Operational Related Fraud Management have a negative significant relationship with all the Independent Variables. To establish reliability, the Cronbach's Alpha coefficient values were analysed, and it states that there is an internal consistency among the variables, and the KMO test states the sample size is adequate. The qualitative analysis of the study was a thematic analysis and these findings were able to back the quantitative findings.

Keywords: *frauds, controls, risk, audit, HR*

The Impact of Gender and Location on Career Indecision: Special Reference to Sri Lankan State Universities

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Making a career decision is one of the most important problems that adolescents face during their transition from university to work environment. In making a decision on career advancement pertaining to a preferred career, young adults and adolescents face high levels of anxiety. The inability to choose a career is referred to as career indecision among university undergraduates. Career indecision is linked to concerns such as career development and difficulties in making career-related decisions, as well as self-efficacy, career counselling opportunities, and family support, many of which can affect a student's capacity to make career decisions. The purpose of the study is to identify whether there is a significant impact of the target population's segregation based on gender and university location on career decision-making among Sri Lankan state university management undergraduates. The sample included 345 final-year management undergraduates from metropolitan and rural state universities. Data were collected using a self-administered questionnaire and the hypothesis was tested using an independent sample t-test. According to the study's primary findings, career indecisiveness is higher among males, while the geographical location of state universities is shown to be insignificant in terms of being career indecisive. When it comes to designing human resource development programs and policies, the research findings are useful to policymakers, government institutions, and the public at large.

Keywords: *career indecision, gender, location, management undergraduates, state universities*

The Role of Environmental and Psychological Factors in Assisting Sustainable Entrepreneurial Performance (SEP) of Women-Led Micro Firms: A Study Based in Kandy District

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Women entrepreneurs have most certainly been identified for their notable additions towards the socio-economic advancement of most countries over the past decades. However, the majority of the literature on female entrepreneurs have been cantered on developed countries, and inadequate knowledge is found on women entrepreneurs in developing countries such as Sri Lanka. In accordance with bridging the said theoretical and empirical gap, this study mainly assembled a unit of analysis of women entrepreneurs in the micro-enterprise sector in the Kandy district with a sample that covered all its divisional secretariat areas. Reliability and validity were tested by carrying a pilot survey of 25 respondents. With the gain of 210 respondents on the final survey, it was found that both the main variables in study had positive relationships with Sustainable Entrepreneurial Performance. Further, opportunities for green entrepreneurship and training support did not prove any relationship, while the rest that are social perception, analytical planning, proactiveness, teamwork, government support policy, business environment, green attitude, perceived controlled behaviour, optimism, innovation, leadership and psychological factors had positive relationships with Sustainable Entrepreneurial Performance. Government, private organizations, and Non-Government Organizations (NGO) should consider necessary efforts to enhance the business talents of women with more industrial opportunities and better entrepreneurial setting in Sri Lanka. This study, thereby offers vastly to the knowledge about women entrepreneurship in a developing economy and also assists to consolidate anyone's understanding about this subject and the scope of entrepreneurship while presenting practical implications for researchers and policymakers.

Keywords: *women entrepreneurs, environmental factors, psychological factors, micro firms, sustainability*

An Investigation on the Constraints Encountered by Lower Secondary Learners with Reference to the Bilingual Education Policy in Sri Lanka

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The Bilingual Education Policy was implemented in Sri Lanka in 2001 through Amity School Programmes in which English is the medium of instruction in selected subjects from grade 6 to grade 11. This study aims to investigate the constraints encountered by lower secondary learners with reference to the Bilingual Education Policy in Sri Lanka. The secondary objective of the study is to identify the attitudes and perceptions of Sri Lankan lower secondary learners towards the Bilingual Education Programme in Sri Lanka. Thus, a group of fifty grade eight students of two local schools were selected as the sample of the study based on the purposive sampling method. The data collection was done by integrating a questionnaire and semi-structured interviews. The study was conducted using a mixed approach where the quantitative data were analysed using Microsoft Excel while the qualitative data were analysed using content analysis. The analysed data of the study elucidate three significant constraints encountered by the learners such as primary education being conducted in the learners' first language, extensive subject contents and terminologies as well as the unsatisfactory exam results and teaching methods. The majority of the selected sample appeared to possess positive attitudes and perceptions towards the Bilingual Education Programme in Sri Lanka.

Keywords: *bilingual education policy in Sri Lanka, constraints, lower secondary learners*

The Impact of the Socio-Political Tenacity on Language Usage in Sri Lankan English Journalistic Writings

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Recently, Sri Lanka underwent major political upheavals, structural and constitutional amendments that attracted the attention of the international community. Formulation of dilemmatic interim government of fifty-two days, the legal debates about alleged political misdemeanours, presidential and general elections were the main discourses of the Sri Lankan society during the last couple of years. Thus, the substantive researchers voyage on a genre analysis in order to analytically explore the intricacies of English journalistic writings as to how they have been impacted by the socio-political tenacity prevalent in the nation. These socio-political milieus were reflected in the English Language in myriad forums and most importantly were visible in the mainstream media in the country, particularly in English newspapers and led to the creation of timely vocabulary of a brief duration. As an instance, coinage of novel terms with a vernacular tinge can be depicted. This new vocabulary that was developed owing to the political and social pressures were replete with political implications, sarcasm and highly pragmatic meaning. Thus, contentious political debates and occurrences seem to have impacted on the structural and semantic English Language used in newspapers in the period concerned. Content analysis method was used to interpret the textual data and the 'latent analysis' method was exploited to analyse the pragmatic meaning of the language used. Thematic analysis was utilized to itemize the findings in the discussion heeding semantic denotations. It was evinced that local English journalistic writings do amply make use of SLE and intertwined use of vernacular language components to relay their socio-politically driven messages to the readership judiciously exploiting code-switching and code-mixing strategies. Thus, artistic journalistic writings have come into being having been profusely fed by socio-political transformations over the years. It has been primarily researched how formulation of 'localized' English terms, affixation of English terms with local flavour, and integration of vernacular expressions along with English wordings, have voiced out the intended messages from English journalistic writings vociferously.

Keywords: *structural language, genre analysis, semantic language, coinage, vernacular tinge*

Despondency of English Language Teaching Departments: Factors Impinging upon the Struggle to Enhance English Language Skills of Undergraduates

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In a context where the increasingly competitive labour market demands individuals to captivate significant skills in the English Language, the role played by the ELTDs in Universities is challenged. A university is a cross-section of a larger society that consists of undergraduates from diverse socio-economic backgrounds. Thus, English language skills possessed by this diverse group vary at the entry and exit. Even though the responsibility of propagating the English Language proficiency of undergraduates lies in the hands of ELTDs, relevant literature suggests that ELTDs of the Sri Lankan government universities are lagging behind in achieving the set goals. Besides, this study meticulously explored the factors behind this failure in order to recommend remedial measures to be taken. The sample consisted of 112 third-year students out of 226 of the Faculty of Science, University of Ruhuna. A convenient sampling method was used to determine the sample and a questionnaire comprising open-ended questions was administered to accumulate data. Moreover, to derive a better understanding of the phenomena, semi-structured interviews were conducted with 12 lecturers of the DELT. It was particularly evident that low proficiency of English at the entry, absenteeism, passive involvement in learning, ragging, and subculture, preconceived notions of students towards English, priority given to core-course units, lack of intrinsic motivation, compartmentalization, the mismatch between the lesson materials and students' desires, make teaching English a struggle at university. Thus, it is argued that the role of ELTDs should be re-conceptualized to equip the undergraduates with the required English language proficiency by introducing innovative teaching methods and incorporating technology, which will in return help to create a conducive English language learning environment.

Keywords: *challenges, English language proficiency, ELTDs*

An Investigation on the Implementation of the Right to Participation in the Teaching-Learning Process at the Senior Secondary School Level

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The main objective of this study is to investigate the execution of the right to participation in the teaching-learning process in a few selected Senior Secondary schools in Sri Lanka. The study used a sequential descriptive survey design. The study was conducted with 692 students, 36 teachers, and 18 principals from the Western, North Central, and Central Provinces. Eighteen schools, representing 1AB, 1C, and Type 2 government schools located in the three selected provinces were in the sample. Several methods were employed for collecting data for the study, which included questionnaires for students and teachers, structured interviews for principals, observations of classrooms and focus group discussions with some selected students, and a documentary study. The study identified the extent to which the right to participation is implemented in the teaching-learning process in the selected senior secondary schools. The findings of this study indicated contradictory opinions. Students perceived that the implementation of the right to participate is not satisfactorily taking place in their schools whereas most of the teachers revealed that the implementation of the right to participation is functioning well within their classroom environment. The study concludes with a number of suggestions for principals and teachers to improve the right to participation of students during the teaching-learning process of Sri Lankan senior secondary schools.

Keywords: *implementation, right to participation, senior secondary level*

Perception of Teacher Trainees Regarding the Implementation of Continuous Assessment in National Colleges of Education in Sri Lanka

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Assessment is considered the process of making judgments about a student's performance on a particular task. It consists of a wide range of methods for evaluating student's performances and attainments including formal testing and examinations, practical and authentic assessments, and classroom-based assessments conduct by teachers. This study examined the perceptions of teacher trainees on the implementation of continuous assessments in National Colleges of Education in Sri Lanka. The selected population of the study was the batch of teacher trainees in the selected National College of Education and the sample for the study was 200 teacher trainees randomly selected from five National Colleges of Education. A questionnaire and interviews were applied to gather data from selected teacher trainees. Quantitative data were analyzed and described using frequency and percentage descriptive statistical tools, and interviews were analyzed qualitatively. The findings of the study have revealed that there is an effective perception of continuous assessment as they have an awareness that continuous assessment develops the knowledge, attitudes, and skills of the teacher trainees. It was recommended that the Academic section of the National College of Education should systematically regulate focusing on whether lecturers implement proper training on continuous assessment methods for teacher trainees in each subject and that sources such as books, magazines, and researches should be provided to study the information needed to write assignments, and the library should be open on weekends as there is no sufficient time on weekdays to use it.

Keywords: *continuous assessment, perception, teacher trainee, national college of education*

Attitudes of Tertiary-Level English Learners in Sri Lanka Towards Online Learning: A Study Conducted During the COVID-19 Pandemic

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The global COVID-19 pandemic has become a hindrance to the education system. To secure both student lives and the continuation of studies, the traditional education system has been compelled to shift to virtual classroom mode which links both teachers and students online. In order to investigate the student attitudes towards the new virtual classroom concept, an online questionnaire was shared among a sample of hundred tertiary level ESL students from state universities across Sri Lanka. The research followed a mixed method. The questionnaire was structured employing varied types of questions and a Likert Scale to collect data. The key findings reveal that the majority of students face varied issues as a consequence of the abrupt change to online learning. In addition to that are issues such as acceptability struggle, ESL classrooms with different teaching/learning approaches, the struggle of merging them with the online learning concept, inability to develop language skills, students being unaccustomed to online tests and being distracted by external barriers. Moreover, learners from developing countries like Sri Lanka face various challenges such as signal strength and technological affordability.

Keywords: *online learning, ESL learner attitudes, COVID-19 pandemic*

Assessing the e-Learner Autonomy among ESL (English as a Second Language) Learners in Higher Education Institutes, Sri Lanka

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Learner autonomy (LA) is defined as the readiness to assume responsibility for learning in the service of one's needs and purposes. LA entails one's capacity and willingness to act independently and cooperate with others as a socially responsible person. There is a dearth of studies conducted on e-learner autonomy among ESL (English as a Second Language) learners in Sri Lanka. Hence, this cross-sectional study aimed to assess the e-Learning Autonomy (e-LA) of ESL learners in higher education institutes in Sri Lanka. An online questionnaire that consisted of two sections, i.e. the socio-demographic data and e-learning autonomy scale, were shared in social media for two weeks and responses were received. Data were analysed using SPSS 23.0 version. Shapiro-Wilk test revealed that the data are not normally distributed on the e-LA score. The descriptive statistics (frequency, percentage, mean and standard deviation), Mann-Whitney U test, Kruskal-Wallis test were performed to find the associations. During the given two weeks, 154 participants responded to the study, and the majority were females (62.3%). The mean e-LA score of the study sample was 31.10 ± 2.78 , which was lower than the original study. There was a statistically significant association between the level of e-LA and the academic stream ($p < 0.05$). However, e-LA had no statistically significant associations with gender difference, academic years, and satisfaction with internet facilities or satisfaction with the instructor/lecturer support ($p > 0.05$). The lecturers' necessary interventions and the students' commitment are crucial in improving e-LA among ESL learners in Sri Lanka.

Keywords: *e-learner autonomy, English as a Second Language, ESL learners*

Adopting Synchronous Teaching Technologies in Online ELT Classrooms During the COVID-19 Pandemic at Technological Education Institutes

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During the global pandemic, the entire education process has evolved significantly over the online platform by integrating technologies. Thus, the teaching/learning process has raised new challenges and opportunities. In the traditional classroom, the learning environment is much more effective due to the inherent synchronous method. However, the online teaching approaches are also enriched by adopting different synchronous approaches such as online teaching over video conferencing, use of instant messages during the class, and Zoom breakout rooms and Google Docs for online activities to deliver sessions same as a physical classroom. The research question is about approaches to adopt synchronous teaching methods effectively, which is based on the hypothesis, whether the technologies are effectively adopted to deliver the true experience of synchronous teaching for the learner. In methodology, the literature is the priority consideration to understand the present use of technologies, then a group of English lecturers from Sri Lanka Institutes of Advanced Technological Institute (SLIATE) selected based on the purposive sampling for a semi structured interview, and their shared experiences were recorded and then analysed based on thematic analysis. Secondly, to understand the learning experience via the online platform, the online structured questionnaire was delivered to the students at the same technological institute who learn English as a Second Language using different technologies, and those quantitative responses were analysed descriptively to understand their trends. The findings over the mixed method are incorporated to describe the scenarios in detail, then the recommendations are raised for effective implementation of synchronous approaches for online classroom assuring similar experience as in the physical classroom. The theoretical framework is the outcome of this study to assure a better teaching-learning process.

Keywords: *English language teaching, synchronous technologies, online teaching approaches*

Preliminary Findings of an Analysis of the COVID-19 English Terminology Used in Electronic News Media in Sri Lanka

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COVID-19 outbreak has brought several language changes mainly in terminology. Some existing analyses on English lexicon usage during the pandemic highlight the frequent use of words which were infrequent before the pandemic and also new coinage. We used a corpus approach to conduct a preliminary analysis of COVID-19 related vocabulary used in electronic news media in Sri Lanka and identified that some health-related terminology used in many other contexts can also be seen in the Sri Lankan context. Apart from that, some localized COVID-19 related terminology has been found in the corpus. The collocation analysis of the words Coronavirus and COVID-19 shows that Coronavirus is used as a noun and a noun modifier while COVID-19 is mostly used as a noun modifier in the corpus.

Keywords: COVID-19, coronavirus, corpus, collocations, frequency

A Participatory Survey on Effective Utilization of Teacher-Student and Student-Peer Interaction on Online Platforms in Second Language Teaching Pedagogy

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Education today has moved from direct interaction with students to distant learning as a means of adapting to the restrictions caused by the pandemic. The traditional classroom has been replaced by synchronous e-learning platforms introducing a novel experience to the teachers and students alike. In this light, the present study investigated the effective use of interaction in the virtual second language classroom at undergraduate level. The data was collected through a self-administered questionnaire distributed among a group of 116 undergraduate participants representing the first and the second years of three BSc degree programs. In addition, focus group discussions were also employed to obtain the learners' perception on virtual language learning. The findings revealed that while the learners were benefitted from online learning activities, interaction takes place best in the traditional physical classroom. Further, the responses to the questionnaire indicated that even though communication with peers was an effective approach towards language development, the learners prefer the involvement of the teacher during interactive activities. However, as per the outcomes of the study, it was evident that the participants were satisfied with online language learning as they viewed it as an innovative experience and a productive approach in second language acquisition.

Keywords: *interaction, online platforms, second language pedagogy*

Does Working from Home Affect Work-Life Balance? A Look into the Factors that Affect Work-Life Balance

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The COVID-19 pandemic has triggered major social, political, and economic ramifications around the world. Amidst social mobility measures imposed to combat the spread of the virus, this pandemic was a major challenge for people in meeting their daily needs and demands of employers. These transformed work habits, moving from physical to a virtual setting, which had mixed effects on employees' lives. The objective of this research was to determine which factors affect the most regarding work-life during the working from the home period. A research gap exists as a result of the lack of studies on this subject in the Sri Lankan context. This study collected data from 270 respondents who were working from home through an online self-developed questionnaire. A factor analysis model was used for data analysis. Both the working and non-working environment factors were identified as having substantial effects during the working from the home period. The unique outcomes associated with working environment factors (Working days during working from home and working time), non-working environment factors (Gender and number of children), and work-life balance factors (Depression and distress and future psychological problems), make it explicit that employers need to concentrate on providing proper prerequisites to maximize the productivity during work from home period to improve employees' quality of life. Employers need to pay particular attention to female workers with children, skilled workers, and others who can adapt to virtual platforms. It is recommended that employers should revamp their attendance policies and produce family-friendly flexible schedules and policies. Further, conducting training programs, providing facilities to enhance employee engagement, and build strong and transparent communication channels by supporting a healthy work environment with various activities are also recommended.

Keywords: *work-life balance, work from home, COVID-19*

In a Home with No Home Feeling: Psycho-Social Encounters of Female Children Living under Institutional Care

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Most of the literal history witnesses that the institutional care is best only as the last resort of child care due to adverse impacts institutionalization causes on child's life. Yet, it is visible that the number of alternative care providing institutions remain high in Sri Lanka. In this backdrop, this study aimed at examining the psycho-social experiences of Female Children living under institutional care. The objectives were understanding the conditions of the institutional environment that impacts on the psycho-social experiences and their consequences on female children in particular. A sample of twenty females between 13 -16 years and five of the care taking staff were purposively selected from a female children's home located in the heart of an urban area. Data collected through in-depth interviews and observation were analyzed using narrative analysis method. According to the findings, it was evident that the institutional structure including location, infrastructural facilities, institutional procedure, need-response mechanism and nature of social relationships within and out of the institutions have resulted in a number of negative psycho-social experiences of female children. Emotional complications were mainly found to be common in pervasiveness and variety in character. Outbursts, withdrawal, reluctance to seek support and loneliness are the most prevailing emotional encounters of female children while lack of self-regulation, maladjustment, poor social interactions, poor attachments and conduct problems along with low well-being and disorganized life patterns are socially defied experiences they face. A culture in which such aggressive, emotionally reserved behaviours of boys are normalized in terms of masculinity, such behaviours in girls are strongly condemned. It would lead them to face negative social responses challenging their reintegration to society. Therefore, while admiring progressive steps already taken in the institutional setting, the study posits that the female children under institutional care are in a dire need of a gender-sensitive professional intervention that would empower them with a strength based resilient approach.

Keywords: *institutional care, psycho-social encounters, social work intervention*

Replanting Tea Lands of Smallholding Sector in Sri Lanka: A Case Study in Galle District

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Replanting and also rehabilitation of tea determine both the productivity and sustainability of the tea industry. To achieve the accepted norm of increasing annual replanting rate up to 2%, replantation should be performed in existing old tea lands. However, considering the farmers' perspective, most of them are reluctant to replace their old tea lands with new tea plantations. Therefore, this research study was carried out with the main intention of analysing the factors behind the lesser interest of farmers in replanting old tea lands in Galle district. The cluster sampling method was used and all tea smallholders in Galle district were divided into small clusters according to the GN divisions. Hiniduma west GN division was selected as the proposed cluster where the highest number of small holders presented and the sample size was 30. According to the results, the highest productivity in the sample was 2666kg/ha/yr. It was revealed that the main reasons why farmers pay less interest in replanting were the absence of any other income source during the replanting period(36%), gap of a long period for new harvesting (21%), high labour cost and labour scarcity (21%), limitations in subsidy procedure and difficulties in obtaining subsidies (5%), and difficulties in finding quality planting materials (5%). Therefore, this study recommends to introduce some extra income sources such as self-employments, livestock and home gardening to ensure a source of income for tea smallholders during replanting period. Moreover, present study recommends regulating the existing procedure of giving subsidies and implementing projects to supply and disseminate quality planting materials among tea smallholders.

Keywords: *replanting, small holding tea sector, Galle district*

An Operational Model of Managing Vocational Training for Persons with Visual Impairment and Blindness

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Vocational training is a key means of strengthening employability of all including those with visual impairment and blindness. Although Sri Lanka too invests significantly on providing vocational training for people with disabilities there is a serious gap in finding productive employment for persons with visual impairment and blindness. This research is aimed at developing and validating a plausible model for strengthening the vocational training provision to visually impaired and blind community in Sri Lanka. Using case study method, three purposely selected leading vocational training centres representing the main forms in existence were examined to analyse their strengths and weaknesses, and the challenges encountered by the trained persons in finding jobs. A model aiming at strengthening the management, efficiency and overall quality of vocational training provision was developed first. This was revised by a number of management experts and stakeholders, both local and international, to arrive at the final model. This model portrays the key determinants and associated processes that could be adopted by the centres for making necessary improvements. Furthermore, an integrated approach linking the government, training centres and the industry responsible for providing employment is incorporated into the model implementation process. The proposed model would broaden the perspectives of policymakers, governmental institutions, and respective stakeholders aiming to empower persons with visual impairment and blindness.

Keywords: *vocational training, employment, persons with visual impairment and blindness*

Economic Sensitivity of Non-Working Females for Wage Differential Compensation: Empirical Evidence from Sri Lanka

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The pathway towards gender equality, poverty eradication and inclusive economic growth can be built by women empowerment. This study addresses the problem of inadequate female labour force participation in South Asia. As such, following a mixed methodological approach, both the qualitative and quantitative analyses were triangulated to achieve the objective of the study. Women's Wage Compensation Sensitivity Index (WWCSI) is constructed as the ultimate output of the quantitative analysis using a sample of 112 respondents (non-working females) from Sri Lanka, India, Pakistan and Bangladesh. The findings of that analysis suggested that compensating wage differentials can economically empower non-working females in South Asia. However, wage differential compensation is likely to be more productive among rural females and then among urban females, and it will be more successful among less educated females. According to the newly recognized backward bending nature of WWCS curve, wage differential compensation should be offered for females in prime working age (25-45 years) instead of mothers with infants or elder children. Further, governments should come up with temporary subsidization programmes especially for urban females in order to turn housewives into own account worker because the interest of females to earn at home is high. The follow-up qualitative analysis involved an in-depth inquiry on empirical evidence of wage differential compensation sensitivity of non-working females through a case study in Sri Lanka. Therein, motherhood and children's age, co-habitation of grandparents, male supremacy in traditionally patriarchal families, intergenerational education and learning, voluntary child labour, human trafficking for women labour exploitation and growth needs and domestic financial requirements were explored as the determinants of women's wage differential compensation sensitivity.

Keywords: *female labour force participation, women economic empowerment, women's wage differential compensation sensitivity*

From 'Frying Pan to Fire': Unprecedented Challenges of COVID-19 on Blind People in Sri Lanka

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COVID-19 has shattered all walks of people's lives in most countries in diverse proportions. Sri Lanka being no exception, has experienced the spread of the deadly virus in early March 2020 and later in September in the same year. Since then, the Government has implemented a wide range of far-reaching health measures and several kinds of social restrictions with the view to combatting the spread of the disease. Among the badly challenged fractions of the population due to pandemic were the people with disabilities as well. It is known that the persons with visual impairments and blindness represent the majority of this vulnerable community. The impact of the pandemic on the blind people is mostly untouched. So, the purpose of this paper is to examine the challenges of COVID-19 experienced by the visually impaired people in the light of their social and economic life. A qualitative case study approach was adopted for data collection. Thirty-six blind persons representing diverse livelihood activities, selected through purposive sampling method were interviewed. The interview transcriptions were initially examined through word cloud and subjected to thematic analysis for examining changes to social and economic activities. Results highlight that owing to COVID-19 pandemic shutdown, blind people have been severally disturbed in several aspects, some of which are unique to this community. The key challenges identified are related to mobility and transportation, acquisition of daily needs, disturbed social interactions, income earning opportunities, and information and communication. The precautionary measures implemented on COVID-19 pandemic have brought about disturbances that are relatively more severe for the blind people on moving forward with their day-to-day life activities than for those without such malady. The decision makers dealing with pandemic situations should implement inclusive policies in terms of social, economic and health aspects of persons with visual impairment and blindness.

Keywords: *COVID-19 pandemic, challenges due to pandemic, visual impairment and blindness*

Factors Affecting on Shifting from Current Cultivation to Hot Pepper Cultivation along with Contract Farming Practices: A Case Study in Minuwangoda, Sri Lanka

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Even though Capsicum Chinese (Hot Pepper) has been recognized as a profitable crop for contract farming in all over the world, Sri Lanka has not yet recognized its economic value and this sector remains unexplored yet. Therefore, this study was conducted to identify the factors affecting the shifting from current cultivation to Hot Pepper cultivation. This research survey study was carried out using a pre-tested questionnaire for 70 vegetable farmers in Minuwangoda. The sample was selected using simple random sampling method. Collected data were analysed using descriptive and inferential statistics. The findings of this study revealed that market potential and agro climatic compatibility are the main factors that impact on farmers' preference on Hot Pepper cultivation on contract basis. Furthermore, the present study revealed that price, quality, timeliness, quantity, proximity and credibility of seed source and crop performance affect while purchasing the seeds from the company in contract farming. Moreover, a fixed price, market assurance, profit, quality standards, transportation and legal framework are requirements demanded by the farmers. According to the findings, the study provides significant insights to plan a sustainable contract farming system for Hot Pepper cultivation with suitable policy initiatives. Key recommendations of this research study include, providing extension services, remedies for diseases, free trials, proper responses to farmer inquiries and flexible agreements, which are required to enhance and sustain Hot Pepper cultivation along with contract farming system.

Keywords: *contract farming, hot pepper, shifting cultivation*

