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Editors' Note

As the Editors-in-Chief of Vidyodaya Journal of Management (VJM), Faculty of Management Studies and Commerce, University of Sri Jayewardenepura, Sri Lanka, we are pleased to publish the Volume 8, Issue II of the Journal. The VJM is dedicated to publishing quality and original research papers in Management and related disciplines. This issue contains nine research papers.

Research papers included in this issue are covering areas of barriers faced by bancassurance managers, a comprehensive definition for operational excellence, influence of green manufacturing practices on sustainable performance, entrepreneurial intentions and entrepreneurial action gap, impression management strategies adopted by academicians, organizational environmental support on sustainable performance, efficacy and concerns of technical project; political instability and economic growth and inequalities and subordination experienced by Global South women.

The first paper explores the barriers faced by bancassurance managers amidst the Covid-19 pandemic. The findings were bracketed under two main themes, namely, i) increased pressure to achieve sales targets from both insurance company and the partnering bank and ii) the work-life imbalance caused by the additional workload during the Covid-19 pandemic. As Covid-19 is an ongoing phenomenon, this study contributes in terms of advancing literature by making knowledge more explicit, in addition to policy formulation and application.

Developing a comprehensive definition for operational excellence (OE) by identifying its attributes, most suitable theoretical lens and dimensions is the objective of the second paper. Attributes of OE were collected by evaluating 32 existing definitions of OE and interviewing 30 OE experts. Based on the identified theoretical lens and identified critical attributes, the new definition of OE involves.

The third paper examines the impact of green manufacturing practices on sustainable performance of organization. The findings of the study revealed that there is a moderate level of green manufacturing practices implemented in the selected manufacturing companies. Green manufacturing practices have a significant and positive impact on sustainable performance of organization. This

study suggested that manufacturing organizations need to focus more on the implementation of green manufacturing practices to ensure organizational sustainability.

The fourth research paper analyzes the gap between entrepreneurial intentions and entrepreneurial action of undergraduates in a major public university in Sri Lanka. Further it identifies the determinants of the intention to action translation. Results revealed that of the respondents, who had entrepreneurial intentions, 32% had taken some actions towards starting a business and progressing from entrepreneurial intention to action was more robust for male undergraduates.

Impression management is one of the important *phenomena* in everyday life. Accordingly, fifth paper explores the impression management strategies which are adopted by academicians, while trying to identify the motives behind them to practice those strategies. Findings indicated that academicians of the selected context use direct strategies of creating a good image through presenting the self as competent, likable, diligent, supplicatory, and dangerous; indirect impression formation as criticizing, passing the fault to others, and getting appreciation from others; and non-verbal ways such as attire, facial expressions, and vehicle & other accessories to create impressions.

Sustainability is a major global concern and there has been increased pressure on organizations to broaden the focus of business performance beyond financial performance. The sixth paper evaluates the association between organizational environmental support and organizational sustainable performance with the mediating role of employee green behavior. The study contributes to the field by bringing together the concepts of employee green behaviour with organizational environmental support and organizational sustainable performance in the context of the Sri Lankan banking sector and suggests the banks provide resources and a supportive environment for the employees to implement eco-initiatives.

Managing at the Top 2 (MATT2) is a technical development project implemented in Bangladesh to provide practical training for approximately 2000 top-level officials of the Bangladesh Civil Service. The seventh paper analyzes the purpose, process, and results of the MATT2 project using a qualitative approach. It was found that the project produced remarkable success as 305 performance improvement projects (PIPs) were developed and implemented by the bureaucrats. However, the project was influenced by some bottlenecks such as unsuitability of PIPs, lower reform value, money-driven motivation and selection of project area out of the jurisdiction. The study suggests considering the intended and unintended consequences of the MATT2 to undertake such kind of project in future.

The eighth research paper assesses the relationship between the political instability and the economic growth in both the short-run and long-run in South Asian countries, employing the Panel Auto Regressive Distributed Lag (PARDL) model. The results revealed that despite the insignificant impact of political instability on economic growth in the short run, countries gain the capability in elevating the growth level by maintaining stable political regimes in the long run. The holistic analysis highlighted that regulatory quality and civil liberties needed to be well ensured to attain economic growth in the long run as they showed a significant positive relationship with the growth of the South Asian region.

The ninth paper brings empirical evidence from the Sri Lankan apparel industry to propose an intersectional approach to understanding the inequalities and subordination experienced by Global South women factory workers. Utilizing a qualitative methodology, the study conducted interviews with women and shop floor-level apparel workers to explore the interplay between multiple social categories influenced by broader power structures and political inequalities. The analysis identifies that workers' rural origins, poverty, and traditionally defined gendered roles have worked interactively in favour of capitalist industrialists by pushing these women workers to lower-paid manual jobs in the apparel industry.

Finally we are grateful for the contribution of authors, reviewers, editorial board members and the publisher for their continuous support in publishing of another volume of the VJM and look forward to having their valuable scholarly contribution for the upcoming volumes as well.

Dr. L. A. Pavithra Madhuwanthi and Dr. Vilani Sachitra
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A Qualitative Case Study of the Barriers faced by Bancassurance Managers due to the Covid-19 Pandemic

Bhagya Dewmini Fernando

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Abstract

Bancassurance is an expanding, significant, yet a highly understudied area. The ongoing Covid-19 pandemic had a critical impact on many industries, including bancassurance, which is defined as a collaborative format to sell insurance products through partnering banks. In the light of this context, this research study identifies and explores the barriers faced by bancassurance managers amidst the Covid-19 pandemic. Following a qualitative approach, a case study strategy has been used to explore the barriers faced by bancassurance managers in the context of Diriya¹ life insurance company. The findings were bracketed under two main themes, namely, a) increased pressure to achieve sales targets from both insurance company and the partnering bank and b) the work-life imbalance caused by the additional workload during the Covid-19 pandemic. The first theme explored the pressure and consequences faced by the bancassurance managers through the insurance company and the partnering bank, while the second theme explored agent-manager engagement, shouldering additional workload and the unique burdens faced by the married, female bancassurance managers. As Covid-19 is an ongoing phenomenon, this study contributes in terms of advancing literature by making knowledge more explicit, in addition to policy formulation and application. Finally, the novelty of this study would be a foundation for further research conducted on barriers faced by bancassurance managers in managing agents amidst the Covid-19 pandemic.

Keywords: *Bancassurance, Covid-19, Qualitative, Case Study*

¹ The researcher uses a pseudonym to ensure confidentiality of the company.

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Introduction

Bancassurance is a blend of banking and insurance, where insurance products are sold through the banking distribution channels. It is initiated as a part of a wider transaction (Gonulal et al., 2012), such as pitching a family health insurance coverage to a customer who initially visited the bank to place a fixed deposit investment, or to offer a loan protection insurance for a bank's customer intending to request a credit facility. In Sri Lanka, there are 28 insurance companies engaging in life insurance, general insurance or both, as well 30 banks engaging in commercial and specialised activities, catering to a population of over 20 million (Central bank of Sri Lanka, 2020). Though bancassurance is a significant revenue generator and an established industry in many markets such as Europe (Reddy & Sreelatha, 2021), it is still an emerging industry in Sri Lanka, with only a selected number of insurance companies and banks' involvement.

Covid-19 pandemic impacted Sri Lanka fundamentally (The World Bank, 2021), including the life-insurance and banking sectors. Amidst the Covid-19 pandemic, the growth of gross written premium of the insurance sector declined significantly (KPMG, 2020), where the said premiums are primarily dependent on agency and bancassurance distribution channels. In shaping the context, this research study looks at Diriya, a private insurance company that engages in bancassurance. Accordingly, Diriya maintains a cluster of regional and zonal managers, who manages a bancassurance agent force of over 400. As of 2020, the company maintained five bancassurance partnerships, out of which two were exclusive partnerships with banks. For this case study, an exclusive bancassurance partnership between Diriya life insurance and a leading commercial bank of Sri Lanka was considered.

Covid-19 pandemic has impacted the bancassurance performance of Diriya, and through initial preliminary discussions with selected bancassurance managers, the researcher observed that many barriers were faced by the bancassurance managers due to the ongoing Covid-19 pandemic. The barriers faced by the bancassurance managers have caused poor individual and team performance and adversely impacted the profitability of the company, which depicts the intensity of the research problem of this study. Additionally, failure to mitigate those barriers may increase the human resource costs, such as turnover and new recruitment costs for Diriya life insurance company, which indicates the significance of the research problem of this study.

Though substantial literature exists regarding banking and insurance, there is a literature gap visible in the field of bancassurance, particularly in the area of barriers faced by bancassurance managers with relation to the ongoing Covid-19 pandemic. Additionally, though studies exist and is being developed focusing on patients, health care workers and the general society in relation to the ongoing pandemic (Graf-Vlachy et al., 2020), there is an empirical gap of literature on managers, and particularly in the field of bancassurance. Therefore, both literature and empirical gaps exist in global and Sri Lankan contexts, regarding the scope of barriers faced by bancassurance managers due to the Covid-19 pandemic. Following the above situation, this research was carried out based on the objective of identifying and exploring the barriers faced by managers in managing bancassurance employees amidst the Covid-19 pandemic.

This research attempts to understand the challenges from the bancassurance manager's point of view. Firstly, an introduction to the study is given, followed by a comprehensive review of literature focusing on insurance, banking, bancassurance, Covid-19 pandemic and barriers faced by managers. Subsequently, an overview of the methodology used for this study is followed up with data and analysis and a conclusion.

Literature Review

Insurance

As there are no certainties in the matters of life and business, insurance is a service that provides financial protection for financial losses of an individual, group or an organisation (Agbo & Nwankwo, 2020). Hence, insurance provides coverage for a wide variety of activities, including personal, commercial and industrial (Gonulal et al., 2012). It is based on six principles namely, insurable interest, utmost good faith, proximate cause, indemnity, subrogation and contribution.

Insurance is critical in facilitating large investments of an economy (Agbo & Nwankwo, 2020). Insurance undertakes and manages risks (Gamage & Fernando, 2018). It is also a stabilizer, where economic shocks such as financial shocks resulting from natural disasters can be minimized (Jude, 2014). Insurance is a concept that is difficult to communicate, and therefore, requires a significant amount of time, skills and money (Gonulal et al., 2012). In Sri

Lanka, insurance plays a critical role (Gamage & Fernando, 2018) and there are both local and foreign insurance companies operating in Sri Lanka (KPMG, 2020).

Currently, Sri Lankan insurance company distribution channels are mainly of four types, namely direct selling, selling through insurance agents/ wealth managers, selling through brokers and bancassurance (Gamage & Fernando, 2018). Usually, the primary distribution of insurance is through the agency channel (Reddy & Sreelatha, 2021). As per Buric et al. (2015), bancassurance is a more effective distribution channel than the agents, due to the high commission rates involved in the agency distribution channel. However, as per Chang et al. (2011), insurance companies with high-performing agency channels do not always perform highly in bancassurance.

Banking

Banking refers to institutions who act as a financial intermediary in the economic system, which includes services such as savings and lending (Agbo & Nwankwo, 2020). Accordingly, the primary income sources of a bank are through the spread between charging interest in lending and deposits. However, banks are facing increased competition, and such increased competition compels banks to search for alternative income generating avenues, and one such solution is bancassurance (Agbo & Nwankwo, 2020). Additionally, banks have been a more predominant player in the wider society compared to insurance, and is therefore, better understood than insurance (Gonulal et al., 2012). The days of banks only focusing on lending and borrowing income are long gone (Grover & Bhalla, 2013). As per Agbo and Nwankwo (2020), both insurance and banks face increased economic pressure, which has paved the way to more collaborations. Therefore, it is a profitable strategy for both the insurance company and the bank (Chang et al., 2011).

Bancassurance

Scholars have provided various definitions for bancassurance. Bancassurance refers to offering insurance products through a bank, to the customers of the bank (Agbo & Nwankwo, 2020). A similar definition was provided by Joshi (2019), as selling insurance and banking products using the same channel, while Gamage and Fernando (2018), stated that bancassurance is an alliance between an insurance company and a bank to increase sales. A broader definition was provided by Buric et al. (2015), where bancassurance is stated as an integration

of insurance and banking through linking and controlling the distribution process of life and general insurance products. Hence, bancassurance is the result of banks searching for additional revenues and insurance companies seeking alternative distribution options (Reddy & Sreelatha, 2021).

The term bancassurance is coined by merging the words bank and insurance and was a concept that originated in Europe (Agbo & Nwankwo, 2020). It has displayed immense growth in countries such as Australia, Brazil and Italy (Gonulal et al., 2012) and is therefore, a global movement (Chang et al., 2011). But bancassurance is still a relatively novel area for Asian countries such as Sri Lanka (Gamage & Fernando, 2018). A similar viewpoint was presented by Reddy and Sreelatha (2021), stating that although developed countries such as France has penetrated bancassurance markets, in developing countries, bancassurance is still an emerging concept. However, it can be established that bancassurance is suited for developing markets with low insurance penetration and has limited distribution options (Buric et al., 2015), such as Sri Lanka.

The evolution of bancassurance occurred in three stages. Firstly, insurance was simply an extension of the bank products, then associated further to gain the benefits of life-insurance such as tax benefits, to finally becoming a diversified range (Joshi, 2019). However, on a converse viewpoint, Gonulal et al. (2012) highlighted the importance of viewing bancassurance as a development path, rather than simply being a distribution channel. According to Agbo and Nwankwo (2020), bancassurance can be mainly classified into three models namely integrated, non-integrated and open architecture model, where integrated model is the creation of a new insurance company that has an exclusive partnership with the bank, non-integrated model is where financial advisors are available in the bank to sell insurance products, and open architecture model refers to one bank maintaining multiple insurance partnerships. As per this classification, Diriya life insurance company falls to the non-integrated bancassurance model.

A different classification was provided by Reddy and Sreelatha (2021), where four bancassurance models were introduced, namely brokers, corporate agencies, fully integrated financial service and referrals. Following that classification, it can be established that Diriya insurance company adopts a co Prorate agency bancassurance model, as the company has partnered up with banks to tap the customer portfolio in exchange of commissions. Additionally, bancassurance can be classified as active and passive, where active

bancassurance refers to banks actively selling insurance products and passive bancassurance is merging insurance to core banking products and selling (Gamage & Fernando, 2018). Following that classification, it can be established that Diriya insurance company adopts active bancassurance selling. If executed successfully, bancassurance is beneficial for the life-insurance company, bank and the customer (Agbo & Nwankwo, 2020). A similar viewpoint was presented by Gamage and Fernando (2018), stating that there are three pillars in bancassurance namely, the insurance company, bank and the customer. From the banks' perspective, bancassurance provides risk-free income for the bank for acting as the link between the insurance company and the bank's customer (Agbo & Nwankwo, 2020). Hence, bancassurance is a way of distancing the bank from its traditional model while providing an edge over the competition (Joshi, 2019). Additionally, banks can improve their reputation and brand image by providing bancassurance services (Singhal & Singh, 2010), gain administration efficiencies (Gonulal et al., 2012), and expand the product portfolio and customer retention of the bank (Reddy & Sreelatha, 2021).

From the insurance companies' perspective, bancassurance enables many benefits. These include access to a novel customer portfolio, reduction of dependence on conventional insurance selling, ease of designing new insurance services, reduce new customer acquisition cost (Agbo & Nwankwo, 2020), liberalization of the finance sector and improving profits (Gamage & Fernando, 2018), taking advantages of deregulation (Buric et al., 2015) as well as gaining access to new technologies, diversify the product portfolio and merge with global financial markets (Joshi, 2019). Additionally, bancassurance enables insurers to further penetrate the market and minimise insurance policy lapses by acquiring loyal customers of the partnering bank (Reddy & Sreelatha, 2021).

From the customers' perspective, bancassurance enables them to purchase services that are more customized to customers' expectations, which subsequently increase their satisfaction (Agbo & Nwankwo, 2020), more product availability, accessibility (Buric et al., 2015), as well as the ability of fulfilling more financial needs through the same channel (Joshi, 2019). Additionally, customers are benefited by reduced premium payments as insurer's distribution costs have been minimised through the bancassurance partnerships (Reddy & Sreelatha, 2021).

However, in some countries bancassurance is still an emerging aspect with

immense untapped potential (Joshi, 2019), and supplies many benefits for developing countries, a classification to which Sri Lanka belongs to. In Sri Lanka, people are more engaged with banks than with insurance companies (Gamage & Fernando, 2018). There are both local and foreign, as well as private and governmental insurance companies, who have partnered with Sri Lankan banks to provide bancassurance products.

However, bancassurance is both an opportunity and a challenge. Gonulal et al. (2012) described the barriers holding back bancassurance in developing countries, which includes policy issues in the scopes of human resource training, disclosure, product bundling, considerations in information protection and licencing. As stated by Reddy and Sreelatha (2021), bancassurance can cause image risks, requires well-trained staff and a healthy workplace culture. Furthermore, there could be distribution disadvantages, coupled with regulatory, legal and taxation barriers for both banks and insurance companies in initiating bancassurance (Gonulal et al., 2012).

Covid-19 Impact

In late 2019, Covid-19 was found in China, which then rapidly spread across countries and continents and was declared as a global pandemic by the World Health Organisation (Hamouche, 2021). Covid-19 is the biggest business crisis the world faced, after the global financial crisis in 2008-2009 (Baura & Baura, 2020). As per the need of the moment, many countries have tightened rules, such as social distancing and wearing face masks in public (Chanana & Sangeeta, 2020). Hence, the pandemic has changed the way an individual participates in everyday life (Hjálmsdóttir & Bjarnadóttir, 2020).

So far, the pandemic does not show signs of complete eradication or slowing down (KPMG, 2020). In 2020, the year Covid-19 was found and started to spread throughout Sri Lanka, the economy contracted by 3.6% (The World Bank, 2021). Sri Lanka entered a comprehensive national lockdown period when its first citizen tested positive for Covid-19 (Meegaswatta, 2021). However, though the first Covid-19 wave was successfully contained, the subsequent waves made a heavy impact on the country (The World Bank, 2021). It can be observed that the Sri Lankan government's response to the subsequent waves of the Covid-19 pandemic, lacked the intensity of the initial response (Meegaswatta, 2021).

Barriers faced by Managers

According to Robbins et al. (2019), a manager is a person who accomplishes goals through other people. Daft (2014) stated four distinct activities of management namely, planning, organising, leading and controlling. Humans are the most important resource of any organisation and in the context of Covid-19, managers should perceive situations clearly, while controlling and influencing their subordinates appropriately (Magdinceva-Sopova et al, 2021).

In a tough time period such as Covid-19, organisations are aware that their human resource will be a critical success factor (Chanana & Sangeeta, 2020). Managers manage other employees (Meinert, 2019), and have been facing increasing barriers amidst Covid-19 pandemic. As individuals in charge of managing other individuals, managers are more prone to mental health issues, and this is further increased due to the Covid-19 pandemic and the novel challenges imposed by the pandemic (Graf-Vlachy et al., 2020). Managers faced increased stressors due to the pandemic (Magdinceva-Sopova et al., 2021) and are facing more challenges in maintaining employee engagement during the pandemic (Chanana & Sangeeta, 2020).

Managers play a critical role in any organisation (Daft, 2014), and are a critical touch point for other employees (Meinert, 2019). Therefore, it can be established that managers play a vital role in the organisations such as bancassurance, even more so during the ongoing pandemic. As previously stated, there is a lack of scholarly articles due to the literature gap in the scope of bancassurance amidst Covid-19, and the barriers faced by Bancassurance managers. Accordingly, in the next section of this study, the methodology of this study is explained in detail.

Looking back at the passage of time, it is clear that the Covid-19 pandemic context is not the first challenging time period faced by the bancassurance managers, along with the bancassurance industry. According to Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (2009), the global financial crisis pressured insurers and bankers to rethink the means of doing collaborative business. Unsurprisingly, bancassurance has often been in the losing end during such crisis (Baluch et al., 2011). However, though the impact of crisis on the bancassurance industry is analysed, it is evident that the impact from an employee viewpoint, particularly in relation to bancassurance managers, is understudied.

Methodology

This study adopted a subjective ontology, subjective epistemology and followed an interpretivist research philosophy. Accordingly, adopting an inductive inquiry, a qualitative case study strategy was used to explore the research problem in detail. Qualitative approach intends to contextualise and understand the phenomenon without heavily focusing to generalise the findings (Fernando, 2021). Similarly, Bell et al. (2019) described the advantages of using qualitative approach in exploring a research problem, which includes the ability of detailly describing the context, process and flexibility.

It should be noted that due to the ongoing Covid-19 pandemic, barriers were faced in formulating the sample and in conducting the interviews for the study. Many bancassurance managers were reluctant to take part in the study, as they feared of adverse consequences from the company, such as if unfavourable opinions stated in the interviews of this study were recognised in relation to the real identities of the participants. According to Bell et al. (2019), interviews is a heavily used method in qualitative research, aiming to elicit all manners of information such as interviewees' behaviour, attitude, beliefs and norms. An interview guide was pre-prepared, which included clear, critical and open questions to explore the research objective, and the interviews were conducted in semi-structured format.

Snowball sampling is where the researcher initially selects relevant participants for the study, and those participants connects more potential participants relevant for the study (Bell et al., 2019). All managers that were interviewed for this study were employed in Diriya life insurance company for more than one year and were responsible of managing a team of bancassurance agents. Therefore, through snowball sampling technique, six participants were selected representing the Diriya life insurance company, including both married and non-married, as well as female and male bancassurance managers.

Accordingly, pseudonyms were used in appropriate instances, as well as the researcher obtained consent from all participants before recording the interviews and using the field notebook. Prior to the interview, the researcher informed the participants the option of withdrawing from the interview at any point. In order to get the maximum and accurate output from the interview, the researcher ensured the participants are comfortable, by conducting the interviews at a suitable location with no interruptions, as well as using a carefully designed interview format. Hence, throughout the research process, privacy, consent,

ethics, voluntariness and confidentiality of the participants were given high importance. The virtually conducted interviews were transcribed, coded and thematically analysed for the discussion. The author used both thematic table and thematic map to construct the themes, which will be the base for the next section.

Results and Discussion

As explained by Bell et al. (2019) one of the key distinctions of qualitative research studies is the ability of “seeing through the eyes of people being studied” (p. 92). Accordingly, in relation to this study, the researcher attempted to view the phenomena through the eyes of the bancassurance managers, in order to get rich perspectives and probe beneath the surface of the context. In addition to that, following a qualitative approach allowed the researcher to form an empathetic stance and describe the course and causes of the barriers faced by the bancassurance managers.

Qualitative research focuses on the process, “to show how events and patters unfold over time” (Bell et al., 2019, p. 94). Accordingly, guided by the rich interviews of the participants, the researcher attempted to showcase how the present reality was cultivated. Hence, the researcher has attempted to describe the process of how the barriers were created for the bancassurance managers along with the reasons and consequences that adversely impacted them, amidst the ongoing Covid-19 pandemic.

The main objective of this study is to identify and explore the barriers faced by managers in managing bancassurance employees amidst the Covid-19 pandemic. Based on the thematic analysis of the rich interviews conducted, two themes were formulated for the discussion namely, a) increased pressure to achieve sales targets from the insurance company and the partnering bank and, b) the work-life imbalance caused by the additional workload during the Covid-19 pandemic, and these two themes are explained in depth, as per Table 1.

Table 1: Thematic Table for the Study

Main theme	Sub themes
Increased pressure to achieve sales targets from the insurance company and the partnering bank	a) Pressure imposed from the insurance company b) Pressure imposed from the partnering bank
The work-life imbalance	a) The bancassurance agent -

caused by the additional workload during the Covid-19 pandemic	b) Additional burdens faced by the married, female bancassurance managers
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Source: Author Compilation.

The first theme of the discussion is the increased pressure to achieve sales targets from the insurance company and the partnering bank. The Covid-19 pandemic caused adverse economic complications both locally and globally. The gross domestic production of Sri Lanka reduced by 3.6%, overall budget deficit increased to -11.1% with unemployment rising up to 5.5% in the year of 2020 (Central bank of Sri Lanka, 2020). Such reductions in consumer earnings hindered investments (The World Bank, 2021). As a result, many customers of the banks were more inclined towards borrowing than investments. Hence the customer's interest for bancassurance, which consisted of investment and protection-based products, declined significantly. Retroactively, this resulted in decreasing sales for bancassurance products.

As a result, the bancassurance managers faced significant pressure from the insurance company to achieve sales targets, as mentioned by all participants of this study. Bancassurance is a significant revenue source for Diriya life insurance company. Amidst Covid-19, the bancassurance sales were impacted due to many reasons and the pressure to recover was increasing. However, instead of empathetic approach, a more aggressive approach was adopted by the Diriya insurance company in improving sales. One participant articulated this point as:

“In 2019 December, I was given a monthly sales target of four million, focusing one bank branch that has not performed in bancassurance for the previous three years, even before Covid-19. So, four million sales target was obviously unachievable”

This reveals the thumb-in-the-air approach taken by the insurance company in setting sales targets for the bancassurance managers. Such impractical targets pile up the pressure to perform for the bancassurance managers, which is ultimately trickled down upon the agents and causes barriers in individual and team performance.

Based on the interview output, it can be established that the pressure of achieving sales targets impacted mental health of the bancassurance managers.

One participant articulated this point as:

“Nearing the month end, I was having difficulty in sleeping. I stayed awake, thinking on what to do if I don’t achieve the sales target this month too”,

where another participant stated a similar viewpoint as:

“I was not eating properly. Work was very stressful, and my entire family noticed the changes in my behaviour”

Additionally, if the sales targets were not achieved continuously for a period of three months, the insurance company has the power to terminate the employment of the respective bancassurance manager, as per the employment contract. This is another reason that increased pressure on the bancassurance managers, as one participant stated:

“Times are difficult. If I lose my job during this pandemic, how will I support my family? My children’s education?”

Hence, the above statements showcase how the fear of not being able to achieve sales targets, adversely impacted both mental and physical health of the managers, through symptoms such as increased stress, pressure, inability to sleep and consume food. This confirms with the findings of Magdinceva-Sopova et al. (2021), who stated that Covid-19 often generates negative stressors, that would eventually cause adverse health consequences for the managers. The high targets set by the insurance company amidst the ongoing Covid-19 have cultivated this fear within the managers, and it adversely impacted the managers’ way of managing the bancassurance agents. Hence, this confirms again that high pressure imposed from the insurance company on the bancassurance agents.

Insurance is more sold than it is purchased (Reddy & Sreelatha, 2021). As the bancassurance managers strived to achieve the increased sales targets, it also meant increased travelling amidst a pandemic. As one participant stated:

“Bancassurance sales is more effective in-person rather than a phone call pitch”

Often, customers need to be educated about bancassurance products for them to be convinced to purchase (Gonulal et al., 2012). Accordingly, as per the

participants of this study, convincing customers to purchase a bancassurance product through virtual settings was less effective. Therefore, coupled with the increased pressure from the insurance company, the bancassurance managers had to increase their in-person travels amidst a pandemic. One participant elaborated this point as follows:

“Within one day, I would visit three to four banks and insurance branches, and continue the same process the next day”

Both bank branches and insurance branches are locations with high Covid-19 risk and exposure, with procedures such as handling cash notes and managing cash deposit machines, that are used by many personnel and can carry Covid-19 infections. Hence, the increased travelling heightened the exposure of the managers to the ongoing Covid-19 pandemic, which further complexified the issues. As one participant articulated:

“Once my work is over, I was scared to go home, as I worried of being exposed to Covid-19 and exposing my family to the risk”.

During the first Covid-19 wave, the government of Sri Lanka imposed an island wide lockdown, then imposed targeted location lockdowns during the proceeding waves (The World Bank, 2021). Hence, increased traveling amidst a deadly pandemic - where managers had to adhere to strict health guidelines and navigate transportation through locations under lockdown - meant that the managers were facing more pressure related to work, which negatively impacted the bancassurance managers.

Bancassurance employees are critical for the success of the bancassurance operations (Buric et al., 2015). Based on the interviews, it is clear that the pressure faced by the bancassurance managers was ultimately cascaded down to the bancassurance agents. One participant articulated this point as:

“Top managers pressurised me to achieve targets. So, I pressurized my team [bancassurance agents] to achieve targets. It was like a cycle.”

Among the Asia-Pacific countries, Sri Lanka has the lowest market share in terms of insurance premium income (Reddy & Sreelatha, 2021), which indicates the newness of the industry. Hence, the newness of the job descriptions of

bancassurance managers was a contributing factor to the pressure, as the managers feared of losing jobs that are not yet established and recognized by the wider economy. This confirms the findings of Magdinceva-Sopova et al, (2021), who stated that Covid-19 pandemic has caused greater uncertainties within employees. As a result, the pressure resulted from the above factors, caused barriers for the bancassurance managers.

However, it was not only the insurance company that was exerting pressure on the bancassurance managers. Though a bancassurance manager formally reports to the insurance company top management, the bancassurance manager maintains strong informal relationships with the branch managers of the partnering bank as well. The participants of this study stated that as per the bancassurance partnership, the partnering bank receives a fixed percentage of the value of the bancassurance policies sold through a particular bank branch. This is reported as direct revenue for the partnering bank with minimal costs attached, and therefore, contributes significantly to improve the profitability of the particular bank branch as well as the partnering bank as a whole. As one bancassurance manager who participated in this study stated:

“[Bank] branch managers would call me daily and ask on the pipeline of bancassurance policies for the month. It was exhausting”.

Banks play an active role in the bancassurance process (Buric et al., 2015). Therefore, when bancassurance sales of Diriya company were decreasing amidst Covid-19, partnering bank received reduced revenue as well. As a result, the bancassurance managers were being pressured by the bank personnel to achieve the targets. Bancassurance involves both banks and insurance companies in selling insurance products (Gonulal et al., 2012). Therefore, it is evident that pressure on the bancassurance managers is caused and increased from dual sources – the insurance company and the partnering bank – which ultimately caused barriers for the bancassurance managers amidst the ongoing Covid-19 pandemic.

According to the regulatory focus theory, individuals may use a promotion-focused strategy or a prevention-focus strategy to accomplish tasks (Wallace & Chen, 2010). In application to this study, through the first theme discussed, the promotion focus strategy of the regulatory focus theory is displayed by the bancassurance managers' behaviour amidst the ongoing Covid-19 pandemic.

The pressure imposed by the insurance company and the partnering bank had amplified the bancassurance managers' concern of achieving higher quantity of work within the specified timelines, which can be categorized as the promotion focus strategy of the regulatory focus theory.

Increased pressure from insurance company and the partnering bank, that was imposed on the managers, was ultimately passed down to the bancassurance agents. Hence, the bancassurance agents were on the final receiving end of this chain of cumulated pressure, which reduced the performance of Diriya insurance company. This is a key barrier faced by the bancassurance managers amidst Covid-19 and confirms the first theme of the discussion.

Covid-19 pandemic has disrupted work and organizational settings (Fernando & Pushpakumari, 2021). Based on the thematic analysis performed on the interview outputs, the second theme of discussion is the work-life imbalance during the Covid-19 pandemic. Work life balance is concerned on both work and non-work life, and whether an individual can coordinate both aspects successfully (Hjálmsdóttir & Bjarnadóttir, 2020).

Sales employees are a key component in the bancassurance process (Gonulal et al., 2012), which in this context, includes the bancassurance manager and the agents. In terms of the work life, as per the exclusive agreement between Diriya insurance company and the partnering bank, bancassurance agents were physically allocated for majority of the bank branches, which translated into the bancassurance agent having a dedicated space within bank branch premises for bancassurance activities. Hence, the bancassurance agent has more engagement with the bank staff, rather than her/his bancassurance manager.

With the Covid-19 pandemic, employee engagement has become a critical aspect for human resource practitioners (Chanana & Sangeeta, 2020). Though the bancassurance agent engages in-person with the bank staff on a daily basis, the bancassurance agent and the bancassurance manager's engagement would be as limited as much as once per week, or even once per fortnight. With the Covid-19 pandemic, as the partnering bank adopted procedures such as staff rosters and bio-bubbles, the engagement between the bancassurance agent and the bancassurance manager declined further, hindering the bancassurance manager's ability to sense the bancassurance agent's work life. Therefore, the lack of periodical meetings between the two parties became a barrier for the bancassurance managers.

Another aspect which increased the work-life imbalance was the additional workload of the bancassurance managers. As the ongoing pandemic spread through the nooks and corners of Sri Lanka, the active bancassurance workforce of the Diriya company reduced, as many bancassurance agents became Covid-19 positive, close contacts of Covid-19 positive patients or were restricted in city/ provincial lockdowns. Therefore, this impacted the team performance of the bancassurance managers. As one participant articulated:

“It is extremely unpredictable. Day by day, people in my team would become positive for the virus”

As a result, the remaining bancassurance managers had to perform the excess workload, in addition to their own allocated work, which caused the lines between work and non-work life of the bancassurance managers to blur further.

However, there is a converse side linked to the above situation. Majority of the participants stated that some bancassurance agents purposefully presented falsified information regarding Covid-19, to enjoy unethical personal benefits such as work leaves with pay and exemption from the monthly target achievements. One participant confirmed this point as:

“Some agents would fake coughing and sickness, but it was hard to obtain proof during the pandemic, so we had to give them lengthy time periods of paid, self-isolation time”

Hence, this further reduced the active agents under a bancassurance manager’s team, causing both the bancassurance manager and the remaining agents to carry out the additional workload. Such intentional absenteeism caused individual targets of the agents to be accumulated, and transferred to other agents, which then snowballed into higher targets that the rest of the team had to achieve. Therefore, the additional target pressures were piled up on the work commitment of both the bancassurance manager and the agents, contributing to work-life imbalance and ultimately, causing more barriers for the manager in managing the bancassurance team.

With the government regulations related to Covid-19, many industries were classified as non-essential and were encouraged to adopt remote working. However, in Sri Lanka, both banking and insurance were classified as essential

activities. Therefore, by default, bancassurance, which is a combination of both banking and insurance, was also classified as an essential activity. As per the participants output, bancassurance was considered as an essential service due to high informational risks and confidentiality, as well as a vital contributor of the economy. Hence, the bancassurance managers and agents had to report to work in-person, instead of adopting alternative work methods.

In terms of the work life of the manager, another key issue was interaction. All six managers interviewed for this study stated the continuous need to interact with the partnering bank branches that their agents were operating in, an action with many associated health risks. As per the high contact service nature of bancassurance, the managers' felt interaction was necessary if sales targets needed to be achieved. As one participant stated:

“Yes, I worried on getting Covid infected, but I worried about not hitting my monthly targets even more. So, I visited my team members [agents] at their respective bank branches”

In terms of the non-work life aspect, the bancassurance managers faced issues in following the social needs of the agents. Another manager stated:

“Due to the strengthened health guidelines, agents were not meeting another in-person”

Additionally, company social events such the annual Halloween themed celebration, Christmas ball and Sinhala-Tamil Awurudu ceremonial activities, were either cancelled or shifted to virtual platforms, which further hindered the social engagement between the bancassurance managers and agents. One participant articulated this point as:

“When the pandemic began [in Sri Lanka] back in February 2020, we thought it might last for couple of weeks, not years”

Hence, for a significant time period, the social engagement between the bancassurance manager and agent, and in between the team, have not been fulfilled. This lack of fulfilment of non-work life requirements of bancassurance managers, caused further imbalance of the between work and non-work life, which ultimately became a barrier for the manager in managing her/his team.

Additionally, when specifically considering the non-work life of female, married bancassurance managers, Covid-19 had fundamentally changed their non-work life settings. This agrees with the findings of Kapoor et al. (2021), who stated that working mothers' well-being was adversely impacted through alternative methods adopted during Covid-19 pandemic. Working women shouldered additional activities in addition to work life, such as preparing meals and looking after children who were schooling from home (Meegaswatta, 2021). Interestingly, none of the married, male participants mentioned on the pressure of performing domestic work while balancing their career amidst the pandemic. As one female participant of this study, who was married and had one child, stated:

“My husband was working from home and my children were learning at home. But I had to travel back and forth every day to work, and I couldn't focus”,

while another female bancassurance manager who was married with two children articulated her thoughts as:

“If I could get a job that can be done from home, I would gladly quit my current job”

Spatial divisions are created through unequal work-from-home options (The World Bank, 2021). Though the female bancassurance managers physically reported to work, it is evident that the rest of the family had shifted to remote working and remote studying formats, which further impacted on the female, married bancassurance managers' non-work life, as she was playing the multiple roles of a wife and a mother. It was a balancing act of personal and professional life for a working woman (Meegaswatta, 2021). It can be established that working mothers who are also bancassurance managers, shouldered a greater mental work compared to pre-Covid period. Therefore, the imbalance of non-work life reflected negatively on the managers' ability of performing, and ultimately caused barriers for bancassurance managers.

As per Wallace and Chen (2010), the prevention focus strategy is used by individuals to minimise the negative outcomes of the career. In continuation of the regulatory focus theory, through the second theme discussed, the bancassurance managers displayed a high concern on their responsibility of meeting the sales targets amidst the challenging conditions imposed by the pandemic, which can be categorised as the prevention focus strategy of the

regulatory focus theory. Hence, it is clear that the bancassurance managers behaviour reflects the self-regulation strategies they have adopted to manage the pandemic.

Based on the above discussion, it can be established that a) increased pressure to achieve sales targets from the insurance company and the partnering bank and, b) the work-life imbalance caused by the additional workload during the Covid-19 pandemic as two primary barriers for bancassurance managers amidst the Covid-19 pandemic. In terms of increased pressure to achieve sales targets from the insurance company, the pressure faced by the bancassurance managers through the insurance company and the partnering bank, and its consequences were discussed in detail. In terms of the work-life imbalance caused by the additional workload during the Covid-19 pandemic, the aspects of bancassurance agent- bancassurance manager engagement, and shouldering of additional burdens faced by the married, female bancassurance managers were explored and explained.

As this is a study of qualitative nature, reflexivity and its implications should be highlighted. As per Bell et al. (2019), reflexivity is the deep consideration about the process of generating knowledge in a study and critically evaluating the assumptions that are often taken for granted. Accordingly, the researcher acknowledges that as a part of a qualitative study, the researcher was part of the process actively as both the author and the observer. Hence, throughout the conduct of this study, the researcher focused on being sensitive and empathetic to the background of the participants, in order to not inject researcher's personal assumptions into the research process.

Conclusion

In conclusion, the research objective of this study was to explore the barriers faced by bancassurance managers amidst the Covid-19 pandemic. Following a qualitative approach, Diriya life insurance company was selected as the case study on which the research was based upon. The findings were bracketed under two main themes, namely, a) increased pressure to achieve sales targets from both insurance company and the partnering bank and b) the work-life imbalance caused by the additional workload during the Covid-19 pandemic. The first theme explored the pressure faced by the bancassurance managers through the Diriya insurance company and the partnering bank, along with its consequences, while the second theme explored agent-manager engagement, additional

workload and the additional burdens of the married, female bancassurance managers.

To the knowledge of the researcher, this is the first study that investigated the barriers faced by the bancassurance managers amidst Covid-19 through a qualitative lens, which increases the originality of this paper. This claim can be further justified by the lack of journal articles on the bancassurance managers in the reputed academic databases. Literature addressing Covid-19 is still evolving, and in the context of bancassurance, both empirical and theoretical literature that address bancassurance are limited. Additionally, a gap of literature exists in both global and Sri Lankan contexts, in the scope of barriers faced by bancassurance managers during the ongoing Covid-19 pandemic. Therefore, this research explores novel and significant information which contributes to furthering the existing body of knowledge and making the knowledge on bancassurance managers during the ongoing Covid-19 pandemic more explicit. Hence, this research contributes to the heavily understudied scope of bancassurance.

The significance of this research is twofold, namely as theoretical and practical significance. In terms of the theoretical significance, the study captures the bancassurance managers behaviour in relation to the regulatory focus theory. According to Wallace and Chen (2010), promotion focus strategy is when employees believe increased performance would be beneficial as it will contribute towards job potential. This was evident through the first theme of the discussion of increased pressure to achieve sales targets from the insurance company and the partnering bank, where bancassurance managers tries to maximize the positive outcomes of the work. Subsequently, Wallace and Chen (2010) describe the prevention focus strategy as performing well at work to meet the basic standards. This is depicted through the second theme of the discussion, the work-life imbalance caused by the additional workload during the Covid-19 pandemic, where bancassurance managers had tried to minimize the negative outcomes.

There are many practical significances of this research. For the bancassurance companies, this research provides an in-depth analysis on practical issues faced by the bancassurance managers, where policies and strategies can be suitably adjusted by taking such barriers into consideration. The governing bodies of bancassurance, insurance and partnering banks will be benefitted by these strategies, in formulating and implementing policies to improve the industry performance amidst the ongoing Covid-19 pandemic. Additionally, the

supporting functions to the bancassurance arm of an insurance company, such as underwriting, actuarial, human resources and marketing, will be highly benefitted by the finding of this research. Hence, this research benefits the practitioners by providing novel knowledge on management during an ongoing pandemic, which increases the practical significance of this study.

In terms of limitations, as this study analyzed a single setting of Diriya life insurance company following the case study strategy, the aim was to understand the course and context of the research problem, which impacts the generalizability of the study. Additionally, as this study adopted a qualitative approach, the findings of the study may face difficulties in replication. Finally, the interviews were conducted online as a mean of adhering to the tightened health guidelines, and therefore may have lacked the effectiveness of in-person interviewing.

There is an increasing interest and importance on bancassurance, as both partnering banks and insurance companies - two parties that directly impact the financial system in Sri Lanka - are benefitted by bancassurance. In projecting the findings of this study into a wider application, further research can be carried out using different approaches and techniques, such as following a quantitative approach where the objective findings can be further replicated and generalized, or ethnographic studies where the researcher can observe bancassurance managers' behaviour over a significant period of time. In addition to that, studies can be expanded towards exploring the research problem from the lens of bancassurance agents. Finally, further comprehensive research can be initiated to explore the barriers faced by bancassurance managers considering the overall bancassurance context in Sri Lanka.

Declaration of Conflicting Interests

The author declared no potential conflicts of interest with respect to the research, authorship, and publication of this article.

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A Comprehensive Definition for ‘Operational Excellence’

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Abstract

The study's objective was to develop a comprehensive definition for operational excellence (OE) while identifying its attributes, most suitable theoretical lens and dimensions. Attributes of OE were collected by evaluating 32 existing definitions of OE and interviewing 30 OE experts. A focus group interview with 15 OE experts was employed to consensus on the critical attributes and tentative dimensions of OE. Content analysis was employed for data analysis. Continuous improvement of sustainable operational performance, deriving sustainable competitive advantages and implementing the operation strategy consistently and reliably were determined as the critical attributes. Based on the identified critical attributes of OE, the Resource-Based Theory (RBT) was recognized as the most applicable theory for explaining OE. Based on the identified theoretical lens and identified critical attributes, the new definition of OE involves, ‘utilization of valuable, rare, costly to imitate and non-substitutable resources & capabilities to execute the operations strategy consistently and reliably as the organization can achieve: a continuous improvement of the sustainable operational performance and sustainable competitive advantages while upholding the satisfaction of employees, customers, suppliers and other important stakeholders.’ Continuous improvement of sustainable operational performance and sustainable competitive advantages were determined as the possible dimensions of OE.

Keywords: *Operational Excellence; Resource-Based Theory; Construct Definition, Operational Performance, Competitive Advantages*

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Introduction

Currently, the corporate sector is adopting philosophies like organizational/business excellence for delighting the customers while gaining sustainable competitive advantages. The journey of 'organizational excellence' requires adapting more systematic and structured ways for responding to the dynamics of the corporate environment and customer needs (BTOES Insight, 2019). Being operationally excellent is the crucial requirement for achieving organizational/business excellence. Hence, if an organization could be excellent in all its operations, the destination of organizational excellence is smoothly arrived (Govindsamy, 2014). Generally, operational excellence means the "execution of the business strategy more consistently and reliably than the competition, with lower operational risk, lower operating costs, and increased revenues relative to its competitor" (Seifert & Soto, 2013. p.68).

According to McKinsey & Company (2015), operational excellence is achieved through the application of various philosophies, tools and technique like lean, Total Quality Management, Six -Sigma, Just in Time and Process Re-engineering which mainly focus a change (gradual or radical change) of the existing way of doing the tasks in the organization. Reduction of lead time, optimized inventory turns, enhanced organizational performance, and competitive advantages are the key benefits expected by applying these operational excellence-oriented tools and techniques (McKinsey & Company, 2015). Thus, targeting such returns globally, the corporate sector is more enthusiastic about the operational excellence philosophy. Likewise, achieving operational excellence has become a global level, contemporary business trend. Nevertheless, the level of success of corporate efforts for reaching operational excellence frequently fails, and the level of operational excellence in the corporate sector worldwide does not exist at a satisfactory level. Thus, currently, operational excellence has become a trending research area. Even though the researchers in this field show a more eagerness on empirical papers, tiny consideration has been given to the conceptualization and scale development of the construct operational excellence (Found et al., 2018).

Contemporary literature on operational excellence, reveals that on some occasions, the term operational excellence has been defined in plausible phrases, such as 'being world class', 'being the best globally' or 'excellence in everything we do' which are hard to translate into practical actions. Also, it reveals that the construct, operational excellence, has often been poorly and vaguely defined (Aguilera & Ruiz, 2019; Found et al., 2018). Also, it seems that

operational excellence has received many contradictory interpretations by different scholars and practitioners. For example, Russell and Koch (2009) defined that “operational excellence is about attaining the maximum operational efficiency level through performing things better, faster, and cheaper”. Then according to Russell and Koch (2009), the sole focus of operational excellence is to improve the operational efficiency of an organization. While Aguilera and Ruiz (2019) defined that “operational excellence involves the organizational culture of a company, where employees can identify problems and solve them analytically”. It seems that according to Aguilera and Ruiz (2019), operational excellence targets an improved culture where problem-solving nicely happens. According to Seifert and Soto (2013), operational excellence is the execution of the business strategy more consistently and reliably than the competitors, with lesser operational risk, lesser operating costs, and amplified revenues comparative to its competitor. According to Seifert and Soto (2013), operational excellence is employed to derive competitive advantages too.

On some occasions, the term operational excellence has been defined more similar to organizational excellence. For example, 'operational excellence is the constant and deliberate improvement of organizational performance and the conditions of those who work there to pursue operational excellence by design and not by accident'(Operational Excellence Society, 2020). Also, some researchers and practitioners define operational excellence as a state, while some define it as a process and strategy. For example, (1)'operational excellence is an organizational status “where each and every employee can see the flow of value to the customer and fix that flow before it breaks down’ (Duggan, 2011); (2)'operational excellence has also been described as a process where the organization or business focuses on the needs of the customers while consistently and continuously improving the current business activities being conducted in the workplace’ (Martin, 2015); (3) ‘operational excellence is defined as the strategy, organizations use to deliver quality, price, ease of purchase and service in such a manner that no other organization in the industry or sector can match’(Wiersema & Treacy, 1993). The other significant issue is the, lack of identification of theoretical domain of the construct operational excellence (Aguilera & Ruiz, 2019). Thus, most of the existing definitions on operational excellence does not represent the theoretical perspectives.

Concerning above dilemmas, research gaps were concluded as: the term OE is still lacking a comprehensive construct definition, the researchers in OE context are still uncertain on the exact theoretical lens & dimensions of the construct,

and researchers face challenging situations in conceptualizing and operationalizing this construct. Correspondently, the main aim of the current study was to develop a comprehensive construct definition for operational excellence while identifying the most critical attributes and suitable theoretical lens of this construct. Consequently, the objectives of the study were formulated: first to identify the critical attributes of OE construct, second to determine the suitable theoretical lens of the construct OE base on the identified attributes, third to develop the new construct definition for OE base on the identified theoretical lens & attributes, and finally to propose the suitable tentative dimensions of operational excellence.

Literature Review

Distinguishing between 'Operational' and 'Organizational'

Distinguishing between these two terms is critical to distinguish between the operational excellence and organizational excellence. Simply the term “organizational” denotes the business structure, and “operational” denotes how things get done within that structure (LaMarco, 2019). When a business organization operates for achieving its goals, it has to perform a large number of different tasks. Those tasks are not performed by the organization's owner himself/herself or a single person. Organizations possess staff members or employees for performing those different tasks. Then organizations need to organize these tasks among the employees, in accomplishing tasks. Organizing the organizational tasks among staff/employees creates organizational structures and charts (LaMarco, 2019). Also, these structures explain the span of control of the organization. Then those structures create the organizations, and it is called the 'organizational'. Within the particular organizational structure, for achieving the organizational goals, the tasks need to be implemented as per the organizational structure defined or organized, and it is called the operational (Milano, 2021).

Organizational Excellence

As Mann, Mohammad and Agustin (2012) emphasized, organizational excellence is about ‘developing and strengthening the management systems, processes and operations of the whole organization to continuously improve organizational superior performance and create a better value for stakeholders. The ‘European Foundation for Quality Management (EFQM) Excellence Model’ which is also a protocol to explain the organizational excellence

concerns the ‘leadership, people, strategy, partnerships, resources, processes, products & services, people result, customer results, society results and business results as the key aspects of operational excellence (EFQM, 2013). Shingo Institute (1988), which offers the Shingo Award on organizational excellence, has introduced ten core principles of organizational excellence: “respect every individual, lead with humility, seek perfection, embrace scientific thinking, focus on process, assure quality at the source, flow & pull value, think systemically, create constancy of purpose and create value for the customer”. When analyzing the aspects emphasized by these frameworks/models/awards on organizational excellence, it can be concluded that organizational excellence refers to an attainment which realizes through organization-wide continuous superior performance. Thus, the emphasis on organizational/business excellence is much broader than focusing on a single area, function, process or operation of an organization.

Operational Excellence

Generally, operational excellence refers to the “execution of the business strategy more consistently and reliably than the competition, with lower operational risk, lower operating costs, and increased revenues relative to its competitor” (Seifert & Soto, 2013. p.68). Watson (2010) introduced operational excellence as “a critical driver for business success, a key part of the enterprise strategy and the systematic management of the five dimensions: process safety, environment, personal health & safety, reliability and efficiency to achieve world-class performance”. Wiersema and Treacy (1993), defined the term operational excellence as a specific strategic approach: to the production and delivery of products & services, which seeks ways to minimize overhead costs, to eliminate intermediate production steps, reduce transaction and other friction costs, and optimize business processes across functional and organizational boundaries to deliver the products or services to customers at competitive prices and with minimal inconvenience. As per this definition (which is a much early definition of operational excellence), operational excellence mainly links with the production & delivery process and primarily focuses only on efficiency in these processes. Nevertheless, modern definitions of operational excellence focus on the continuous improvement of all the operations within an organization, concerning that every operation of the organization is vital to delighting customers and achieving competitive advantages (BTOES Insight, 2019).

Existing Theories on Operational Excellence

The Scientific Management Theory

The Scientific Management Theory was invented by Fredrick Winslow Taylor (1890-1940), and it is often called "Taylorism". The focus of the Scientific Management Theory is to increase the production within an organization by increasing the productivity of the individuals. Taylor always intended one best way to accomplish a task of an organization. Also, Taylor's focus was on repetitive, routine tasks - rather than dynamic, problem-solving activities. Thus, this theory proposes to make specifications for each regular task of the organization. The theory assumed that if the tasks could be standardized, they could be made more efficient. Also, the theory proposed an awarding and punishment mechanism to improve the efficiency of individuals. Employees with improved efficiency are rewarded, and employees who cannot reach the targeted efficiency are punished (Wren & Bedeian, 2009).

The Transformational Leadership Theory

Many researchers who focused on the antecedents of operational excellence have utilized the Transformation Leadership Theory for explaining the link between leadership and operational excellence. The Transformational Leadership Theory emphasizes how leaders make valued and constructive change in their followers. As per the theory, transformational leaders can inspire followers toward action and change. James MacGregor Burns (1978) first introduced the concepts of transformational leadership in his studies on political leaders. Currently, this concept is widely used in organizational studies also. The ideal target of transformational leadership is to create a valuable and positive change in the followers to develop followers into the leaders' level or beyond. Transformational leadership is possible to enhance the motivation, morale and performance of followers through connecting individual followers' self to the mission of the organization; being a role model for followers that inspires them; challenging followers to take greater ownership for their work, and understanding the strengths and weaknesses of followers (Bass, 1998).

The Resource-Based Theory

The Resource-Based Theory (RBT), an extensively accepted theory of competitive advantages and superior firm performance, primarily explains the interaction between a company's internal resources/operational capabilities and competitive advantages (Spanos & Lioukas, 2001). The RBT emerged in the

1980s and 1990s, with the critical contributions of Wernerfelt (1984) (“The Resource-Based View of the Firm”), Prahalad and Hamel (1990) (“The Core Competence of The Corporation”) and Barney, (1991) (“Firm resources and sustained competitive advantage”). The theory grounded on two major assumptions of heterogeneous and immobility of organizational resources. The assumption of heterogeneous means that skills, capabilities and other resources which an organization possesses differ from one organization to another. The second assumption of RBT emphasizes that organizations internal resources are immobile and do not transfer from one organization to another, in short-run. Thus, it assumes that competitors cannot imitate the companies’ resources & strategies in the short run. Barney (1991), argued that heterogeneous and immobile resources alone is not enough to achieve competitive advantage and introduced the VRIN framework (that scrutinizes whether resources are valuable, rare, costly to imitate and non-substitutable), which describes the characteristics that resources should possess in order to enable competitive advantages. According to this model, ‘valuable, rare, imperfectly imitable and non-substitutable resources generate the sustainable competitive advantage.

Methodology

The study followed the qualitative research approach with qualitative research design. Here, as the main data collection methods the researcher employed document reading (research papers, books, web articles), unstructured interviews and focus group interviews. While content analysis and thematic analysis were utilized for data analysis. Then employing moderators, the validity of the new definition was confirmed. Following section explain these research methods with more details.

As the starting point in the definition development process, the researcher required to ascertain the attributes of this construct. The researcher attained this purpose through reading documents like research articles, books and web articles and unstructured interviews. For collecting research articles, online databases like Wiley Online Library, Scopus, EBSCO, Taylor and Francis, Emerald Insight, JSTOR, Web of Science, Science Direct and Directory of Open Access Journals were referred under the key word ‘operational excellence’ and focused time period was from 2005 to 2020. Through document reading, the researcher could collect 32 existing definitions on OE. For unstructured interviews the researcher drew 30 international and national experts on operational excellence, following the purposive sampling technique.

Interviews were conducted online using the 'Zoom' software. The composition of the experts' sample were 10 academics, 7 consultants and 13 top level managers who works for development of operational excellence. Also, out the 30 experts, 13 were from international and 17 were from Sri Lanka. The international experts represented countries: United Kingdom, Australia, Japan, Singapore, Vietnam, USA, India, France, New Zealand, China, Spain, Brazil, Canada.

After the data collection, the researcher employed the content analysis for deriving key themes (through developing open codes and axial codes) of each operational excellence definition. Then, thematic analysis was performed to derive the themes of interview records. Content analysis involves a data analysis method employed to recognize patterns in 'recorded communication' (Saunders et al., 2009). Content analysis can be utilized for any type of written text, no matter of from where the text comes (Sekaran & Bougie, 2010). It means, for conduct the content analysis, data can be collected systematically, using any form of data collection methods (written, oral, or visual): deep interviews, focus group interviews (Golsater et al., 2011), one single written question (Bengtsson et al. 2007), open-ended questionnaire, observations of situations, pictures and films (Krippendorff, 2004) (as cited in Bengtsson, 2016). Content analysis may be in quantitative or qualitative type. In these both types of content analysis, the researcher categorizes or develop codes, themes, and concepts within the text (first identify the codes, then themes and concepts are developed through categorizing/grouping the codes). Thematic analysis is a qualitative data analysis technique that mainly employed for data which collected through interviews and focus group interviews. It identifies the patterns of data sets to derive the themes. Here the researcher's subjective experience plays a crucial role (Saunders et al., 2009).

Subsequently, the researchers conducted a focus group interview for evaluating the identified themes and come into a consensus on the critical attributes of operational excellence. The focus group interview consisted of 15-members (5 academics and 10 practitioners on operational excellence in Sri Lankan context). Members for the focus group discussion were drawn purposively (base on expertise), and it was conducted online using the 'Zoom' software. Afterwards, the researcher determined the key attributes of operational excellence and the theoretical lens/domain of the construct operational excellence based on these attributes. Next, the new definition was developed,

being in the identified theoretical domain while integrating the identified critical attributes. Ultimately the validity of the new definition was ensured, employing the qualitative, validity methods. One of the critical techniques of establishing the validity and reliability of qualitative data comprises selecting a skilled moderator. Primarily, employing a moderator will support overcoming the personal bias of the data analysis. Thus, the researcher employed three moderators who are academic experts in the operational excellence field to evaluate the new definition. Ultimately the definition was revised based on the reviews and recommendations of these moderators.

Results and Discussion

Identification of Attributes in the Construct Operational Excellence

Table 1 concisely exhibits 32 definitions on operational excellence which were collected through referring research papers, books and web articles. Also, it summarizes the key themes emphasized in each of these definitions.

Table 1: Operational Excellence Definitions and Theme Identification

	Definition	Source	Key themes
1	‘Operational excellence is defined as the “constant and deliberate improvement of an organization’s performance and the conditions of those who work there to pursue operational excellence by design and not by accident.”	(Operational Excellence Society, 2020)	1.Continuous improvement of operational performance 2.Maintaining better partnerships
2	“Operational excellence is a mindset, philosophy and lifestyle helping organizations to constantly improve their work processes and performing better each time based on past experience and breakthrough ideas. It is fueled by distinct operational enablers and performance drivers: cost, profitability, efficiency, reliability and safety facilitated through a comprehensive system of processes aimed at making a difference in the core business”.	(Yeo, 2019)	1.Continues improvement in operational performance measures
3	‘Operational excellence involves the “organizational culture of a company,	(Aguilera & Ruíz, 2019)	1.Employee satisfaction

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	where employees have the ability to identify problems and solve them analytically.”		2.Customer satisfaction
4	“Achieving operational excellence requires the successful implementation of a business execution system that effectively and seamlessly integrates the four building blocks: strategy deployment, performance management, process excellence and high-performance work teams”	(Wurtzel, 2019)	1.Focus on the business strategy 2.Integration of resources 3.Improving operational performance
5	“Operational excellence provides tools and a framework to enable for people in the organization to operationalize the change or transformation”	(Carvalho et. al., 2017)	1.Continuous improvement of operational performance measures
6	“Operational excellence is an approach that managers follow to achieve world-class performance level by integrating their firm’s people, processes and tools”.	(Shehadeh et al., 2016a)	1.Integration of resources 2.Competitive advantages (because it targets the world class performance, to receive world class position, organizations need order winning criteria, through order winning criteria competitive advantages can be realized).
7	Operational excellence is achieved through “supreme control of assets concerning probable effects on environment and measures of safety like: reducing energy and material consumption; balancing assets availability and utilization and empowering people for their maximum performance.”	(Owusu & Sarkodie, 2016)	1.Improving operational performance measures 2. Environmental performance
8	“Operational excellence is the continuously pursuit of better performance and effectiveness in all dimension of the organization”.	(Park, 2016)	1. Improving operational performance measures

9	“Operational excellence spreads beyond the organization’s shop-floor, incorporating the whole supply chain, optimizing processes between the organization, suppliers and customers.”	(Schmiedel, vom Brocke & Uhl, 2016)	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1.Improving operational performance 2. Customer satisfaction 3. Better partnerships/ satisfaction of suppliers (suppliers)
10	“Operational excellence is not for perfection but to achieve the superior performance and profits by using a systematic approach which is focusing on people and implement the changes by involving customers, constantly innovating, operation continuous improvement and moving at optimal speed.”	(Park, 2016)	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1.Customer satisfaction 2. Continuous improvement of operational performance 3.Employee satisfaction
11	“Operational excellence is a systematic approach to achieve world-class performance in productivity, quality and delivery of services and/or products with the objective to achieve superior results, lead time and to reduce the waste.”	(Susanti, Dachyar and Yadrifi, 2015)	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Improving operational performance measures (efficiency and effectiveness) 2.Competitive advantages 3.Customer satisfaction 4. Focus on business strategy
12	“An organization’s operating excellence which linked with organizational efficiency & effectiveness is the state of any business organizations that is achieved through the development of the product and service development and distributions through the inception of continuous improvement methodologies for the satisfaction of customers”	(Ojha, 2015)	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Improving operational performance measures (efficiency, effectiveness) 2.Customer satisfaction
13	“Operational excellence emphasizes on the performance of internal operations of a company where the excellence will	(Susanti, Dachyar & Yadrifi 2015)	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1.Improving operational performance (quality,

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	prove quality improvement, flexibility improvement, delivery improvement, productivity improvement, cost and waste reduction”		flexibility, delivery, cost, waste)
14	“Operational excellence has also been described as a process where the organization or business focuses on the needs of the customers while consistently and continuously improving the current business activities being conducted in the workplace.”	(Martin, 2015)	1.Customer satisfaction 2. Continuous improvement of operational performance
15	“Operational excellence is an organizational management system that: increases the competitive edge of the business, profitability through increased efficiencies, maximizes returns from investment in assets, utilizes best practices, develops a competent and empowered work force (including leaders), strives for continuous improvement and quality & customer focused”.	(Govindsamy, 2014)	1.Competitive advantages 2.Customer satisfaction 3. Continuous improvement of operational performance
16	‘Operational excellence is both managing day to day operations with efficiency and foster continuous improvement	(Fok-Yew, 2014)	1. Improving operational performance measures (Efficiency) 2.Continuous improvement of operational performance measures
17	“Operational excellence is not only to improve quality and cost reduction, but also being smart about how to tackle people and use resources and it requires good leadership, solid change management ability, culture of continuous improvement and employees’ empowerment.”	(Fok-Yew, Ahmad & Baharin 2013)	1.Employee satisfaction 2.Continuous improvement of operational performance measures (cost, quality)
18	“Operational Excellence is the execution of the business strategy more	(Seifert & Soto, 2013)	1. Focus on the business strategy

	consistently and reliably than the competitors, with lower operational risk, lower operating costs, and increased revenues relative to its competitor.”		2.Improving operational performance measures 3.Competitive advantages
19	Operational excellence composes of conditions: “(1) unity of senior leadership in driving excellence, (2) commitment and engagement of every member of the organization, (3) clear, well defined and communicated organizational strategy (4) ongoing process improvement together with self-assessment and (5) the use of information and data analysis”	(Brown, 2013)	1.Employee satisfaction 2.Focus on the strategy 3.Continuous improvement of operational performance measures 4.Scientific decision making
20	‘Operational excellence strategically focusses on maximizing the value for customers through operations with the support of strong leadership, the power of people, the use of industry best practice and the application of value-added technologies.	(Sutton, 2012)	1.Customer satisfaction
21	Operational excellence is supported by “operational practices that focus on right first time – optimization of production processes, high efficiency – productivity, and effectiveness of processes – and customer and market orientation”	(Lu et al., 2011)	1.Improving operational performance measures 2.Customer satisfaction
22	Operational excellence is an organizational status “where each and every employee can see the flow of value to the customer and fix that flow before it breaks down.”	(Duggan, 2011)	1.Employee satisfaction 2.Customer satisfaction
23	“Operational excellence is a management system which focus to increase its competitiveness through world leading operations performance. This is achieved by integrating people, processes and tools. The gain in competitive advantage is through	(Ifeanyichukwu, 2010)	1.Competitive advantage 2.Improving operational performance measures

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	improved cash flow, return on assets and growth”.		
24	Operational excellence is a critical driver for business success and a key part of the enterprise strategy and is defined as the “systematic management of the five dimensions: process safety, environment, personal safety and health, reliability and efficiency to achieve world-class performance”.	(Watson, 2010)	1. Improving operational performance measures 2. Competitive advantages
25	‘Operational excellence is an approach to achieve “world class performance” in productivity, quality and delivery of products and services and empowers organizations to achieve a “continuous improvement culture, service excellence, customer orientation, customer satisfaction and operational efficiency”.	(Cesarotti & Spada, 2009)	1. Improving operational performance measures 2. Competitive advantages
26	“Operational excellence is about reaching the height of operational efficiency through doing things better, faster, and cheaper”.	(Russell & Koch, 2009)	1. Improving operational performance measures
27	“Operational excellence needs the dynamic capability to realize effective and efficient core processes in the value creation chain utilizing technological, cultural and organizational factors in an integrative way and based on the respective strategy.”	(Gleich & Sauter, 2008)	1. Improving operational performance measures (efficiency and effectiveness)
28	‘Operational excellence is a philosophy of “leadership, teamwork and problem solving” resulting in “continuous improvement” throughout the organization by focusing on the needs of the customer, empowering employees and optimizing existing activities in the process’	(Liker, 2004)	1. Continues improvement of operational performance measures (efficiency and effectiveness) 2. Customer satisfaction 3. Employee satisfaction (empowerment of

			employees)
29	“Operational excellence strategies support business strategies of overall cost leadership through total cost reduction, efficient and reliable supply, and high levels of basic service”	(Morash, 2001)	1.Improving operational performance measures (cost, efficiency, reliability) 2.Competitive advantages (through cost leadership)
30	‘Operational excellence requires “4 Ps: excellent people, who establish excellent partnerships (with suppliers, customers and society) in order to achieve excellent processes (key business processes and management processes) to produce excellent products, which are able to delight the customers.”	(Dahlgaard & Dahlgaard, 1999)	1.Customer satisfaction 2.Employee satisfaction 3.Improving operational performance measures 4. Maintaining better partnerships
31	“A specific strategic approach to the production and delivery of products and services which seeks ways to minimize overhead costs, to eliminate intermediate production steps, reduce transaction and other friction costs, and to optimize business processes across functional and organizational boundaries with the aim of delivering the products or services to customers at competitive prices and with minimal inconvenience”.	(Wiersema & Treacy, 1993)	1.Improving operational performance measures (Cost, Efficiency) 2.Competitive advantages 3.Customer satisfaction
32	‘Operational excellence is defined as the “strategy organizations use to deliver quality, price, ease of purchase and service in such a manner that no other organization in the industry or sector can match.”	(Wiersema & Treacy, 1993)	1.Competitive advantages 2. Improving operational performance measures (efficiency, effectiveness)

Performing content analysis for 32 definitions and interview records of 30 experts on operational excellence (OE), the researchers identified nine themes that comprised in the construct ‘operational excellence’. Table 2 summarizes these key themes mentioning the relevant

researchers/authors/practitioners/professional organizations and number of interviewees who emphasized the particular theme.

Table 2: Summary of Key Themes of Operational Excellence Definitions

No	Key themes	Authors/researchers/practitioners of the definition and interviewees
1	Continuous improvement of operational performance (measures)	-(Yeo, 2019; Fok-Yew, 2014; Liker, 2004; Carvalho et al., 2017; Brown, 2013; Operational Excellence Society, 2020; Fok-Yew et al., 2013; Govindsamy, 2014; Martin, 2015; Park, 2016) -21 Interviewees out of 30 interviewees
2	Environmental performance	-(Owusu & Sarkodie, 2016) -10 Interviewees out of 30 interviewees
3	Improvement of operational performance	-(Morash, 2001; Wiersema & Treacy, 1993; Ojha, 2015; Russell & Koch, 2009; Fok-Yew, 2014; Cesarotti & Spada, 2009; Park, 2016; Lu et al., 2011; Watson, 2010; Seifert & Soto, 2013; Gleich & Sauter, 2008; Dahlgaard & Dahlgaard, 1999; Susanti et al., 2015; Wiersema & Treacy, 1993; Schmiedel et al., 2016; Susanti et al., 2015; Wurtzel, 2019; Owusu & Sarkodie, 2016) -25 Interviewees
4	Integration of resources/capabilities	-(Shehadeh et al., 2016; Wurtzel, 2019) -14 Interviewees
5	Deriving sustainable competitive advantages	-(Morash, 2001; Wiersema & Treacy, 1993; Shehadeh et al., 2016; Ifeanyichukwu, 2010; Cesarotti & Spada, 2009; Watson, 2010; Seifert & Soto, 2013; Susanti et al., 2015; Wiersema & Treacy, 1993; Govindsamy, 2014) -26 Interviewees
6	Focus on the business strategy	-(Seifert & Soto, 2013; Susanti et al., 2015; Brown, 2013; Wurtzel, 2019) -22 Interviewees
7	Employee satisfaction	-(Liker, 2004; Duggan, 2011.; Aguilera & Ruiz, 2019; Dahlgaard & Dahlgaard, 1999; Brown, 2013; Yew et al., 2013; Park, 2016) -12 Interviewees
8	Customer satisfaction	-(Wiersema & Treacy, 1993; Ojha, 2015; Liker, 2004; Lu et al., 2011; Duggan, 2011.; Sutton, 2011; Aguilera & Ruiz, 2019; Dahlgaard & Dahlgaard, 1999; Schmiedel et al., 2016; 2014; Govindsamy, 2014; Martin, 2015; Park, 2016)

		-21 Interviewees
9	Maintaining better partnerships and relationships with key stakeholders	-(Dahlgaard & Dahlgaard, 1999; Susanti et al., 2015; Operational Excellence Society, 2020; Schmiedel et al., 2016) -12 Interviewees

Base on the consensus of experts in focus group interview, these nine themes were further summarized into three themes as follows.

1. Continuous improvement of sustainable operational performance measures
2. Deriving sustainable competitive advantages
3. Implementation of the operation strategy consistently and reliably ensuring the involvement and satisfaction of employees, suppliers, customers and other stakeholders

Finally, the researchers determined these three themes as the key attributes of the construct of OE.

Most Suitable Theory/Theories to Explain the Construct Operational Excellence

Currently, a well-established theory is not available for explaining operational excellence construct Saeed et al. 2020; Wahab et al. 2019a; Boya & Rao 2019; Ahmad et al. 2018; Boya & Rao, 2018). Refers to existing studies on operational excellence (OE) from 2005 to 2020, the Scientific Management Theory (Urlick, Adams & Smith, 2017), Transformational Leadership Theory (Sriyakul et al., 2019; Ahmad et al., 2018; Fok-Yew & Ahmad, 2014) and Resource Based Theory (Wahab, Ismail & Muhayiddin, 2019a; Fok-Yew & Ahmad, 2014) were identified as the frequently used theories in OE research context.

The focus of Scientific Management Theory is to increase the productivity within an organization by increasing the productivity of the individuals. The theory focuses on repetitive, routine tasks - rather than dynamic, problem-solving activities for improving productivity. Even though other researchers utilized the Scientific Management Theory in the operational excellence context, the researchers concluded that the Scientific Management Theory is not sufficient to explain the construct operational excellence. Because it does not focus on the key themes/attributes of the concept of operational excellence like: continuous improvement of the operational performance, sustainable competitive advantages and satisfaction of the employees, customers and other

stakeholders, but its sole focus is to improve efficiency. Nevertheless, being efficient is only one condition for operational excellence.

The Transformational Leadership Theory has been employed by some researchers in the operational excellence research context. The ideal target of transformational leadership is to create a valuable and positive change in the followers with the ultimate goal of developing followers into leaders. Here, the researchers conclude that Transformational Leadership Theory also not sufficient to explain operational excellence since its primary concern is to make a positive change of the followers for improving the performance. Leadership has been identified as an essential antecedent of operational excellence. Thus, this theory is suitable to explain the antecedents of operational excellence but not the attributes of operational excellence.

The Resource-Based Theory is an extensively accepted theory of competitive advantages and superior firm performance, primarily explaining how the company's internal resources contribute to developing competitive advantages and superior firm performance (Spanos & Lioukas, 2001) while ensuring employees' and customers' satisfaction. The Resource-Based Theory focuses on improving superior performance, achieving competitive advantages while delighting employees and customers. When analyzing the key attributes of operational excellence: continuous improvement of operational performance, competitive advantages and employee & customer satisfaction, the RBT can be identified as the most suitable theory for explaining operational excellence because the aims of the RBT and operational excellence are going in the same direction. According to the key assumptions of the RBT, organizations can achieve competitive advantages only when the resources of that particular organization are rich in the conditions: heterogeneity and immobility (Spanos & Lioukas, 2001). The assumption of heterogeneous means that 'skills, capabilities and other resources which an organization possess differ from one organization to another. Then, the assumption immobility means that resources do not transfer from one organization to another, in short-run. Thus, it assumes that competitors cannot imitate company's resources & strategies in the short run. As per these assumptions, an organization can receive competitive advantages since the heterogeneity is long lasting when the resources immobility is fulfilled (Spanos & Lioukas, 2001).

Then, providing an extension for the RBT, Barney (1991) argued that

heterogeneous and immobile resources alone is not enough to achieve competitive advantage and introduced the VRIN framework (that scrutinizes whether resources are valuable, rare, costly to imitate and non-substitutable), which describes the characteristics, resources should possess in order to enable competitive advantages. According to this model, ‘valuable, rare, imperfectly imitable and non-substitutable resources generate the sustainable competitive advantage. The ‘value’ of resources involves the ability of the resource to defuse threats and support the company to internalize opportunities in the business environment, i.e., a resource is valuable if it empowers a company to articulate and implement strategies that improve productivity. The rareness of a resource implies that rivals do not have access to a particular resource or have minimal access. Resources are concerned as inimitable if those particular resources can’t be obtained from competing businesses. If an ideal resource cannot substitute by any other resource, that particular resource is considered as not substitutable. Here, the value and rarity of resources are essential requirements for reaching competitive advantages. However, resources should be inimitable and not substitutable for accomplishing sustainable competitive advantages (Barney, 1991).

The New Definition for the Construct Operational Excellence

Aligning the theoretical principles of RBT and identified attributes the researchers defined the construct operational excellence as follows.

“Achieving the continuous improvement of sustainable operational performance and sustainable competitive advantages through the utilization of resources which are valuable, rare, costly to imitate and non-substitutable in a manner upholding the satisfaction of employees, customers, suppliers and other important stakeholders”.

For ensuring the validity of the new definition, it was presented to three moderators who possessed a sound knowledge of operational excellence. Based on the given comments of the moderators, the above definition was finalized as follows.

“Utilization of valuable, rare, costly to imitate and non-substitutable resources and capabilities to execute the operations strategy consistently and reliably as the organization can achieve: a continuous improvement of the sustainable operational performance and sustainable competitive advantages while upholding the satisfaction of employees, customers, suppliers and other important stakeholders”.

Interpretation of the New Construct Definition of Operational Excellence and Identification of Key Dimensions of the Construct Operational Excellence

The new definition for operational excellence developed by the researchers focuses on the process perspective. Accordingly, key inputs for operational excellence involve the valuable, rare, costly to imitate and non-substitutable resources and capabilities. Here, the 'value' of a resources/capabilities involves the ability of the resource to defuse threats and support the company to internalize opportunities in the business environment, i.e., a resource is valuable if it empowers a company to articulate and implement strategies that improve the productivity. The rareness of a resource implies that rivals do not have access to a particular resource or have minimal access. As per the theory, valuable resources which are not rare will not generate competitive advantages. For achieving competitive advantages, a resource should be both valuable and rare. Though it does not mean that valuable, but not rare resources are useless to a company. A company will undergo competitive disadvantages in the absence of exploit valuable resources (Barney & Clark, 2007). Resources are concerned as inimitable if those particular resources cannot be obtained from competing businesses. If an ideal resource cannot substitute by any other resource, that particular resource is considered as not substitutable. Here, the value and rarity of resources are essential requirements for reaching competitive advantages. However, resources should be inimitable and not substitutable for accomplishing sustainable competitive advantages (Barney, 1991).

The key outputs involve the continuous improvement of sustainable operational performance and sustainable competitive advantages, here continuous improvement of sustainable operational performance' refers to continuously improving the operational performance, which addresses the triple bottom lines performance: the economic, social and environmental performance. Then sustainable competitive advantages refer, the company should receive the competitive advantages continuously. Whereas, inputs should be converted into outputs, ensuring the satisfaction of employees, customers and other essential stakeholders while aligning with the existing operations strategy of the company consistently and reliably. Executing the operations strategy consistently and reliability' involves that operations strategy should be implemented a defined or intended way continuously. Thus, the organization should improve sustainable operational performance and sustainable competitive advantages by implementing the defined operations strategy by the strategic/top management. In other words, the company's defined operations strategy works as a constraint for the operational excellence efforts.

Some attributes in the definition like: implementation of operations strategy consistently and continuously and employee, customer and other essential stakeholder satisfaction includes within the dimension operational performance (Filippini et al., 1998). Thus, to represent all these attributes the dimension continuous improvement of operational performance is suggested by the experts in the focus group interview. While sustainable competitive advantages were proposed as the other dimension of the construct operational excellence. Actually, these two dimensions are the output attributes of this new definition.

Operational Excellence vs. Organizational Excellence

Operational excellence is connected with the operations strategy. It is achieved by implementing the operations strategy. Therefore, operations strategy is the crucial point to differentiate operational excellence and organizational excellence. Organizational excellence is achieved through implementing the organizational strategy. Thus, organizational excellence targets at the organizational level, while operational excellence targets at the operational level. The term ‘organizational excellence’ focuses on attaining excellence in the whole things that an organization does, counting business results, leadership, strategy, customer focus, information management, people and processes (Mann, Mohammad & Agustin, 2012). Meanwhile, as characterized by the European Foundation for Quality Management (EFQM), organizational/business excellence means accomplishing business results through outstanding practices of business management, aligning with eight crucial concepts: “results orientation, customer focus, leadership & consistency of purpose, management by processes & facts, people development & involvement, continuous learning, innovation & improvement, partnership development and public responsibility” (European Foundation for Quality Management - EFQM, 2013). Thus, the emphasis on organizational/business excellence is much broader than focusing on a single area, function, process or operation of an organization. In achieving organizational/business excellence, being operationally excellent is a crucial requirement. If the organization could be excellent in all the operations, the destination of organizational excellence is smoothly arrived (Goswami, 2017).

Comparison of the New Definition with the Existing Definitions of Operational Excellence

According to Wurtzel (2019), accomplishing operational excellence (OE) requires “integrating strategy deployment, performance management, process

excellence and elite work teams". He has emphasized the essence of integration of strategy, process and people for achieving OE. However, this definition lacks the most crucial output attributes of OE: competitive advantages and continuous improvement of sustainable operational performance. Cesarotti & Spada (2009) defined, that OE enables an enterprise and its leadership to continuously improve performance through proper decision-making, ongoing investment, customer services and human resources capabilities. Nevertheless, their definition has given less attention to the attribute 'sustainable competitive advantages. Yeo (2019) defines OE as a mindset, philosophy, and lifestyle that helps organizations endlessly advance their processes and perform better every time based on experience and breakthrough ideas. However, this definition also has missed the attribute, competitive advantages. According to Yeo (2019), performance measures: cost, profitability, efficiency, reliability and safety are targeted through the OE and inclusive system of processes which creates a difference in the core business are essential for improving these measures. This definition also has given less attention to competitive advantages. In addition, Fok-Yew (2014) has defined operational excellence as an approach to managing day to day operations with efficiency and foster continuous improvement. Though this definition focuses on operational efficiency and continuous operational performance improvement, the importance of competitive advantages has been missed.

Russell & Koch (2009) outlines, OE is about attaining a higher level of operational efficiency through doing things better, faster, and cheaper. Here, the sole focus is given on operational efficiency and attributes: continuous improvement of operational performance and sustainable competitive advantages are lacking. Ojha (2015) defines that OE is a function of organizational efficiency and effectiveness. The weakness of this definition is poor focus on the attributes: competitive advantages and continuous improvement of operational performance. Owusu and Sarkodie (2016) view that organizations can accomplish OE through maximum utilization of assets while concerning on the natural environment and health and safety measures. This definition has concerned environmental and social aspects as critical attribute of OE. But the weakness is poor focus on the essential attributes: competitive advantages and continuous operational performance improvement. Shehadeh et al. (2016) introduced OE as an approach that is followed to achieve a world-class performance level by integrating the people, processes and tools. However, focus on the attributes: sustainable competitive advantages and

continuous improvement of operational performance are lacking in this definition as well.

Govindsamy (2014) perceives operational excellence as an organizational management system that raises the business's competitive edge through increased efficiencies, higher returns on investment in best practices, a capable and empowered workforce, continuous improvement, and focus on quality and customer. Nevertheless, less focus has been given on the importance of implementing operational activities aligning with the operations strategy, which represents the organizational strategy. Meanwhile, as Seifert and Soto (2013) describe, operational excellence means the consistent and reliable execution of the business strategy than the competitors. Here consistently and reliably denotes that the execution of the business strategy should happen on the projected way, continuously. However, this definition has given less attention to the continuous improvement of operational performance and does not mention the way of execution and what type of resources are used to execute the operations strategy.

According to Morash (2001), operational excellence strategies facilitate overall cost leadership through total cost reduction, efficient and reliable supply, and high basic service levels. In this definition, the focus has been given only to cost leadership, which is one of the requirements to achieve operational excellence, and most of the essential attributes of operational excellence are not represented. Wiersema and Treacy (1993) defined, OE as an exact strategic approach to the production and delivery of products and services, to eliminate intermediate production steps, reduce transaction and other friction costs, and optimize business processes across functional and organizational boundaries to deliver the products/services to customers at a competitive price. They have given the priority only to the production & delivery efficiency and competitive prices. Nevertheless, this definition has given a less concern on the effectiveness, continuous improvement, and being consistent with the operations strategy. Park (2016) defined operational excellence as the continuous search for better performance and effectiveness in all organizations' dimensions. As per this definition, the main focus of operational excellence is the continuous improvement of organizational performance. However, this definition has failed to address the attributes: competitive advantages and strategic consistency. While, Liker (2004) considered operational excellence as a philosophy of leadership, teamwork and problem solving resulting in continuous improvement

throughout the organization by focusing on the customer's needs, empowering employees and optimizing existing activities in the process. However, this definition has given a less attention to the competitive advantages and strategic consistency. Lu, Betts, and Croom (2011), defined that operational excellence is supported by operational practices that focus on the right first time, optimization of production processes, high efficiency, productivity & effectiveness of processes and customer & market orientation. As per their definition, operational excellence is achieved through operational practices of the organization, and key outcomes are quality, productivity and customer satisfaction. Nevertheless, this definition has failed to address the most important attributes: competitive advantages, strategic consistency, and continuous operational performance improvement.

According to Duggan (2011), operational excellence is an organizational status where “every employee can see the flow of value to the customer and fix that flow before it breaks down”. Even though this definition is less operationalized, at a glance, this definition means that operational excellence can be achieved mainly through satisfied internal employees. However, for operational excellence, other attributes like focus on continuous improvement of operational performance, aligning with operational strategy and competitive advantages are also important. As per Sutton (2011), operational excellence strategically focuses on maximizing the value for customers through operations with the support of strong leadership, the power of people, the use of industry best practice, and the application of value-add technologies. Here, Sutton mentions that customer satisfactions is the main aim of OE and continuous improvement of operational performance, aligning with operational strategy and competitive advantages are mistreated. Gleich and Sauter (2008) stated that dynamic capabilities and integration of technological, cultural & organizational factors as the key inputs and efficiency & effectiveness as the key output of operational excellence. However, this definition does not focus on the attributes: continuous improvement of the operational performance and competitive advantages. As per Aguilera and Ruiz (2019), operational excellence involves a company's organizational culture, where employees can identify problems and solve them analytically to satisfy the customers. However, this definition has overlooked on the continuous improvement of operational performance and competitive advantages. As defined by Carvalho et al. (2017), operational excellence provides tools and a framework to enable people to operationalize the change or transformation. As per this definition, the key outcome of operational excellence

is change or transformation. This definition is impossible to explain the nature of the transformation that should be happened. Also, the definition lacks most of the attributes: competitive advantages, continuous improvement of operational performance and consistency with the strategy. Dahlgaard and Dahlgaard-Park (1999) explains that OE targets the integration among employees, external partnerships (customers, suppliers, society), processes and products to ultimately satisfy the external customers. Nevertheless, they have overlooked on the competitive advantages and continuous improvement of operational performance.

According to Susanti, Dachyar and Yadrifi (2015), operational excellence is a systematic approach to achieve world-class performance in productivity, quality and delivery of services and products to achieve superior results, lead time and reduce waste. Essentially, as this definition emphasizes, the key outcomes of operational excellence are the productivity, quality and status of distribution. However, the definition shows some repetitive terms because the term productivity included the term quality also. Further, the definition has not focused on competitive advantages and continuous improvement of operational performance. As stated by Brown, (2013), organizational leadership, clear organizational strategy, employee engagement, continuous improvement and scientific decision making are the main conditions of OE. This definition emphasizes the antecedents or conditions that affect operational excellence rather than the outcomes of the operational excellence. As stated by Operational Excellence Society, 2020, operational excellence is the constant and deliberate improvement of an organization's performance and the conditions of those who work there to pursue operational excellence by design and not by accident. This definition has equalized operational excellence with organizational excellence. Providing a broader concern on OE, Schmiedel, Brocke, and Uhl (2016) stated that OE spreads beyond the organization's shop-floor, incorporating the whole supply chain, optimizing processes among the organization, suppliers and customers. Here the short come is poor focus on the output attributes: competitive advantages, continuous improvement of operational performance, employee and customer satisfaction. According to Susanti, Dachyar, & Yadrifi (2015), OE stresses an organization's internal operations in terms of quality, flexibility, delivery, productivity, cost, and waste. As per their explanation, OE has a narrow focus only on the internal operational performance measures and it neglects the competitive advantages and continuous improvement of operational performance. Martin (2015) explained that OE is a process in which the

organization or business focuses on the customers' needs while consistently and continuously improving the current business activities being conducted in the workplace. This definition has neglected the importance of competitive advantages solely focusing on customer satisfaction and the continuous improvement of operational performance. As Park (2016) stated superior performance and profit is the key concerns of the operational excellence and it is achieved through customer involvement, innovations, change management and continuous improvement. Here focus on competitive advantages is not clear because sometimes superior performance means being good compared to the previous period.

Conclusion

The main aim of the current study was to develop a comprehensive construct definition for operational excellence and identify the most suitable dimensions of this construct and determine the most suitable theoretical domain of OE. Continuous improvement of sustainable operational performance measures, deriving sustainable competitive advantages and implementation of the operation strategy consistently and reliably ensuring the involvement and satisfaction of employees, suppliers, customers and other stakeholders were the main themes that were identified through existing operational excellence definitions, expert interviews, and focus group interviews. Thus, the researchers concluded these three themes as the key attributes of the concept of operational excellence. Refers to these attributes, the Resource-Based Theory (RBT) was concluded as the most applicable theory (theoretical lens) for explaining the construct operational excellence. The new construct definition of operational excellence was developed as, "utilization of valuable, rare, costly to imitate and non-substitutable resources & capabilities to execute the operations strategy consistently and reliably as the organization can achieve: a continuous improvement of the sustainable operational performance and sustainable competitive advantages while upholding the satisfaction of employees, customers, suppliers and other important stakeholders". Ultimately, the researchers concluded that continuous improvement of the sustainable operational performance and sustainable competitive advantages as the two main dimensions of the construct operational excellence.

Declaration of Conflicting Interests

The authors declared no potential conflicts of interest with respect to the research, authorship, and publication of this article.

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Green Manufacturing Practices and Sustainable Performance of Organization in Selected Manufacturing Companies in Kegalle District of Sri Lanka

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Abstract

This study aims to examine the impact of green manufacturing practices on sustainable performance of organization. In order to achieve the study objective, primary data were collected through a questionnaire-based survey among 70 manufacturing companies which are operating in Kegalle district of Sri Lanka. This study has used the convenience sampling (availability sampling) method and the unit of analysis was individual firms. The simple regression analysis was used to test the research model. The findings of the study revealed that there is a moderate level of green manufacturing practices implemented in the selected manufacturing companies and sustainable performance of surveyed companies was recorded at in moderate level. And the findings of the study also suggested that green manufacturing practices have a significant and positive impact on sustainable performance of organization. This study suggested that manufacturing organizations need to focus more on the implementation of green manufacturing practices to ensure organizational sustainability.

Keywords: *Green manufacturing, sustainable performance, Sri Lanka*

Introduction

The prominence of sustainability has risen as a result of economic globalization, increasing social and environmental awareness, media attention, and pressure

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from a variety of stakeholder groups. Thus, the world has been making progress towards sustainable development. According to Opatha (2019, p. 3), sustainability is defined as “deliberate constant endeavour to utilize human and other resources, and natural environment to meet needs of current human beings as well as non-human beings while maintaining and if possible enhancing human and other resources, and natural environment to meet needs of future human beings and non-human beings.” In recent years, sustainability has become one of the primary objectives of organizations in order to become the contributors to sustainable development. Organizational sustainability is operationalized based on the triple bottom line (TBL) framework which includes three performance dimensions, namely, economic, social and environmental performance (Willard, 2002). As a result, contemporary organizations need to focus equally on environmental and social performance in addition to economic performance in order to ensure organizational sustainability. Organizations have faced pressure from stakeholders to adopt environmentally friendly business practices to boost sustainability. Thus, several organizations respond to this issue by applying several green practices such as green management, green human resource management, green accounting, green marketing, etc. to reduce their ecological footprint and satisfy their stakeholders.

Manufacturing industries are critical to a country's economic development. In this perspective, the Sri Lankan manufacturing sector also makes a significant contribution to the country's economic progress (Central Bank Annual Report, 2020). According to a report published by the United Nations Environmental Programme (UNEP) in 2011, the manufacturing industry is responsible for 20% of global carbon dioxide emissions and accounts for about 35% of global electricity use. Furthermore, the manufacturing industry presently accounts for roughly 10% of global water consumption, with this figure predicted to rise to over 20% by 2030. Moreover, the risks connected with the use of hazardous chemicals are growing as the industry grows in new markets. Furthermore, industrial businesses are responsible for 17% of all air pollution. In this context, manufacturing organizations are in a big necessity to maintain a solid commitment to green manufacturing which provides the long-standing assurance for organizational sustainability.

Researchers discovered that manufacturers may be able to reduce negative environmental effects and resource consumption throughout a product's life cycle (Liu, Zheng, & Cheng, 1999; Melngk & Smith 1996). Furthermore,

manufacturers utilize green manufacturing processes and procedures to save energy and resources, mitigate potentially dangerous waste via reuse and recycling, and avoid contamination at the source (Inman & Green, 2018). In addition to that, the adaptation of green manufacturing practices supports companies to align with environmental laws and regulations imposed by the governments and regulatory bodies and contribute to establishing the image as the greener organizations (Zhu & Sarkis, 2004). Due to these benefits, manufacturing organizations strive to adopt green manufacturing practices to gain a sustainable competitive advantage. A study conducted by Rehman, Seth and Shrivastava (2016) in the Indian context regarding green manufacturing practices indicated that prior research works in green manufacturing practices mostly come under conceptual work and has limited empirical studies. They also pointed out that available research works did not cover the entire spectrum of green manufacturing and they over served missing links among them.

In recent years, an increasing number of researchers have added to our knowledge of green manufacturing (Govindan et al., 2014; Chuang & Yang, 2014; Yu & Ramanathan, 2015; Inman & Green, 2018; Yacob et al., 2018; Mao & Wang, 2018; Afum et al., 2020a; Afum et al., 2020b). In this context, researchers link the relationship between green manufacturing practices and sustainability performance in an organizational context (Afum et al., 2020a; Afum et al., 2020b). Moreover, most empirical studies on the association between green manufacturing practices and organizational sustainable performance have focused on manufacturing companies in developed nations (Zhan et al., 2018). However, only a few research studies were conducted in the Sri Lankan context in connection with green manufacturing (e.g., Kalhari, et al., 2019) and green supply chain management practices (e.g., Priyashani and Gunarathne, 2021). As the consequence of the high environmental challenges such as climate change, depletion of forest cover, land degradation, solid waste disposal, including non-degradable and e-waste, threats to wildlife, coastal erosion, air pollution, and pollution of water bodies, Sri Lanka has a strong need to focus on developing a sustainable development policy framework (Central Bank Annual Report, 2020), which provoked and stimulated the necessity of Sri Lankan manufacturing companies to pay more attention on their sustainability performance as they significantly contribute to environmental pollution compared to other sectors. On other hand, previous studies did not focus on the linked between green manufacturing practices and sustainability performance in Sri Lankan context. In this context, there is a need to explore more on the link

between green manufacturing practices and sustainable performance theoretically and empirically. Moreover, anecdotal evidences revealed that a very few research works are available in this area in Sri Lanka. Therefore, researchers are intended to carry out this study because Sri Lankan manufacturing companies strive to align the environmental sustainability agenda to the guidelines set out by international and local organizations, such as the United Nations Global Compact (UNGC), Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design (LEED) and Central Environmental Authority of Sri Lanka. On the other hand, in general, the same sector has been treated as one of the major contributors to air, water, and earth pollution compared to other sectors.

Hence, these issues and empirical knowledge gap in the context of Sri Lanka evident that the association between green manufacturing practices and sustainable (environmental economic and social) performance of manufacturing organizations remain an unexplored area of research. Thus, in order to address the identified empirical knowledge gap, the current study was initiated with two research objectives. Therefore, this research will be useful to managers and practitioners, particularly in Sri Lanka. In light of these facts, researchers carried out this study to examine the impact of green manufacturing practices on sustainable performance of organization.

Research Objectives

1. To find out the levels of green manufacturing practices and sustainable performance of the selected manufacturing companies in the Kegalle district of Sri Lanka.
2. To examine the impact of green manufacturing practices on sustainable performance of the selected manufacturing companies in the Kegalle district of Sri Lanka.

Literature Review

Green Manufacturing

The concept of green manufacturing has gained tremendous popularity across the world. Green manufacturing is totally in contrast to traditional manufacturing, which aims to protect the natural environment via adopting green manufacturing practices and initiatives. Manufacturing firms began to apply green manufacturing techniques with the launch of ISO 14001 in 1996 to ensure regulatory compliance as well as obtain a competitive edge (Govindan et al., 2014). Environmental measures worldwide, green development trends, and

fierce industrial rivalry all push businesses to implement green manufacturing methods as quickly as possible (Chuang & Yang 2014). Many manufacturing companies seek certification for their environmental management systems (EMS) to show governments, consumers, suppliers, and other stakeholders that they have embraced green manufacturing practices (Mao & Wang, 2018). EMS certification can be considered as a reward for the company's environmental concern and efforts.

According to Melngk and Smith (1996, p. 60), green manufacturing referred as “a system that integrates product and process design issues with issues of manufacturing planning and control in such a manner as to identify, quantify, assess, and manage the flow of environmental waste with the goal of reducing and ultimately minimizing environmental impact while also trying to maximize resource efficiency”. Further, Srivastava (2007), defined green manufacturing as environmentally friendly manufacturing processes and activities that cover the entire stages or phases of manufacturing operations of an organization. According to Hofer et al. (2012), green manufacturing referred to all the environmental management initiatives which are practiced by an organization during the manufacturing operations in order to satisfy the internal and external stakeholders as well as to achieve competitive advantages. Green manufacturing is considered as the use of environmentally friendly and more efficient input materials during the production process in order to reduce or eliminate negative environmental impacts (Ghazilla et al., 2015). According to Toke and Kalpande (2019), green manufacturing is about minimizing negative environmental impacts by reducing toxins, waste, pollution, best use of input raw materials and energy by implementing end of life, cradle to cradle and close loop approaches. Based on the above definitions, researchers defined green manufacturing as the set of green policies, practices, and systems connected with the company's manufacturing processes to reduce the negative environmental impacts and enhance the positive environmental impacts.

Sustainable Performance of Organization

According to Opatha (2019, p. 3), organizational sustainability is defined as the “deliberate consent endeavour to utilize human and other resources, and natural environment to meet needs of current stakeholders of the organization while maintaining and if possible enhancing human and other resources, and natural environment to meet needs of future stakeholders”. Therefore, the Triple Bottom Line (People, Planet and Profit) is considered the valid framework to

measure the organization's sustainable performance. Sustainable performance guarantees that businesses achieve a comprehensive balance of economic, environmental, and social performances. In this climate, a rising number of businesses appear inclined to disclose their economic, social, and environmental sustainability performance (Schaltegger & Wagner, 2006). This is reinforced by the expansion of reporting standards, such as the global reporting initiatives (Ehnert et al., 2016).

The following definitions for the economic, social, and environmental performance of sustainable organizations are provided in order to achieve the study objectives:

Economic performance of an organization relates to its profitability and growth (Judge and Douglas, 1998). Social performance refers to the actual achievement of the organization in terms of increasing and sustaining the quality and standard of life without ignoring environmental concerns and protection (Yusuf et al., 2013).

Manufacturing businesses achieve environmental performance by minimizing solid and water waste, reducing carbon emissions, reducing the usage of contaminated and toxic inputs, reducing the frequency of environmental accidents, and minimizing the entire environmental effect of their operations (Centobelli et al., 2019; Çankaya and Sezen, 2019).

The Relationship between Green Manufacturing Practices and Environmental Performance

Manufacturing organizations bear a great responsibility to adapt green manufacturing practices to serve the natural environment. A number of environmental specialists have emphasized the need of green manufacturing in achieving environmental performance (Govindan et al., 2014; Afum et al., 2020a; Afum et al., 2020b). Manufacturing companies may improve their environmental performance by improving the quality of their eco-friendly products, developing green processes and products, and incorporating green environmental concerns into their operations (Singh et al., 2020). In general, green manufacturing practices highly contribute to reduce energy consumption and manage CO_2 emissions, pollutants, and wastes will have a beneficial impact on environmental performance (Evans et al., 2009; Duflou, et al., 2012). Thus, green manufacturing can be considered as the powerful predictor environmental performance of the organization. Further, green supply chain management treated as the dimension of green manufacturing substantially impacts

environmental performance (Kalyar et al., 2019). Contemporary manufacturing organizations strive to invest more in green manufacturing practices to comply with local environmental laws and regulations, minimize pollution, and keep environmental risks at the bottom level during the production process (Mao & Wang 2018). In general, manufacturing organizations can mitigate air, water, and earth pollution by adopting green manufacturing practices such as energy conservation practices, water conservation practices, earth conservation practices, etc. Based on the above arguments it is possible to conclude that green manufacturing practices are significantly and positively influences on the environmental performance of organizations.

H₁: Green manufacturing practices are significantly and positively influences on the environmental performance of organizations.

The Relationship between Green Manufacturing Practices and Economic Performance

According to Roy and Khastagir (2016), manufacturing companies that successfully employ green manufacturing techniques make more profit and perform better economically. Researchers revealed that green manufacturing has the ability to produce the economic outcomes (e.g., profitability, market share and productivity) and operational outcomes (e.g., cost reduction, improved order delivery and flexibility, and improved product quality) (Carter, Kale, and Grimm, 2000; Rao and Holt, 2005; Zhu and Sarkis, 2004; Chung and Tsai, 2007; Vachon and Klassen, 2006).

Further, green manufacturing is considered the mandatory requirements to gain environmental certificates (eg., ISO 14001) and minimize the penalties and fines of environmental violation. Furthermore, with customers' burgeoning desire to purchase green products, manufacturing companies must develop and embrace green manufacturing practices in order to meet their customers' expectations (Ghadimi et al., 2020). Green manufacturers utilize methods, practices, and techniques that use less energy and material, reuse and recycle potentially harmful waste, and prevent pollution at the source. These procedures, practices, and strategies can result in lower costs, improved production, and a better image with consumers and the community (Inman & Green, 2018).

Overall, green manufacturing ensures the optimum utilization of resources by reducing wastages, which enriches the firms' productivity and profitability. As a result, green manufacturing practices enable businesses to improve

organizational efficiency, which positively impacts financial gains (Roy & Khastagir, 2016). Furthermore, Hui, Chan, and Pun (2001) revealed that green manufacturing practices highly contribute to building customer loyalty, increasing profitability, and improving company image. Ultimately this trend leads to upscale the economic performance of the organization. According to the above literature, this review establishes that green manufacturing practices positively and significantly impact on the economic performance of organizations as the second hypothesis of this study:

H₂: Green manufacturing practices are significantly and positively influences on the economic performance of organizations.

The Relationship between Green Manufacturing Practices and Social Performance

Social performance is the method of placing an organization's vision, purpose, objectives, and social aims into action according to widely held social values aimed at the well-being of the people manufacturing companies serve (Thomas & Kumar, 2016). In this sense, some empirical studies confirmed that green manufacturing practices have a positive and significant impact on an organization's social performance. Green manufacturing practices (e.g., green product design, green production process, green supply chain management, etc.) can enhance the positive impact on society and mitigate the negative impact on society. Further, implementing green manufacturing practices paves the way to reduce threats to employees' health and the possibility of safety-related problems and contribute to creating good working conditions (Gao & Bansal, 2013).

In addition, manufacturing organizations tend to serve the health of customers through their green products. Researchers discovered a link between an organization's environmental performance and social performance (Toke & Kalpande, 2019). As green manufacturing aims to protect the natural environment, it will also enhance the organization's social performance. Green manufacturing techniques allow companies to quickly respond to stakeholder demands regarding corporate social sustainability, enhancing company reputation and competitive advantage in today's highly competitive business environment. Therefore, this review proposes the third hypothesis:

H₃: Green manufacturing practices are significantly and positively influences on the social performance of organizations.

Hence, based on the review, this paper proposes a conceptual model that shows the relationships between green manufacturing practices and the organization's sustainable performance (see Figure 1).

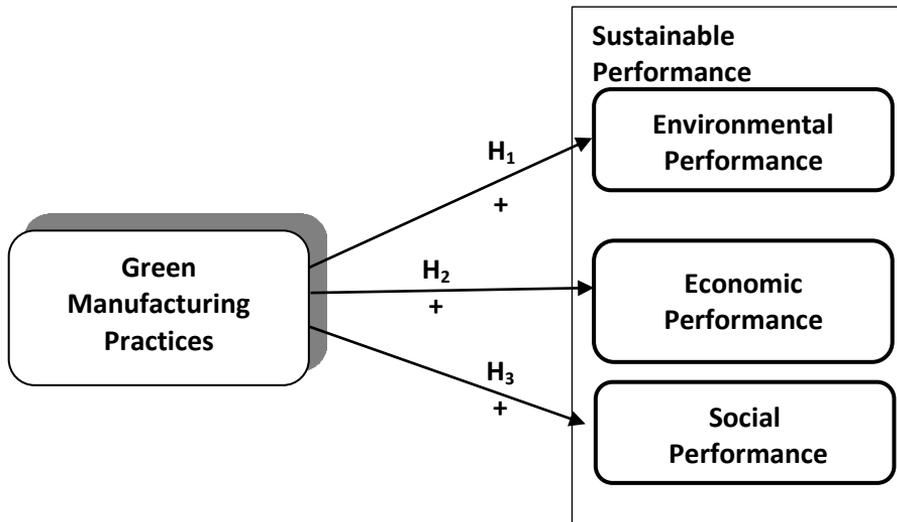


Figure 1: Conceptual Model

Method

Study Design

The industry sector of Sri Lanka is the second largest of the economy after services, and within the industry, the manufacturing sector contributed about 15.5 percent of gross domestic product (GDP) in 2020. Accordingly, the high cost of production and low-quality products are critical issues faced by local manufacturers in Sri Lanka (Central Bank Annual Report, 2018). Hence, manufacturing organizations must implement high-performance operational techniques and practices to overcome this issue. In this context, organizations strive to adapt to green manufacturing as one of the high-performance practices to ensure legal compliance, operational and environmental excellence, and gain a competitive advantage.

The study's purpose was to be analytical and predictive through testing hypotheses. The degree of researcher interference was minimal since the two variables were studied at their natural times without controlling or manipulating any of them. The research was done in the natural environment, not in an artificial environment, so the study setting was non-contrived.

The empirical data for this study were collected from manufacturing companies

in the Kegalle district of Sri Lanka as researchers unable to consider the 25 districts of Sri Lanka due to the time limitation of the study. There are 80 manufacturing companies exist in the Kegalle district of Sri Lanka. These 80 manufacturing companies are considered as the total population of this study. A total number of 80 questionnaires were distributed to manufacturing companies in Kegalle district. A total of 70 questionnaires were returned, yielding a response rate of 87.5%. Thus, 70 companies were selected as samples to conduct this research using a convenience sampling method (also known as availability sampling). The success or failure of these organizations is still primarily determined by the managers. Manufacturing managers have the appropriate competencies and right attitude regarding the green manufacturing of an organization. Therefore, this study considered operation/production manager as the unit of analysis for this study.

The study's purpose was to be analytical and predictive through testing hypotheses. The degree of researcher interference was minimal since the two variables were studied at their natural times without controlling or manipulating any of them. The research was done in the natural environment, not in an artificial environment, so the study setting was non-contrived.

This study is based on primary data. The data for this study was collected from respondents via a structured questionnaire. The questionnaire contained questions relating to green manufacturing practices and the sustainable performance of an organization.

Measures

Table 1 shows the measures of the study. The questionnaire used in this study was gathered and assembled from various validated instruments from the previous studies however some modifications were made in order to align with the context of the current study. The concept of green manufacturing practices consists of seven dimensions such as energy, air, water, material, waste, compliance and other green management practices. The concept of sustainability performance of an organization consists of three dimensions such as economic, social and environmental performance. This study has used a Five Point Likert Scale to measure the variables.

Table 1: Measures of the Study

Variable	Number of Question Items	Source
Green Manufacturing Practices 29		
Energy Management Practices (EMP)	06	Rehman and Srivastava (2011) Yacob et al. (2018);
Air Quality Management Practices (AQMP)	02	Ghadimi et al. (2020), and Zhu et al. (2008)
Water Management Practices (WMP)	04	Shang K., Lu C. and Li, S. (2010).
Material Management Practices (MMP)	05	Routroy (2009), Rehman and Srivastava (2011)
Waste Management Practices (WaMP)	05	Shang K., Lu C. and Li, S. (2010). Hofer, Cantor and Dai (2012)
Compliance Management Practices (CMP)	04	Rehman and Srivastava (2011)
Other Green Manufacturing Practices (OGMP)	03	Rehman and Srivastava (2011) Hofer, Cantor and Dai (2012)
Sustainable Performance of Organization 11		
Environmental Performance (EnP)	04	Abdul-Rashid et al. (2017) Hussain, Al-Aomar, and Melhem (2019)
Economic Performance (EP)	04	Abdul-Rashid et al. (2017) Hussain, Al-Aomar, and Melhem (2019)
Social Performance (SP)	03	Abdul-Rashid et al. (2017) Hussain, Al-Aomar, and Melhem (2019)

Reliability and Validity

Table 2 shows the Reliability and Validity of the Study. Reliability was measured using Cronbach's Alpha (Alpha values > 0.7) and composite reliability (values > 0.7). Average Variance Extracted (AVE) (values ≥ 0.5) was used to measure the convergent validity (Hair et al., 2014). All the instruments had a Cronbach's Alpha values above 0.70. Hence, the instruments had good reliability. Discriminant validity is established when all correlations between the

constructs are significantly smaller than 1 and the squared correlations calculated for each pair of constructs are always smaller than the average variance extracted for corresponding constructs (Fornell & Larcker, 1981; Hair et al., 2014), thereby confirming the discriminant validity presented in Table 3. As shown in Table 2, except for the AVE of energy, water and material management practices, all other values are over the agreed-upon lower limit. Energy, Water and Material management practices have a lower convergent validity (AVE), but still have an acceptable level of composite reliability. Convergent validity is adequate when constructs have an average variance extracted (AVE) of at least 0.5 (Chin 1998). It is noted that high value of AVE for all the constructs are good, but this is unlikely to occur in real data. More common magnitudes in the social sciences are low to moderate communalities (or AVEs) of 0.40 to 0.70. Suppose an item has an AVE (communality) of less than 0.40. In that case, it may either (a) not be related to the other items, or (b) suggest an additional factor that should be explored (Velicer and Fava 1998; Costello and Osborne 2005). A Study conducted by Wijekoon and Galahitiyawe (2016) also applied the same method in ensuring the convergent validity. Hence, the reliability and validity of the measurement are assured.

Table 2: Reliability and Validity of the Study

Variable	Reliability- Cronbach's Alpha Value	Composite Reliability	Average Variance Extracted (AVE)
Green Manufacturing Practices			
Energy Management Practices	0.845	0.84	0.48
Air Quality Management Practices	0.710	0.73	0.58
Water Management Practices	0.738	0.71	0.44
Material Management Practices	0.793	0.79	0.45
Waste Management Practices	0.781	0.83	0.53
Compliance Management Practices	0.813	0.86	0.62
Other Green Manufacturing Practices	0.891	0.88	0.72
Sustainable Performance of Organization			
Environmental	0.792	0.83	0.55

Performance

Economic Performance	0.796	0.87	0.63
Social Performance	0.887	0.89	0.74

Source: The Authors

Table 3: Discriminant Validity of the Study

	EMP	AQMP	WMP	MMP	WaMP	CMP	OGMP	EnP	EP	SP
EMP	0.48									
AQMP	0.18	0.58								
WMP	0.11	0.04	0.44							
MMP	0.05	0.00	0.27	0.45						
WaMP	0.15	0.04	0.00	0.00	0.53					
CMP	0.06	0.06	0.00	0.00	0.01	0.62				
OGMP	0.07	0.03	0.01	0.08	0.03	0.10	0.72			
EnP	0.09	0.05	0.20	0.05	0.05	0.11	0.19	0.55		
EP	0.04	0.00	0.29	0.89	0.01	0.00	0.07	0.06	0.63	
SP	0.22	0.05	0.09	0.19	0.10	0.02	0.00	0.16	0.06	0.74

Source: The Authors

Data Analysis and Techniques

Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) was used to analyse the primary data collected from the respondents. The simple regression analysis was utilized to test the functional relationships among the variables which were with regard to the three hypotheses numbering H1 to H3. *R* is the correlation coefficient between the real data points and the values predicted by the model. *R-squared* explains how much of the variation in the dependent variable is explained by the independent variables in the model. *Adjusted R-squared* is used to compensate for the addition of variable to the model. The Anova analysis provides the *f-test* value for the regression analysis. Anova analysis gives an indication of the significance of the model. If the *f* ratio is significant, the regression equation has predictive power, which means that we have at least one statistically significant variable in the model. In contrast, if the *f*-test is not significant, none of the model variables is statistically significant, and the model has no predictive power. If $P \leq 0.05$, alternate hypothesis is supported and can be used to make predictions. If $P \geq 0.05$, the alternate hypothesis is rejected (Stockemer, 2019).

Findings

Profile of the Respondents

An analysis of the descriptive statistics of the sample of valid questionnaires showed that 55.7 percent of the respondents are female and 44.3 percent are male; 60 percent of them were married, and 40 percent were single. The results also revealed that 38.6 percent of them were owners, 10 percent of them were executive officers, 32.9 percent of them were managers (Accounting and Finance, Marketing, Operations and Production), 5.7 percent of them were engineers, 10 percent of them were assistant managers and 2.8 percent of them were in the other responsible positions. All of them are aware of the concept of green manufacturing practices and sustainable performance of organization.

Data Presentation and Analysis

The first objective study was to identify the usage level of green manufacturing practices and sustainable performance of selected manufacturing companies in the Kegalle district of Sri Lanka. This study used descriptive analysis to achieve the first objective.

Table 4: Descriptive Statistics for Variables

Dimension	Mean	Standard Deviation
Energy Management Practices	2.84	0.86
Air Quality Management Practices	3.81	0.79
Water Management Practices	3.31	0.75
Material Management Practices	2.75	0.95
Waste Management Practices	3.16	0.64
Compliance Management Practices	3.37	0.97
Other Green Manufacturing Practices	2.80	1.08
Green Manufacturing Practices	3.15	0.48
Environmental Performance	3.35	0.86
Economic Performance	3.08	1.06
Social Performance	2.91	0.87
Sustainable Performance of Organization	3.11	0.68

(Note: Mean value range: $1 \leq X \leq 1.80$: Very Low, $1.80 < X \leq 2.60$: Low, $2.60 < X \leq 3.40$: Moderate, $3.40 < X < 4.20$: High, and $4.20 < X < 5.00$: Very High:
 Source: Masri and Jaaron, 2017)

(Source: Survey Data)

The variable of green manufacturing practices includes seven dimensions which

are: (1) Energy management practices, (2) Air quality management practices, (3) Water management practices, (4) Material management practices, (5) Waste management practices, (6) Compliance management practices and (7) Other green management practices. The mean, standard deviation, individual score of dimensions and mean and standard deviation for the variable are shown in Table 4. The average value of the green manufacturing practices (mean value is 3.15) indicates that selected manufacturing companies were implemented green manufacturing practices at a moderate level.

The variable of sustainable performance includes three dimensions which are: (1) Environmental performance, (2) Economic performance, and (3) Social performance. The mean, standard deviation, individual score of dimensions and mean and standard deviation for the variable are shown in Table 4. The average value of the sustainable performance (mean value is 3.11) indicates that there was a moderate level of sustainable performance recorded in surveyed companies.

The study's second objective was to examine the impact of green manufacturing practices on sustainable performance of the organization in selected manufacturing companies in the Kegalle district of Sri Lanka. Simple regression analysis was applied to test the three hypotheses related to this objective.

Test of Hypotheses (H1-H3)

Table 5: Test of Hypotheses

	H1	H2	H3
R	.563 ^a	.480 ^a	.527 ^a
R square	.317	.230	.277
Adjusted R Square	.307	.219	.267
Std. Error of the Estimate	.71684	.93264	.74796
F	31.612	20.340	26.109
Sig.	.000 ^b	.000 ^b	.000 ^b

H1: Dependent Variable: Environmental Performance Predictors: (Constant), Green Manufacturing Practices; H2: Dependent Variable: Economic Performance; Predictors: (Constant), Green Manufacturing Practices; H3: Dependent Variable: Social Performance Predictors: (Constant), Green Manufacturing Practices

Table 5 presents the R statistics as 0.563. It is empirically and statistically evident that green manufacturing practices have a strong positive and significant relationship with environmental performance. Adjusted R Square statistics indicated that the 31.7 % of the variation in the environmental performance is explained is explained by green manufacturing practices.

The f -value is 31.612 and the corresponding significance level is 0.000 which is below than 0.5. Thus, it is possible to conclude that green manufacturing practices influence on environmental performance of organization.

Table 5 presents the R statistics as 0.480. It is empirically and statistically evident that green manufacturing practices have a medium positive and significant relationship with economic performance. Adjusted R Square statistics indicated as 21.9 %. It indicates that about 21.9 percent of the variance (R Square) in the economic performance is explicated by green manufacturing practices. The f -value is 20.340 and the corresponding significance level is 0.000 which is below than 0.5. Thus, results conclude that green manufacturing practices positively and significantly positively impact on economic performance of organization.

Table 5 presents the R statistics as 0.527. It is empirically and statistically evident that green manufacturing practices have a strong positive and significant relationship with social performance. Adjusted R Square statistics indicated that the 26.7 % of the variation in the social performance is explained is explained by green manufacturing practices. The f -value is 26.109 and the corresponding significance level is 0.000 which is below than 0.5. Thus, results conclude that green manufacturing practices positively and significantly positively impact on social performance of organization. The regression analysis supported substantially to accept the three hypotheses. It is empirically and statistically evident that green manufacturing practices have positive and significant impact on environmental performance, economic performance and social performance of organization. In overall empirical findings of the study revealed that green manufacturing practices have positive and significant impact on sustainable performance of organization.

Discussion and Conclusion

The manufacturing industry has a greater obligation than other industries to demonstrate and disclose their economic, social, and environmental performance in order to ensure organizational sustainability. As a result, manufacturing firms are placing extra focus on implementing green manufacturing practices, which have a substantial impact on economic, social, and environmental outcomes. This study examines the impact of green manufacturing practices on sustainable performance of organizations in selected manufacturing companies which are operating in the Kegalle district of Sri Lanka. The study's empirical findings revealed that green manufacturing

practices are significantly and positively influence on sustainable performance of organizations (economic, social and environmental performance). In other words, green manufacturing practices have the potential to equally improve the economic, social, and environmental performance of manufacturing organizations. An empirical study conducted by Kalhari et al., (2019) also proved the same positive association between green manufacturing practices and perceived financial performance of the 36 manufacturing companies in Sri Lanka. The findings of the current study also comply with a study conducted by Sezen and Chankuaya in 2013. According to their findings, green manufacturing applications (practices) have a significant positive impact on environmental performance and social performance of the surveyed organizations in Turkey.

In this sense, green manufacturing practices support to achieve economic gains via ensuring the efficient and effective utilization of organizational resources. Further, environmental excellence is highly possible by implementing green manufacturing practices (e.g., air management practices, water management practices, energy management practices, etc.), which effectively mitigate or ensure zero water, air, and pollution. In addition, the social performance of an organization is guaranteed by the green manufacturing practices by ensuring the well-being of stakeholders who are directly or indirectly connected with the organizations (e.g., employees, customers, suppliers, government and media etc.). Therefore, as green manufacturing practices can equally contribute to the economic, social and environmental performance of organizations, they can be labelled as sustainable manufacturing practices. The findings of the study are consistent with recent studies (e.g., Toke and Kalpande, 2019; Afum et al., 2020a) which also revealed the positive and significant relationship between green manufacturing practices and sustainable performance of organizations.

Implications and Future Research Directions

The findings of this study have significant practical implications. To achieve organizational sustainability, contemporary organizations are expected to concentrate equally on economic, environmental, and social performance. More and more manufacturing companies are attempting to enhance sustainable performance via the use of relevant practices, initiatives, and processes. Green manufacturing practices can be seen as a critical tool for manufacturing companies to enhance their economic, environmental, and social performance

while ensuring their organizational sustainability. When senior management intends to enhance organizational sustainable performance, they must consider economic, environmental, and social performance equally. As the findings show, green manufacturing practices may improve economic, environmental, and social performance, all of which are necessary for greater organizational sustainable performance. As a result, managers who are adopting green manufacturing practices and want to know how green manufacturing might assist organizations attain organizational sustainability can benefit from this study. The outcomes of this research will motivate manufacturing companies' managers to develop and sustain green manufacturing practices across the Sri Lankan manufacturing sector. This research also encourages manufacturing professionals to experiment with innovative green manufacturing techniques and evaluate their effects on their companies' economic, environmental, and social performance.

This study has significant implications for research. This research makes a substantial contribution to the area of green manufacturing research. Although there have been a few studies that have looked at the content of green manufacturing in Sri Lanka, this research contributes to the body of knowledge by documenting the impact of green manufacturing techniques on economic, social, and environmental results. The study's primary objective was to examine at the influence of green manufacturing practices on the sustainable performance of organizations. This study was done to discover how green manufacturing practices help organizations improve their economic, social, and environmental performance. Therefore, the study's findings contribute to green manufacturing practices and organizational sustainability literature.

The current research is a cross-sectional study. As a result, future researchers should confirm the current findings using longitudinal designs rather than cross-sectional designs for establishing casual assumptions based on previous theory and empirical evidence. Furthermore, only a quantitative research design is used in this study. As a result, future researchers may consider gathering deeper data from respondents. The use of qualitative and quantitative methods would provide more depth and richer explanations regarding the relationship between green manufacturing practices and sustainable performance of organizations. In addition, future researchers may look at the factors that influence the deployment of green manufacturing in the industry. Furthermore, the findings' generalizability is hampered by the study's sample being limited to manufacturing companies in a selected district in Sri Lanka. Hence, future studies can be extended nationwide.

Declaration of Conflicting Interests

The authors declared no potential conflicts of interest with respect to the research, authorship, and publication of this article.

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Appendix: Questionnaire

Green Manufacturing Practices						
Energy Management Practices						
1	My firm uses low voltage and energy efficient machineries.	1	2	3	4	5
2	My firm installed LED panel.	1	2	3	4	5
3	My firm shares or provides energy saving information to employees.	1	2	3	4	5
4	My firm has moved to cloud computing in order to save energy.	1	2	3	4	5
5	My firm practices automatic sleeping systems for ICT equipments.	1	2	3	4	5
6	My firm has fixed solar panel system.	1	2	3	4	5
Air Quality Management Practices						
7	My firm has a mechanism to control or reduce noise pollution.	1	2	3	4	5
8	My firm has a mechanism to control or reduce air pollution.	1	2	3	4	5
Water Management Practices						
9	My firm uses recycled water.	1	2	3	4	5
10	My firm discharges waste water outside after filtering.	1	2	3	4	5
11	My firm has water tanks to save/stock rain water.	1	2	3	4	5
12	My firm shares or provides water saving information and knowledge to the employees.	1	2	3	4	5
Material Management Practices						
13	My firm has efficient material management systems.	1	2	3	4	5
14	My firm uses environmental friendly materials.	1	2	3	4	5
15	My firm produces goods only after taking valid orders.	1	2	3	4	5
16	My firm purchases raw materials from the suppliers who comply with green management practices.	1	2	3	4	5
17	My firm uses environmental friendly packing materials.	1	2	3	4	5
Waste Management Practices						
18	My firm categorizes waste before handing over.	1	2	3	4	5
19	My firm produces by-products from wasted or unused materials.	1	2	3	4	5
20	My firm discharges chemicals outside after applying appropriate treatment.	1	2	3	4	5
21	My firm practices 'green travelling' program.	1	2	3	4	5
22	My firm practices the concepts of reduce, reuse, and recycle.	1	2	3	4	5
Compliance Management Practices						
23	My firm develops green behavior among employees, suppliers, and customers.	1	2	3	4	5
24	My firm has achieved certain ISO certifications such as	1	2	3	4	5

GREEN MANUFACTURING PRACTICES AND SUSTAINABLE PERFORMANCE OF
ORGANIZATION IN SELECTED MANUFACTURING COMPANIES IN KEGALLE DISTRICT OF SRI
LANKA

	ISO 9001, ISO 22000, ISO 14001 and ISO 50001					
25	My firm has sound green or environmental management systems and policies.	1	2	3	4	5
26	My firm compliance with global/national green/environmental rules and regulations.	1	2	3	4	5
Other Green Manufacturing Practices						
27	My firm collaborates with organizations for develop green practices among society or community.	1	2	3	4	5
28	My firm has engaged in getting eco-friendly business certifications.	1	2	3	4	5
29	My firm conducts green vision programs among the employees.	1	2	3	4	5
Sustainability Performance						
Environment Performance						
30	My firm has reduced CO ₂ emission.	1	2	3	4	5
31	My firm has reduced water usage.	1	2	3	4	5
32	My firm has reduced energy consumption.	1	2	3	4	5
33	My firm has improved compliance with environmental standards when compared with last year.	1	2	3	4	5
Economic Performance						
34	My firm has improved market share.	1	2	3	4	5
35	My firm has improved company image.(i.e. company is seen as a green company)	1	2	3	4	5
36	My firm has improved company's position in the marketplace.	1	2	3	4	5
37	My firm has increased profitability.	1	2	3	4	5
Social Performance						
38	My firm has improved relationships with the community and stakeholders.	1	2	3	4	5
39	My firm has Improved work safety work environment.	1	2	3	4	5
40	My firm has improved living quality of surrounding community.	1	2	3	4	5

Determinants of Translating Entrepreneurial Intention to Action: A Study of Undergraduate Students of the University of Peradeniya, Sri Lanka

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Abstract

Entrepreneurs are the wealth creators of an economy, and hence business start-ups are always encouraged. Although it is often suggested that entrepreneurial intentions are strong predictors of entrepreneurial action, all intentions do not necessarily translate into action as there is an “intention-action gap” when nascent entrepreneurs fail to act on their intentions. This study aimed to explain the gap between entrepreneurial intentions and entrepreneurial action and identify the determinants of the intention to action translation by surveying the final year undergraduates from different degree programs at a major public university in Sri Lanka. The research focused on the effects of demographic, psychographic, and environmental factors to explain the intention-action gap. Data were collected using a pre-tested self-administered questionnaire. The questionnaire was circulated online among the entire final year undergraduate student population of the University of Peradeniya. Four hundred and fifty-three undergraduate students (n=453) responded to the survey. Hierarchical OLS regression with the main effect model and an interactions model was used for the data analysis. Results found that of the respondents who had entrepreneurial intentions, 32% had taken some actions towards starting a business. The results also revealed a positive relationship between entrepreneurial intention and action and there were positive effects of gender, perceived competence in entrepreneurial skills, entrepreneurial environment in the faculty, and entrepreneurial education on entrepreneurial actions.

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Furthermore, it was found that progressing from entrepreneurial intention to action was more robust for male undergraduates compared to female undergraduates. Therefore, to promote entrepreneurship, introducing entrepreneurship courses, introducing programmes to improve entrepreneurial skills and competencies and promoting an entrepreneurial culture in the Faculties could be recommended.

Keywords: *Entrepreneurial intention, Entrepreneurial action, Hierarchical OLS regression, Students*

Introduction

Entrepreneurship has been viewed as a crucial factor in sustained economic development and economic growth through employment creation, market spending, knowledge transfer, and innovations (Meyer & Jongh, 2018; Tunio, 2020). Higher education in entrepreneurship is identified as an important tool in aiding countries' social and economic development (Tunio, 2020). Entrepreneurial higher education has been increasing in the Sri Lankan context, which has positively affected entrepreneurial intention among undergraduates (Kumara, 2012). Subsequently, this study has focused on entrepreneurial behaviour among undergraduates. Entrepreneurship is suggested to be an intentional activity (Kautonen et al., 2015; Shirokova et al., 2015; Bogatyreva et al., 2019). The emergence of new business ventures is a key outcome of entrepreneurship (Shirokova et al., 2015). Some studies suggest that forming an intention to start a business is a part of the process of eventually creating an organization (Liñán & Chen, 2009; Kolvereid & Moen, 1997; Kautonen et al., 2015).

A person's intention is assumed to represent the motivational factors that influence behaviour (Ajzen, 1991). Entrepreneurial intentions have been further elaborated as the readiness and commitment to start a new business, and previous studies identify intentions to be key predictors of entrepreneurial action (Krueger, 1993; Shirokova et al., 2015; Meoli et al., 2019). The Theory of Planned Behaviour by Ajzen (1991) recognized this association between intention and behaviour, and the theory explains that intention is a significant predictor of behaviour (Kautonen et al., 2013). However, not all entrepreneurial intentions turn into subsequent entrepreneurial behaviour (Shirokova et al., 2015; Bogatyreva et al., 2019; Meoli et al., 2019). This creates a sizable 'intention-action gap' in entrepreneurship, and this is explained by those who have the entrepreneurial intention but fail to act on it (Adam & Fayolle, 2015;

Kautonen et al., 2015; Shirokova et al., 2015). The formation of a new business venture can be challenging due to external and internal limiting factors (Weiss et al., 2019). It is also suggested that the translation of entrepreneurial intention into entrepreneurial behaviour can be attributed to a range of individual and situational factors (Kautonen et al., 2015; Bogatyreva et al., 2019; Meoli et al., 2019).

Although the translation of intention into subsequent behaviour has been abundantly studied in many research domains, it is much less studied with respect to entrepreneurship (Shirokova et al., 2015; Kautonen et al., 2013). This translation is critical in economic growth through new venture creation. There is a dearth of research focusing on the relationship between entrepreneurial intention and action in the Sri Lankan context. Even though a considerable number of studies in Sri Lanka have focused on entrepreneurial intention (Nishantha, 2009; Thrikawala, 2011; Kumari et al., 2019; Gunawardane & Weerasinghe, 2021), the translation of intention into entrepreneurial behaviour has not been a research focus. In considering entrepreneurship studies, the context has been identified as an important factor that explains entrepreneurial action (Weiss et al., 2019). Therefore, it is crucial to study the relationship between entrepreneurial intention and behaviour affected by potential individual and situational factors in the Sri Lankan context.

Entrepreneurship becomes attractive to those who are about to make their career choice and it has been suggested that the majority intends to pursue entrepreneurship while they are relatively young (Martinez et al., 2007; Shirokova et al., 2015). Therefore, it was identified that the intention-action gap is better suited to be studied concerning young adults. Further, since higher educational institutes play an active role in molding young adults professionally as well as personality-wise, it was identified that a study carried out in a University context would yield useful policy implications. Therefore, the objectives of this research are to assess if entrepreneurial intention leads to entrepreneurial action and to identify the factors determining the translation of entrepreneurial intention to entrepreneurial action of undergraduate students in a university context.

Literature Review

Progression from Entrepreneurial Intention to Entrepreneurial Action

Entrepreneurial intentions are defined as the commitment to start a new business (Krueger, 1993) while entrepreneurial action is defined as the discovery, evaluation, and exploitation of an opportunity (Shane & Venkataraman, 2000). The stream of literature which explains new venture creation through intentionality is conceptualized using the Theory of planned behaviour by Ajzen (1991). The theory of Planned Behaviour proposes that intention is a significant predictor of behaviour. This theory has been applied in the entrepreneurial context to predict entrepreneurial intention (Kautonen et al., 2013). However, the literature recommends that in the context of entrepreneurship, behaviour is poorly explained by intentions alone (Meoli et al., 2019). Entrepreneurial intentions are said to explain only a 30% or less of the variance in subsequent entrepreneurial behaviour (Adam & Fayolle, 2015; Bogatyreva et al., 2019; Meoli et al., 2019).

Creating new business ventures has been identified as a primary result of entrepreneurship (Shirokova et al., 2015; Bogatyreva et al., 2019). It is often considered that venture creation is not a single activity. Instead, it is a process consisting of several activities leading to the eventual creation of new business ventures (Kautonen et al., 2015; Shirokova et al., 2015). Literature also presents entrepreneurship as an intentional activity (Kautonen et al., 2013; Shirokova et al., 2015; Bogatyreva et al., 2019; Meoli et al., 2019). However, it is empirically identified that not all entrepreneurial intentions translate into action, thus creating an “intention-action gap” (Adam & Fayolle, 2015; Shirokova et al., 2015; Bogatyreva et al., 2019). From the past studies, it is evident that entrepreneurial intention displays a positive relationship with entrepreneurial action, thereby forming the first hypothesis of this study.

Hypothesis 1: Entrepreneurial intention is positively related to entrepreneurial action

Those who have entrepreneurial intentions are said to take calculated risks, obtain required resources and ultimately create new business ventures (Karabulut, 2016). According to Kautonen et al. (2015), the robustness of the Theory of Planned Behaviour in explaining entrepreneurial behaviour has been recognized. Apart from entrepreneurial intentions, perceived behavioural controls have been recognized as a predictor of entrepreneurial action (Kautonen et al., 2015). It is said that even though the intention is a sufficient predictor of action, perceived behavioural controls can also have an independent effect on entrepreneurial action. This is especially valid for behaviours such as entrepreneurship, where an individual will not have complete volitional control

over the action (Ajzen, 1991; Kautonen et al., 2015). This points to the relationship between an individual's perceived behavioural controls and entrepreneurial actions. Hence, the second hypothesis tested in this study is as follows.

Hypothesis 2: Perceived behavioural control is positively related to entrepreneurial actions.

According to Weiss et al. (2019), the formation of a novel business venture can be challenging due to external and internal limiting factors. It is also suggested that the translation of entrepreneurial intention into entrepreneurial behaviour can be attributed to a range of individual and situational factors (Kautonen et al., 2015; Bogatyreva et al., 2019; Meoli et al., 2019). These factors include demographic characteristics, entrepreneurship education, physiological factors, and environmental factors. The following sections address each of these aspects.

Demographic Characteristics

Gender: Literature has continued to showcase that women are less likely to engage in entrepreneurial actions than men (de Bruin et al., 2007). The moderating effect of gender on the translation of entrepreneurial intention to action has been studied by Shinnar et al. (2018), who revealed that the effect of entrepreneurial intention on action is stronger for men compared to women. It is also identified that when men and women have the same level of entrepreneurial intentions, men are more likely to act on their intentions (Shinnar et al., 2018). A study performed on university undergraduates by Shirokova et al. (2015) also revealed similar results where it was found that the positive relationship between entrepreneurial intention and action is stronger for male undergraduates. It is also suggested that even if females develop entrepreneurial intentions, it is more likely to be disregarded eventually (Shirokova et al., 2015). Studies on Sri Lankan undergraduates have also revealed similar results (Nishantha, 2009; Thrikawala, 2011; Kumari et al., 2019). Gender of an individual therefore displays an impact on the translation of entrepreneurial intention to action leading to the third hypothesis of this study.

Hypothesis 3: The positive relationship between entrepreneurial intentions and entrepreneurial action will be stronger for male undergraduates than female undergraduates

Family Entrepreneurial Background: Family entrepreneurial background of an individual has been identified as an impactful aspect of translating one's

entrepreneurial intention to action. A student's parents being occupied in business ventures or self-employment have been identified as having an entrepreneurial background in the family (Yang, 2013; Shirokova et al., 2015). The benefits of such a background for an undergraduate's entrepreneurship roots from the comparative easiness of assessing social capital through entrepreneurial parents' connections and social networks (Laspita et al., 2012). Past studies have often indicated that parental entrepreneurial status can facilitate entrepreneurial intention among children (Jodl et al., 2001). Moreover, it is identified that the family entrepreneurial background plays an important role in the development of children's entrepreneurial intention (Laspita et al., 2012). In a study on university undergraduates by Shirokova et al. (2015), the moderating effect of family entrepreneurial background on the translation of entrepreneurial intention to action was identified. Thrikawala (2011) has identified a positive effect of parental entrepreneurial experience on undergraduate entrepreneurship among Sri Lankan undergraduates. Family background and experience in entrepreneurship have thereby shown an impact on entrepreneurial action in global and Sri Lankan contexts, developing the fourth hypothesis of the study.

Hypothesis 4: The positive relationship between entrepreneurial intentions and entrepreneurial action will be stronger for undergraduates with a family entrepreneurial background than for undergraduates without such background.

Entrepreneurship Education: Entrepreneurship education of students has been identified to influence entrepreneurial intentions and their subsequent translation to action (Kolvereid & Moen, 1997). Literature also suggests that education in entrepreneurship enables students to accumulate the resources required for entrepreneurial action (Solesvik et al., 2014). Solesvik et al. (2014) have also mentioned that the provision of entrepreneurial education in universities can promote the entrepreneurial intentions of undergraduates. Bae et al. (2014) have also identified the positive effect of entrepreneurial education on entrepreneurial action. A study conducted on Ugandan university students by Byabashaija & Katono (2011) has identified that entrepreneurship courses influence the perception of entrepreneurship as a desirable and feasible career choice. It has also been found that entrepreneurial education boosts the confidence among undergraduates in entrepreneurial performance (Byabashaija & Katono, 2011). Similar arguments have been made by Liu et al. (2019) based on Chinese college students. In the Sri Lankan context, similar connections were also found

among undergraduates (Gunawardane & Weerasinghe, 2021). The impact of entrepreneurial education on translating entrepreneurial intentions to action is thereby tested in the fifth hypothesis of the study.

Hypothesis 5: The positive relationship between entrepreneurial intentions and entrepreneurial action will be stronger for undergraduates with entrepreneurial education than for undergraduates without entrepreneurial education.

Psychological Characteristics

Personality Traits: Previous studies have shown that personality traits such as the need for achievement, risk tolerance, internal locus of control, and entrepreneurial alertness lead an individual towards entrepreneurial intention development (Karabulut, 2016). Barton et al. (2018) have also shown that differences among personalities can affect how individuals become entrepreneurs. Internal Locus of Control has shown a positive reaction to entrepreneurial action among undergraduates (Shirokova et al., 2015). An individual that perceives the ability to control their life is identified to have an internal locus of control (Karabulut, 2016). Internal locus of control is identified as a psychological trait that can explain entrepreneurial behaviour (Ajzen, 1991). Previous studies suggest that people who display an internal locus of control are more likely to have an entrepreneurial intention that translates to starting business ventures (Karabulut, 2016). Higher levels of entrepreneurial intentions have been observed among undergraduates with a higher level of internal locus of control (Kristiansen & Indarti, 2004). Similar results have been identified among Sri Lankan undergraduates by Nishantha (2009). The impact of internal locus of control in the translation of entrepreneurial intentions to action is prominent in past literature leading to the sixth hypothesis of the study.

Hypothesis 6: The positive relationship between entrepreneurial intentions and entrepreneurial action will be stronger for undergraduates with a higher internal locus of control.

Perceived Competence in Entrepreneurial Skills: Literature suggests that the perceived level of competence in performing skills related to entrepreneurship affects the emergence of entrepreneurial intention among academics (Rasmussen et al., 2010; Fernández-Pérez et al., 2015; Shirokova et al., 2015). Shirokova et al. (2015) have found out that the perceived competence in entrepreneurial skills positively affects entrepreneurial action as well. It has also

been suggested by Liñán & Chen (2009) that the self -efficacy in entrepreneurial skills is a strong predictor of entrepreneurial intention and action. The positive relationship between entrepreneurial self-efficacy and entrepreneurial intentions has been discussed by Saeed et al. (2013). Studies conducted on Sri Lankan undergraduates by Weerakoon & Gunatissa (2014) have also shown that when undergraduates perceive higher entrepreneurial self-efficacy, they are more likely to develop entrepreneurial intentions. Therefore, the seventh hypothesis of the study is developed to investigate the impact of perceived behavioral control in translating entrepreneurial intention to action.

Hypothesis 7: The positive relationship between entrepreneurial intentions and entrepreneurial action will be stronger for undergraduates with higher perceived competency in entrepreneurial skills.

Environmental Characteristics

Peer Entrepreneurial Background: The presence of entrepreneurial peers in an educational environment influences the formation of entrepreneurial intentions, according to Falck et al. (2010). Studies such as Kacperczyk (2013) and Bellò et al. (2017) suggest that the entrepreneurial intentions among undergraduates are affected by their peers. A positive relationship between having close friends who engage in businesses and entrepreneurial intentions is identified by Davidsson & Honig (2003). Furthermore, the past entrepreneurial behaviours of university peers have acted as a driver of entrepreneurship among university students (Kacperczyk, 2013). In the Sri Lankan context, the importance of the peer effect on career aspirations among undergraduates is identified by Madurangi et al. (2019). Since past studies point to the relationship between peer entrepreneurial background and one's formation of entrepreneurial intentions, the following hypothesis is considered in the study.

Hypothesis 8: The positive relationship between entrepreneurial intentions and entrepreneurial action will be stronger for undergraduates with peer entrepreneurial effect than for undergraduates without such effect.

Uncertainty Avoidance: Literature has identified that some cultures encourage entrepreneurship more than other cultures (Bogatyreva et al., 2019). The relationship between entrepreneurial intention and action is identified to be stronger among cultures that are conducive to entrepreneurship (Newbery et al., 2018). Societal uncertainty avoidance has been specifically identified to affect

the relationship between entrepreneurial intention and action among undergraduates (Shirokova et al., 2015). Hofstede (1991) understood uncertainty avoidance of society as “the extent to which the members of a culture feel threatened by uncertain or unknown situations”. Literature suggests that cultures with low levels of uncertainty avoidance are more inclined to entrepreneurship (Bogatyreva et al., 2019). Similar arguments have been made by Autio et al. (2013) suggesting that societies with low levels of uncertainty avoidance are more favourable toward entrepreneurship. This aspect forms the ninth hypothesis of the study.

Hypothesis 9: The positive relationship between entrepreneurial intentions and entrepreneurial action will be weaker for undergraduates with high levels of societal uncertainty avoidance.

Entrepreneurial Background in the Education Institute: Previous studies have suggested that the place of education and its values, norms, and context can affect the entrepreneurial intention of its students (Shirokova et al., 2015). Initiation of business ventures among students has been identified to be influenced by the support extended by universities towards entrepreneurship (Saeed et al., 2013). According to this study, universities can provide support for entrepreneurship by fostering a supportive environment and offering resources. Such support can equip undergraduates with the confidence to initiate their business ventures (Kraaijenbrink et al., 2010). This study also stressed that the student's perception of university support is important for their entrepreneurial initiations. Shirokova et al. (2015) have identified that the university entrepreneurial environment has a moderating effect on the translation of entrepreneurial intention to action among undergraduates. According to the administrative structure of the Sri Lankan university system in Sri Lanka, faculties in a university have an independent and unique educational environment. Therefore, the entrepreneurial environment in different faculties could be different. The impact of these unique backgrounds in faculties could lead to varied translations of entrepreneurial intentions of their students to action. This is identified in the tenth hypothesis of the study.

Hypothesis 10: The positive relationship between entrepreneurial intentions and entrepreneurial action will be stronger for undergraduates with a better entrepreneurial environment in the faculty.

Conceptual Framework

Independent Constructs: Two constructs have been identified through the literature review as entrepreneurial intention and perceived behavioural controls.

Dependent Constructs: Entrepreneurial action has been included as the dependent variable for the study. The conceptual framework also includes eight moderating variables categorized into three demographic characteristics, two psychographic characteristics, and three environmental characteristics.

Moderating Constructs: The literature review identified age, gender, entrepreneurial education, and family entrepreneurial background as demographic characteristics that could be moderating variables in the current study. However, age was excluded from the conceptual framework based on the cross-sectional approach of the research. Furthermore, a considerable variance of age is not expected within the sample because all the respondents belong to the final year batch of undergraduates at the University of Peradeniya. Hence, gender, entrepreneurial education, and family entrepreneurial background are included in the conceptual framework as three moderating variables.

Through the review of literature, personality traits and the perceived competence in entrepreneurial skills were identified as moderating variables under the category of psychographic characteristics. In addition, internal locus of control has been identified to affect undergraduate entrepreneurial intention and action from the discussed personality traits. Therefore, perceived competence in entrepreneurial skills and internal locus of control have been used in the conceptual framework as psychographic characteristics.

Environmental characteristics such as peer entrepreneurial background, entrepreneurial background in the education institute, and societal uncertainty avoidance were identified to affect undergraduate entrepreneurial action. The following conceptual framework also presents the study's alternative hypotheses as discussed above.

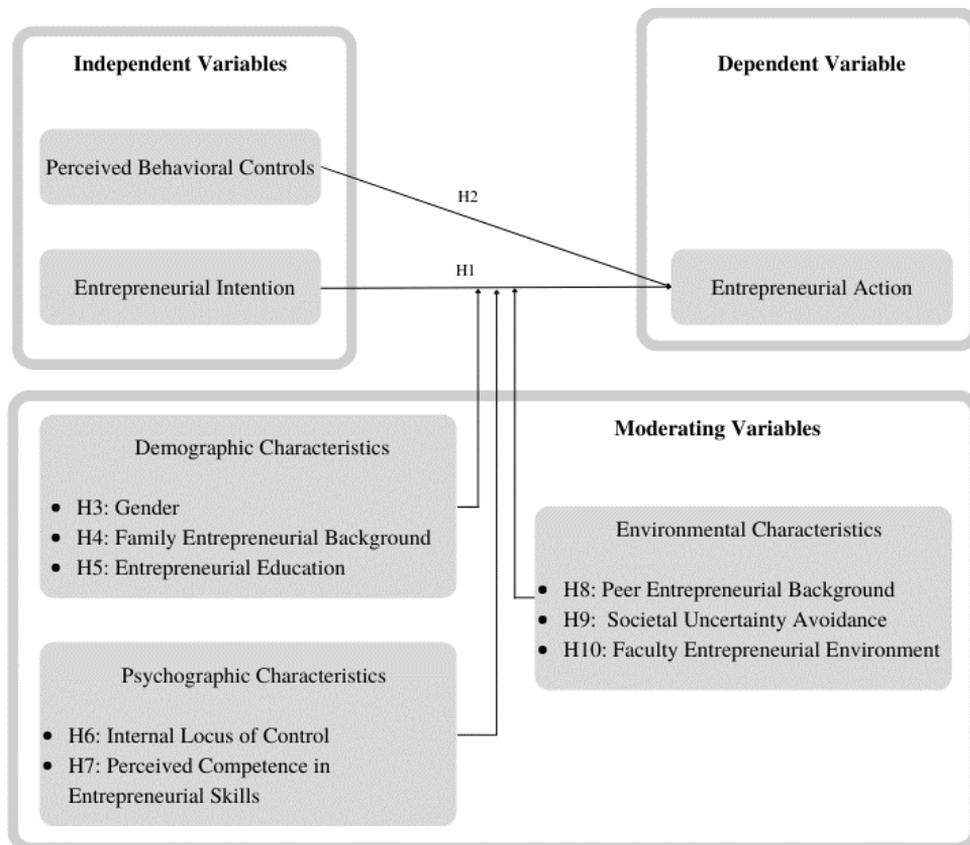


Figure 1: Conceptual framework for the study

Methodology

Research Design

This research takes a deductive approach. Primary data were collected through a self-administered online questionnaire and the time horizon is cross-sectional. Most past research that focused on the relationship between entrepreneurial intention and action has opted to measure intention and action separately with a substantial time gap (Kautonen et al., 2013; Weiss et al., 2019). However, when such a time gap is present between the measurements, it is more likely that intention may change during the time gap due to external events (Shirokova et al., 2015). Therefore, this study has adopted a cross-sectional approach in collecting data.

Population and sample

Prior studies have pointed toward the importance of studying entrepreneurship among young groups about to make career choices (Martinez et al., 2007; Shirokova et al., 2015). In this regard, the study was conducted at the University of Peradeniya, Sri Lanka. Higher education in entrepreneurship has been increasing in the Sri Lankan context (Kumara, 2012) providing a strong context for this study. The University of Peradeniya includes nine faculties specializing in various academic fields. Final year undergraduates from all the faculties were included in the population of the study. These undergraduates represented a young group about to make the transition from undergraduate education to a career path. A pre-tested online questionnaire survey was distributed to the total population of the final year 2,688 undergraduate students of the University and the respondents were selected as the sample for the study.

Data Collection Instrument

The questionnaire was prepared using established scales adapted from previous literature. It was first prepared in English and later translated to the two local languages Sinhalese and Tamil by bilingual speakers. Translated questionnaires were back-translated to English to ensure accuracy. The questionnaire was pre-tested and was further improved with the feedback received in order to improve understandability.

The questionnaire consisted of four sections. The first section comprised questions on the demographic information and peers and the family entrepreneurial background of the respondent. The second section included Likert scale questions with multiple items which measured entrepreneurial intention, entrepreneurial environment in the faculty, societal uncertainty avoidance, internal locus of control, and perceived behavioural controls. The third and fourth sections focused on measuring the respondent's perceived level of entrepreneurial skills and entrepreneurial actions using a semantic differential scale and a "select all that is relevant" type question respectively.

Construct Measurement

The dependent variable of the study, entrepreneurial action is the turning of entrepreneurial intentions into actions and steps taken towards new venture creation and selling products or services (Shirokova et al., 2015). This is measured in this research through an index capturing ten start-up activities adopted from the Global Entrepreneurship Monitor and Panel Study of Entrepreneurial Dynamics. This has been used to measure entrepreneurial action

in studies such as Shirokova et al. (2015), and Neneh (2019). The activities in the entrepreneurial action scale include, *“Discussed product or business idea with potential customers”*, *“Collected information about markets or competitors”*, *“Written a business plan”*, *“Started product/service development”*, *“Started marketing or promotion efforts”*, *“Purchased material, equipment or machinery for the business”*, *“Attempted to obtain external funding”*, *“Applied for a patent, copyright or trademark”*, *“Registered the company”* and *“Sold product or service”*. The index for the variable was calculated as a summative index of the number of activities engaged by the undergraduates and divided by the overall number of activities (10). This provided a scale from zero to one, where zero indicated none of the activities were undertaken and one where all the activities were undertaken. Equal weights were used for all the activities when calculating the summative index, which is justified by the internal consistency of the items.

Entrepreneurial intention and perceived behavioural controls (PBC) were independent variables considered in the study. The entrepreneurial intention was operationalized using a 5-point Likert scale with six items. The scale was adopted from Liñán & Chen (2009) which included six statements as, *“I am ready to do anything to be an entrepreneur”*, *“My professional goal is to become an entrepreneur”*, *“I will make every effort to start and run my own firm”*, *“I am determined to create a firm in the future”*, *“I have very seriously thought of starting a firm”* and *“I have the strong intention to start a firm someday”*.

For measuring PBC, a scale adopted by Kautonen et al. (2013) was used. The scale is a revised version of an original scale developed by Kolvereid (1996). The scale consisted of two items, *“For me, starting my own business would be (very easy-very difficult)”* and *“If I wanted to, I could easily pursue a career as a business owner (strongly agree-strongly disagree)”*.

Gender was measured as a dummy variable which was coded 1 for males and 0 for females. The family entrepreneurial background of the respondents was measured in a dichotomous question. If at least one parent has owned a business or been self-employed, the responses were coded one and zero if none of the parents owned a business or had been self-employed. The peer entrepreneurial background is a dummy variable coded one if the respondent had peers who were engaged in starting or running a business, and zero if the respondent did not have such peers.

The perceived competence in entrepreneurial skills of the respondent was

measured using a semantic differential scale from one to seven, (1= “not confident”, 7= “completely confident”). The scale items were adopted from Kickul et al. (2009) which included items “*Creating a new business idea*”, “*Identifying new business opportunities*”, “*Creating new products or services*”, “*Planning a new business*”, “*Writing a formal business plan*”, “*Raise money to start a business*” and “*Managing a business*”.

The internal locus of control was operationalized using a Likert scale developed by Levenson (1981). These included, “*When I make plans, I am almost certain to make them work*”, “*I can pretty much determine what will happen in my life*”, “*I am usually able to protect my personal interests*”, “*When I get what I want, it’s usually because I worked hard for it*” and “*My life is determined by my own actions*”.

The entrepreneurial environment of the Faculty was measured using a 5-point Likert scale with items adapted from Shirokova et al. (2015) designed to measure the University's entrepreneurial background. Considering the Faculty-wise organization of the study site i.e. the University of Peradeniya selected for this research, the scale items were adjusted to measure the entrepreneurial environment at each faculty by replacing the term “University” with “Faculty”. The revised scale items were, “*The atmosphere at my Faculty inspires me to develop ideas for new businesses*”, “*There is a favorable climate for becoming an entrepreneur at my Faculty*”, and “*At my Faculty students are encouraged to engage in entrepreneurial activities*”.

A 5-point Likert scale was used in operationalizing the construct of societal uncertainty avoidance. The items for the scale were adopted from Shirokova et al. (2015) which included, “*In my Society, orderliness and consistency are essential, even at the expense of experimentation and innovation*”, “*In my society, most people lead highly structured lives with few unexpected events*” and “*In my society, societal requirements and instructions are spelled out in detail so citizens know what they are expected to do*”.

Data Analysis

Measurement of Model Appropriateness: The data analysis process included coding, data entry, data cleaning, and data analysis. The scales used for measuring constructs using several scale items were tested for the internal consistency using the Cronbach’s alpha test. Construct validities were tested for convergent and discriminant validities. The convergent validity of the scales used in this study was tested using the composite reliability indices and

Cronbach's alpha. To test for the discriminant validity, average variance extracted (AVE) statistics were calculated. The scales show discriminant validity if the square root of the AVE was larger than the coefficients between the composite constructs (Fornell & Larcker, 1981). There is a possibility of common method variance bias due to using a self-administered questionnaire to measure all the constructs. This was tested using Harman's statistical test. If one general factor accounts for the majority (more than 50%) of the variance then the result is interpreted to indicate the presence of the common method variance (Podsakoff et al., 2003).

Hypotheses Testing

Hypotheses were tested using hierarchical OLS regression models. The first model of the hierarchical OLS regression tested the main effects of entrepreneurial intention and PBC on Entrepreneurial Action (Hypotheses 1 and 2). The second model included interaction terms between the moderating variables and entrepreneurial intentions to test the hypotheses 3 to 10. Both the models used mean-centered variables for entrepreneurial intentions and PBC. Possible heteroskedasticity in the hierarchical OLS regression and potential correlated errors across observations that result from the non-independence of observations collected from the same Faculty were controlled by applying heteroskedasticity-robust standard errors adjusted for Faculty clusters.

Results and Discussion

Profile of the Sample

There were 453 responses from final year undergraduate students of the University of Peradeniya with a response rate of 16.85%. However, the sample was reduced to 363 responses after data cleaning. In the cleaning process, inconsistent responses were removed. The cleaned sample had a majority of females (70.5%) with a 29.5% representation from males. Table 1 displays the faculty-wise distribution of the sample. It also displays the gender distribution of the sample among the nine faculties.

Table 1: Sample Distribution by Faculty and Gender

Faculty	Males	Females	Total
Faculty of Agriculture	36	64	100
Faculty of Allied Health Sciences	02	32	34
Faculty of Arts	06	49	55
Faculty of Dental Sciences	06	06	12
Faculty of Engineering	14	03	17
Faculty of Management	05	21	26
Faculty of Medicine	12	20	32
Faculty of Science	22	49	71
Faculty of Veterinary Medicine and Animal Science	04	12	16
Total	107	256	363

The entrepreneurial intention was measured in a 5-point Likert scale item which measured the level of agreement to the items in the scale in which strongly disagreed was scored 1 and strongly agreed scored 5. Therefore, when considering those who had a score of 4 or above as those who had an entrepreneurial intention, 28.3% of the sample had an entrepreneurial intention. Out of this, 68% have taken at least one step in the entrepreneurial action list, which comprises ten activities from zero actions to finally making a sale. The gender-wise distribution of the entrepreneurial action and intention is presented in Tables 2 and 3, respectively. Interestingly, females comprise a large percentage of those who have taken entrepreneurial actions as well as among those who fail to take entrepreneurial actions. Similarly among those who have an entrepreneurial intention and those who do not have entrepreneurial intention females are the majority as well as those who do not have an intention.

Table 2: Percentage Distribution of Entrepreneurial Action by Gender

	Entrepreneurial Action ¹	No Entrepreneurial Action ²
Male	35.1%	22.7%
Female	64.9%	77.3%
Total	100%	100%

¹ Those who have taken at least one step in the entrepreneurial action scale. ² Those who have taken zero steps in the entrepreneurial action scale.

Table 3: Percentage Distribution of Entrepreneurial Intention by Gender

	Entrepreneurial Intention ¹	No Entrepreneurial Intention ²
Male	49.4%	23.2%
Female	50.6%	76.8%
Total	100%	100%

¹ Those who have scored more than 4 on the entrepreneurial intention scale. ² Those who have scored less than 4 on the entrepreneurial intention scale.

Sixty-four percent of the sample did not come from a family with entrepreneurial backgrounds as they indicated that neither of their parents had owned a business or been self-employed. The peer entrepreneurial background was quite the opposite, where the majority (71.5%) had peers who owned or ran a business.

Entrepreneurial education was measured as a dummy variable where respondents scored 1 if they had followed a credited entrepreneurial course in their degree program. Only 34% had taken an entrepreneurial course for credit in their degree program. The faculty-wise distribution of entrepreneurial education is shown in table 4.

Table 4: Sample Distribution by Entrepreneurial Education and Faculty

Faculty	Students With Entrepreneurial Education (N)	Students Without Entrepreneurial Education (N)
Faculty of Agriculture	76	23
Faculty of Allied Health Sciences	02	32
Faculty of Arts	03	53
Faculty of Dental Sciences	00	12
Faculty of Engineering	01	16
Faculty of Management	24	02
Faculty of Medicine	02	30
Faculty of Science	15	56
Faculty of Veterinary Medicine and Animal Science	04	12
Total	127	236

Table 5 refers to the descriptive statistics of variables. The dependent variable,

entrepreneurial action had a mean of 0.1523 (minimum value = 0, maximum value = 10). The two independent variables of entrepreneurial intentions and perceived behavioural control had mean values of 3.1602 and 2.8402, respectively, where the minimum value for both variables was one with a maximum value of five. The frequency percentages of the dummy variables are presented in table 6.

Table 5: Descriptive Statistics

Variables	Mean	SD	Median
Entrepreneurial Action	0.1523	0.2005	0.1000
Entrepreneurial Intention	3.1602	0.9543	3
Perceived Behavioural Controls	2.8402	0.7007	3
Internal Locus of Control	3.9193	0.5405	4
Perceived competence in Entrepreneurial Skills	3.7068	1.4553	3.8571
Faculty Entrepreneurial Background	3.3298	0.8514	3.3334
Societal Uncertainty Avoidance	3.6236	0.5485	3.6000

N = 363

Table 6: Frequency Percentages of Dummy Variables

Variables	Frequency percentage	
	1	0
Gender	29.5% ¹	70.5%
Entrepreneurial education	27% ²	73%
Peer entrepreneurial background	71.5% ³	28.5%

¹ Males are denoted as 1, females as 0 ² Having entrepreneurial education is denoted as 1, otherwise as 0 ³ Having peers who run/own businesses is denoted as 1, otherwise as 0.

(*N* = 363)

Scale Reliability and Validity Tests

The Cronbach's alpha test was used to measure the internal consistency for variables which were measured using scales with multiple items. These variables included entrepreneurial action, entrepreneurial, perceived behavioural controls, internal locus of control, perceived competence in entrepreneurial skills, faculty entrepreneurial background, and societal uncertainty avoidance. All the scales had alpha values above the cut-off level of 0.7 (table 7) (Cortina,

1993; Bland & Altman, 1997). This indicates that the scales used to measure the above variables had sufficient internal consistency between the items.

Convergent validity of the scales with multiple constructs was tested using composite reliability indices (CR) and Cronbach's alpha. The convergent reliability of the scales was satisfactory as all scales had values above the threshold level of 0.7 for both the tests (table 7).

The average variance extracted (AVE) was measured for composite scales to measure the discriminant validity. Discriminant validity is suggested to be achieved if the square root of the AVE is larger than the correlation coefficients of the composite constructs (Fornell & Larcker, 1981). The seven scales with multiple items achieved this, thus concluding that the discriminant validity is achieved in the scales used in the study.

Table 7: Scale Measurements

Variables	Cronbach's Alpha	CR	AVE
Entrepreneurial Action	0.7723	0.8943	0.7621
Entrepreneurial Intention	0.9204	0.9384	0.7181
Perceived Behavioural Controls	0.7410	0.8862	0.7957
Internal Locus of Control	0.7622	0.8411	0.5156
Perceived competence in Entrepreneurial Skills	0.9512	0.9600	0.7748
Faculty Entrepreneurial Background	0.8723	0.9215	0.7965
Societal Uncertainty Avoidance	0.7835	0.9176	0.7324

N= 363

Harman's single factor statistical test was conducted to test for the possibility of common method bias in the study. The single factor explained 30.949% of the total variance. This indicates that there is no one general factor that accounts for the majority of the variance, thus allowing the conclusion that common method bias is unlikely to be an issue for this study (Podsakoff et al., 2003).

Regression Results

A hierarchical OLS regression was used to test for the hypotheses presented with the study's conceptual framework. The regression was run in two models, the first model to test for main effects and the second model with interactions. The main effect regression results of both models are presented in table 9 while table 10 presents the interaction effects of moderating variables with

entrepreneurial intention of the second model.

The regression resulted in significant ($P < 0.01$) F values in both models. The R squared value for the first model was 0.248 in the first model, which increased up to 0.288 in the second model with the inclusion of interaction terms. Multicollinearity was tested in the main effect regression model through variance inflation factor (VIF). The average VIF was 1.22, with a maximum of 1.50. These are well below the stipulated level of VIF (4), and hence do not indicate an issue of multicollinearity in the study. Possible heteroskedasticity in the hierarchical OLS regression and potential correlated errors across observations that result from the non-independence of observations collected from the same Faculty were controlled by applying heteroskedasticity-robust standard errors adjusted for Faculty clusters. Normality of the distribution was tested using the Shapiro-Wilk test and residual plots.

Table 9: Regression Analysis Results

Variables	Dependent Variable: Entrepreneurial Action	
	Model 1	Model 2
Main Effects	β	β
Entrepreneurial Intention	0.030**	-0.159
Perceived Behavioural Controls	-0.005	-0.008
Gender	0.060*	0.047*
Family Entrepreneurial Background	0.020	0.024
Entrepreneurial Education	0.085**	0.085**
Internal Locus of Control	0.012	0.010
Perceived Competence in Entrepreneurial Skills	0.033**	0.031**
Peer Entrepreneurial Background	0.017	0.018
Faculty Entrepreneurial Background	0.016	0.023*
Societal Uncertainty Avoidance	omitted	omitted
Constant	-133	-163
F	12.93**	8.75**
R^2	0.248	0.288
ΔR^2		0.040

$N = 363$ ** $P < 0.01$ * $P < 0.05$

Main effects: The first hypothesis of the study was that entrepreneurial intention is positively related to entrepreneurial action. This was tested through the first model of the hierarchical OLS regression. This hypothesis was supported through the regression analysis with a beta coefficient of 0.030 and a significance level below 0.01. The positive relationship identified between entrepreneurial intention and action is corresponding to the theory of planned behaviour (Ajzen, 1991) which suggests intention as a predictor of behaviour. The positive and significant relationship between entrepreneurial action and intention is well supported by previous studies such as Kautonen et al. (2013), Shirokova et al. (2015), and Bogatyreva et al. (2019).

The correlation coefficient between the entrepreneurial intention and action was 0.3267 which indicates that a 10.67% variance in entrepreneurial actions can be explained by the main effect on entrepreneurial intention. This indicates the possibility of moderators between entrepreneurial intention and action.

The perceived competence in entrepreneurial skills ($\beta = 0.033$; $P < 0.01$), entrepreneurial education ($\beta = 0.085$; $P < 0.01$) and gender ($\beta = 0.060$; $P < 0.05$) were found to have positive main effects with respect to entrepreneurial action.

The second hypothesis of perceived behavioural controls being positively related to undergraduate entrepreneurial action found no support through the regression analysis. Kautonen et al. (2015) has recognized perceived behavioural controls as a predictor of entrepreneurial action which contradicts this finding.

Apart from the hypothesized relationships, perceived competence in entrepreneurial skills, entrepreneurial education, and gender displayed positive main effects on entrepreneurial action. Furthermore, the main effect of the faculty entrepreneurial environment became significant ($\beta = 0.023$; $P < 0.05$) with the inclusion of interaction effects. This result suggests that the undergraduates that perceive a positive faculty environment towards entrepreneurship are more likely to engage in entrepreneurial action. The positive relationship between a favourable university entrepreneurial environment and entrepreneurial action is supported by studies such as Shirokova et al. (2015). The interaction between societal uncertainty avoidance and the entrepreneurial intention was omitted by the regression to avoid multicollinearity.

Moderating effects

The moderating effects of the eight hypothesized (H3-H10) moderators were tested in the second model of hierarchical OLS regression. Two models were performed for each moderating variable with the first model including the

independent variables and the moderating variable. Next, the interaction term between the entrepreneurial intention and the moderating variable was added to the regression model and the changes in the R^2 values were observed.

Table 10: Regression Results- Interaction Effects

Moderating Variable (interaction with entrepreneurial intention)	Without the Interaction Term		With the Interaction Term		
	R^2	F	ΔR^2	ΔF	β
Gender	0.119	24.281	0.016*	6.705	0.489
Family Entrepreneurial Background	0.111	22.399	0.005	2.127	0.273
Entrepreneurial Education	0.177	38.759	0.002	0.844	0.167
Internal Locus of Control	0.114	23.239	0.090*	3.707	0.870
Perceived Competence in Entrepreneurial Skills	0.177	38.605	0.006*	2.704	0.382
Peer Entrepreneurial Background	0.120	24.615	0.026**	10.923	0.624
Faculty Entrepreneurial Background	0.121	25.940	0.001	0.343	0.146
Societal Uncertainty Avoidance	0.126	24.696	0.000	0.059	0.093

$N= 363$ ** $P<0.01$ * $P<0.05$

The first models of the eight moderating variables included the independent variables (mean-centered) and the moderating variable without the interaction term. All the models displayed significant R^2 and F values ($p<0.01$). However, with the inclusion of the interaction term in each model separately, only four moderating variables displayed significant changes in the R^2 value.

Inclusion of the interaction term of gender and entrepreneurial intention caused significant change in the R^2 value ($\Delta R^2 = 0.016$, $\Delta F=6.705$, $\beta= 0.489$, $p<0.05$). This establishes the hypothesized (H3) positive moderating effect of gender on the translation of entrepreneurial intention into action. Hence, the positive relationship between entrepreneurial intention and action is stronger for male undergraduates. This finding is in line with studies suggesting that males have more tendency to enroll in entrepreneurial activities than females (Shirokova et al., 2015; de Bruin et al., 2007). Moreover, studies indicate that even if females develop intentions in entrepreneurial activities, they might be eventually

disregarded (Shirokova et al., 2015). In the Sri Lankan scenario, such findings have been made among undergraduate groups by Nishantha (2009), Thrikawala (2011), and Kumari et al. (2019) further strengthening the finding of this study. The fourth hypothesis of this study focused on the moderating effect of the family entrepreneurial background. There was no significant change in the R^2 value with the inclusion of interaction terms to support the hypothesis. However, studies showcase that family background and experience in entrepreneurship play a vital role in developing entrepreneurial intention among children (Laspita et al., 2012). Other international and local studies have also observed this relationship such as Thrikawala (2011), but this study did not.

Although entrepreneurial education displayed a positive main effect with respect to entrepreneurial action (Table 9), the hypothesized moderating effect (H5) between intention and action was not supported by the analysis. Entrepreneurial education was measured in this study as to whether undergraduates have followed at least one credited entrepreneurship course in their degree program. Entrepreneurship education has been shown to increase entrepreneurial intention in previous studies such as Solesvik et al. (2014) and Liu et al. (2019). In the Sri Lankan context, Gunawardane & Weerasinghe (2021) have identified similar relationships. This study provides insight to the main effect of entrepreneurial education on the action.

Internal locus of control was observed to be associated with the translation of entrepreneurial intention into action in past studies such as Karabulut (2016) and Shirokova et al. (2015). A higher level of entrepreneurial intention was identified among undergraduates who displayed a stronger internal locus of control according to Kristiansen & Indarti (2004). With such a backdrop, this analysis has also revealed similar results supporting the sixth hypothesis of the study. With the inclusion of the interaction term, the R^2 value changed significantly indicating the moderation effect of the internal locus of control on the relationship between entrepreneurial intention and action ($\Delta R^2 = 0.090$, $\Delta F=3.707$ $\beta= 0.870$, $p<0.05$). Hence, the translation of entrepreneurial intention into action is stronger for undergraduates with a higher locus of control. This finding is in line with the study by Nishantha (2009) on Sri Lankan undergraduates.

Perceived competence in entrepreneurial skills resulted in a positive main effect in the first model. Similarly, the inclusion of the interaction term also caused a significant change in the R^2 value ($\Delta R^2 = 0.006$, $\Delta F=2.704$ $\beta= 0.382$, $p<0.05$)

supporting the hypothesized moderation effect (H7). These values suggest that undergraduates with higher perceived competence in entrepreneurial skills display a stronger relationship between entrepreneurial intention and action. Moreover, this demonstrates that if an undergraduate perceived themselves to be more confident in performing entrepreneurial skills, they are more likely to translate their intention into entrepreneurial action. This finding is in line with previous literature. In a study by Kickul et al. (2009), the positive relationship between the perceived entrepreneurial self-efficacy and venture creation was identified. Shirokova et al. (2015) and Saeed et al. (2013) have also declared similar results among undergraduates. Dev elopement of entrepreneurial intention was found to be more likely in Sri Lankan undergraduates with higher self-efficacy in entrepreneurship by Weerakoon & Gunatissa (2014).

The presence of peers with entrepreneurial backgrounds has been shown to influence individuals to pursue entrepreneurship themselves by a number of studies such as Bellò et al. (2017), Kacperczyk (2013), and Falck et al. (2010). This study also revealed the hypothesized moderating effect (H8) of having peers with entrepreneurial backgrounds on translating entrepreneurial intention to action. The inclusion of the interaction term between intention and peer background caused significant changes in the R^2 value ($\Delta R^2 = 0.026$, $\Delta F = 10.923$, $\beta = 0.624$, $p < 0.001$) leading to this interpretation. It is noteworthy to indicate Madurangi et al. (2019) have also identified the importance of peer effect on career aspirations among undergraduates.

The ninth and tenth hypotheses of this study focused on the moderation of societal uncertainty avoidance and faculty entrepreneurial background, respectively. The inclusion of these interaction terms did not lead to significant changes in the R^2 values of the respective models. Hence, the moderation effect of these variables on translating entrepreneurial intentions to action is not supported. Nevertheless, the faculty's entrepreneurial background displayed a positive main effect in the main model providing insight into the importance of this variable in undergraduate entrepreneurship. Past literature has shown that some cultures with low uncertainty avoidance promote entrepreneurship (Newbery et al., 2018), although this did not reflect in this study. However, the importance of favorable conditions for entrepreneurship in educational institutes was heavily shown to impact undergraduate entrepreneurship in studies such as Shirokova et al. (2015), Saeed et al. (2013), and Kraaijenbrink et al. (2010).

Conclusion

The research was carried out to understand the intention-action gap between entrepreneurial intention and entrepreneurial action among final year undergraduate students of the University of Peradeniya. The research objective is to determine the factors that are likely to cause students with entrepreneurial intentions to actually engage in entrepreneurial start-up activities. Through the study, it is confirmed that there is a positive relationship between entrepreneurial intention and action.

Despite eight variables tested for their effect on the entrepreneurial intention and entrepreneurial actions, only four variables were found to have a moderating effect on the translation of entrepreneurial intention to action. Male undergraduate students showed a higher positive relationship between entrepreneurial intention and action compared to female undergraduate students. Furthermore, entrepreneurial education was found to have a positive main effect on entrepreneurial action, indicating that undergraduate students are more likely to engage in entrepreneurial action when they have followed an entrepreneurial course as a part of their degree program.

In addition to the opportunity to engage in some early start-up activities, the perceived competence in entrepreneurial skills of undergraduate students also reported a positive main effect on entrepreneurial action. It also resulted in a moderating effect concluding that when an undergraduate perceives higher confidence in performing entrepreneurial skills, they are more likely to translate entrepreneurial intentions into entrepreneurial action. The internal locus of control of undergraduates acts as a moderator in a way that a stronger translation of entrepreneurial intention to action can be observed among those who report a higher internal locus of control.

It is crucial to note that the presence of peers with an entrepreneurial background in the university caused a stronger translation of entrepreneurial intention to action among undergraduates. Moreover, the environment at the faculty was found to affect entrepreneurial action among undergraduate students. A better faculty environment towards entrepreneurship positively affected the students' engagement in entrepreneurial action.

Recommendations

The study focused on the final year undergraduate students of the University of Peradeniya, Sri Lanka. Through the research findings, it is possible to provide

recommendations to improve the entrepreneurship education provided to university students in order to strengthen the degree of entrepreneurial intentions among its graduates and to facilitate its translation to action. Providing entrepreneurial courses as a part of the degree program was shown to have a positive effect on entrepreneurial action among undergraduate students. Therefore, the faculties could consider incorporating entrepreneurship courses to their curriculum. Furthermore, creating a university and faculty environment that inspires and encourages undergraduate students toward entrepreneurship and positive peer experiences can increase entrepreneurial action. This may be via activities such as establishing entrepreneurship incubators, organizing talks by successful entrepreneurs, providing financial support for start-ups, and training programs on business creation and management. It can be also recommended to take necessary actions to increase the level of confidence in undergraduate entrepreneurial skills to facilitate more entrepreneurial action. Therefore, universities should modify the curriculum for every faculty to ensure that students are able to develop necessary entrepreneurial competencies and a strong internal locus of control. Further, a majority of students in the Faculties of the University of Peradeniya are females (except the engineering Faculty) and the percentage of females is increasing, the faculties have to understand why females have a lesser tendency to become entrepreneurs and change the entrepreneurship courses and the environment to match the needs of the females. It can be argued that empowering and encouraging female undergraduates toward entrepreneurship is necessary.

Limitations of the Study and Suggestions for Future Research

The study was confined to the final year undergraduate students of the University of Peradeniya, Sri Lanka. Further research can be extended to other universities. Furthermore, the translation of entrepreneurial intention and action could be studied in non-university populations to further understand the translation of entrepreneurial intention to action. The study was confined to the final year undergraduate students of the University of Peradeniya, Sri Lanka. However, future research can be extended to other universities. Furthermore, the translation of entrepreneurial intention and action could be studied in non-university populations to further understand the translation of entrepreneurial intention to action.

The data collection of the research was cross-sectional. A cross-sectional data collection eliminates the possibility of unforeseen events changing intention between collections of data. Since intention precedes action in time, this is a

major limitation of the study. a longitudinal study would have been appropriate to take into account the time gap between intention formation and action initiation. This is a potential direction for future research in the Sri Lankan context.

Declaration of Conflicting Interests

The authors declared no potential conflicts of interest with respect to the research, authorship, and publication of this article.

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The Art of Self-Presentation: A Study on Impression Management among Academicians in Sri Lankan State Universities

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Abstract

Impression Management is one of the important phenomena in everyday life, which everyone uses as a strategy to improve their current state of affairs. This qualitative study on impression management among academicians in Sri Lankan state universities was carried out to explore the impression management strategies which are adopted by academicians, while trying to identify the motives behind them to practice those strategies. Eight academics of a leading faculty in a state university, which is in the Colombo district were selected as the sample using the purposive sampling technique. Semi-structured interviews were adopted to collect data and the Thematic Analysis Technique was used to analyze those collected data. Findings of the study indicate that academicians of the selected context use a variety of impression management strategies. Those include direct strategies of creating a good image through presenting the self as competent, likable, diligent, supplicatory, and dangerous. Strategies of apology, reasoning and rejecting were identified as the direct ways of defending a bad image. Indirect impression formation is done by criticizing, passing the fault to others, and getting appreciation from others. Not only that, but academicians also use non-verbal ways such as attire, facial expressions, and vehicle & other accessories to create impressions. Further, the results illustrate that academicians are motivated to manage impressions to maintain a good image of themselves, to build a relationship, to achieve job-related goals such as, job security, career growth, and finally to motivate others for success. This study also provides some valuable theoretical and managerial implications and considerations for future research in the field of impression management.

Keywords: *Academicians, Impression Management, Impression Management Strategies, Impression Management Motives*

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Introduction

As social beings, people always tend to interact with others though they have different purposes of association. The most important thing is, when interacting, people try to create an impression about themselves in other's minds. Cambridge Dictionary (2019) defines 'impression' as an idea or opinion of a particular person or about something which is seemed, looked or feel to be. Simply, impressions are what we feel and think about others who are around us. Due to the individual differences and diverse backgrounds of individuals, there may be some conflicts during interactions. Once an individual co-operates with another, the person should have the ability to behave in such a way where others will accept the presence of that individual. If not, problems may arise. That is where the concept of 'Impression Management' (IM) comes into the field.

Leary and Kowalski (1990) state that Americans spend billions of dollars on diets, make-ups and plastic surgeries every year to make them more attractive to others. This indicates that people have an interest to know how others perceive and evaluate them, which is known as the concept of impression management. Impression management refers to the process by which individuals try to control the impressions that others form of them (Leary & Kowalski, 1990). Similarly, Bozeman and Kacmar (1997, as cited in Drory & Zaidman, 2007) define impression management as intentionally exhibiting certain behaviours, both verbal and nonverbal, which lead others to perceive the actor as desired. Altogether, it can be defined as the conscious or unconscious efforts of individuals which influence and keen them to know how others perceive and accept them. People may use different techniques to impress others with different intentions in their minds. Many researchers have identified those various strategies of impression management and, they have built up theories on them (Jones & Pittman, 1982; Leary & Kowalski, 1990).

Having a better knowledge of impression management is very helpful to understand and be aware of our actions in day-to-day life with the impressions we give to others (Gaspar, 2016). So, it is much more important to give significant consideration to the concept of impression management in the present scenario. Thus, engaging in impression management can help to ensure that social interactions go smoothly (Dunn & Forrin, 2007, p. 468). This statement illustrates the importance of conducting studies on impression management further. Over the past few years, many kinds of studies have been done to identify impression management and its tactics within the

organizational context (Asawo & George, 2018; Bolino et al., 2006; Drory & Zaidman, 2007; Gwal, 2015; Mohamed & Gardner, 2004). However, Leary and Kowalski (1990) emphasize that even at home, work, school, and elsewhere people monitor the reaction of others on them and try to show an image that promotes themselves. Correspondingly, Gwal (2015) highlights the importance of managing impressions in any kind of organization, which consists of individuals who possess different personalities. These statements direct that impression management can be practiced anywhere if there is a presence of individuals. So, even in not-for-profit organizations such as universities and colleges, impression management practices can be experienced especially among academicians as there are higher levels of interactions taking place with each other. The term ‘academician’ refers to a member of an academy or educational institute (Cambridge Dictionary, 2019). Though impression management can be utilized to enhance the quality of interactions of academicians, researchers in Sri Lanka have paid less attention to such mechanisms. As a result, there are limited studies done on impression management in relation to the educational institutions in Sri Lanka. Therefore, this study is designed to address the identified problem and focused to look at how and why impression management is done among academicians within state universities in the Sri Lankan context to give a thorough understanding of the site. Drawing from the above-mentioned gaps, this research study raises the following research questions:

- a) How impression management is done by academicians of a selected state university in Sri Lanka? and,
- b) Why such impression management strategies are being practiced by them?

Literature Review

The Concept of Impression Management

The theoretical framework for the concept of impression management was initially introduced by Erving Goffman through his book ‘The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life’. There, he defines impression management as a dramaturgical metaphor of individuals as actors on a stage performing for the audience (Goffman, 1971). Impression management is concerned with studying how individuals present themselves to be perceived favourable by others according to the social-psychology viewpoint (Hooghiemstra, 2000, as cited in Chaubey & Kandpal, 2017). In an advanced way, “Impression management is a goal-directed, conscious or unconscious attempt to influence the perceptions of

other people about a person, object or event by regulating and controlling information in social interaction” (Singh, 2013, as in Shoko & Dzimiri, 2018, p. 253).

Dunn and Forrin (2007) demonstrate that impression management is mostly done unintentionally though people are not expecting to do so, by providing an example of how it differs the way we interact with a close friend from the way we interact with a family member. There, they state such different behaviour occurs not only because of what we wish to be viewed differently when interacting with people, but also the people whom we interact with have different hopes regarding our behaviour and how we should behave in front of them. Therefore, as individuals we may use the best identity for a situation, as we have different identities to interact (Araz, 1998, as cited in Khadyr & Caliskan, 2016).

Although most of the researchers have focused on how people present themselves to others under impression management, it can be seen some people try to manage the images of other people or other entities if they are related to them. To prove that Cialdini and Richardson (1980), as in Mohamed & Gardner, 2004) show how people try to damage the image of others or business organizations to enhance their own image. Thus, the target of impression management is not always the self, but it may be other people or entities too.

Strategies of Impression Management

Akdogan and Aykan (2008) express, to have effective impression management, it should use a suitable strategy (as cited in Khadyr & Caliskan, 2016). Initially, scholars have categorized impression management strategies as direct and indirect tactics. Again the direct tactics are divided as assertive and defensive tactics (Amaral, 2018). Similarly, Mohamed et al. (1999, as in Terrell & Kwok, 2011) have developed a 2×2 taxonomy of organizational impression management behaviours including all direct and indirect tactics with assertive and defensive tactics. Use of own information to improve/ repair image is called ‘direct strategies’ while using information whom associated with to manage impressions is called ‘indirect strategies’. Assertive strategies are used to improve the good image while defensive strategies are accompanied to reduce/ repair the damage to the image (Terrell & Kwok, 2011; Yan & Ho, 2017). Moreover, Jones and Pittman (1982) introduced five strategies of impression management that are used by individuals aiming at protecting and maintaining one’s image. Ingratiation, self-promotion, exemplification, intimidation, and supplication are those five strategies under Jones and Pittman’s taxonomy.

“Ingratiation involves doing a favor or use of flattery to be likable by the observers” (Chaubey & Kandpal, 2017, p. 10). Self-promotion is convincing the target people about the actor’s competence to compete with others (Jones & Pittman, 1982). In the similar fashion, “Self-promotion is a proactive process in which the self-promoter has to actively say things to show the competence or at least undertake actions so that the competence is displayed to the target” (Gwal, 2015, p. 41). “Exemplification involves showing oneself to look overly dedicated and committed while creating a feeling of guilt among others” (Arif, 2011, as cited in Chaubey & Kandpal, 2017). In the same way, Jones and Pittman (1982) describe exemplification as the action in which individuals seek to project integrity and moral worthiness where it makes others feel guilty.

The actor tries to show that he/she is dangerous by advertising the available power by creating pain, discomfort, and all type of psychic costs on the target person using the strategy of intimidation (Jones & Pittman, 1982). According to Rosenfeld et al. (1995, as cited in Gwal, 2015), the intimidation tactic of impression management mostly flows from higher-level positions to lower-level positions. As stated by Jones and Pittman (1982), the strategy of supplication is in which a person exploits his weaknesses and dependencies to get help from the target. People who use supplication as a strategy, try to establish a social norm that we should help others when they need the help of someone, by displaying the weakness/ disability (Rosenfeld et al., 1995, as cited in Gwal, 2015).

Moreover, Lee et al. (1999) have developed a taxonomy of self-presentation skills including 13 tactics. Their 13 tactics of impression management include excuse, apology, justification, disclaimer, self-handicapping, entitlement, enhancement, blasting, basking, ingratiation, exemplification, intimidation, and supplication. An excuse is used when the person rejects his/her responsibility for a negative action. A person confessing the wrong things done to others is called an apology. Justification involves providing reasons for the wrongdoing while taking responsibility for it. Providing explanations before difficulties occur is the action of disclaimer. In self-handicapping, it is creating complications to the success of an action to prevent others from being asked regarding the failure. Entitle means taking credits for a successful accomplishment. When the person shows that his/her actions are more positive than expected, it is called the tactic of enhancement. Basking occurs when a person tries to engage with the people who are perceived as good by others. Blasting is the opposite of basking, where a person creates a bad image on others with whom he/she engages (Lee et al., 1999).

However, all the above-mentioned classifications have left the non-verbal impression management tactics (Yan & Ho, 2017). Non-verbal behaviours such as facial expressions, movements, postures, and appearance can be used for impression construction (DePaulo, 1992, as in Yan & Ho, 2017). Similarly, Brooks (1985, as cited in Gaspar, 2016) illustrates how first impression and nonverbal behaviours such as the dress are important in the formation of impressions. Yilmaz (2014) notes that although the same situation individuals face, the tactics they use may differ (as cited in Yan & Ho, 2017). Consequently, the extent to which one person employs impression management strategies may differ from one person to another and also, from one organization to another (Shoko & Dzimiri, 2018).

Motives behind Impression Management

To have desired impressions from others it is required to consider the motivation and the belief of the person who created impressions (Khadyr & Caliskan, 2016). Therefore, it is important to identify not only the strategies of impression management but also the motives behind them. Schlenker (1980) points out that the motivation behind impression management behaviours leads to increase rewards while reducing punishments (as cited in Leary & Kowalski, 1990). Therefore, individuals tend to use impression management strategies when they get to know that they can gain more results over it (Schlenker & Weigold, 1992, as cited in Khadyr & Caliskan, 2016). Similarly, Demir (2002) directs that individuals use impression management to improve personality, manage emotions, and with the idea that they can have better results by creating good impressions in other's minds (as cited in Khadyr & Caliskan, 2016). Thus, Impression management is used when a person wishes to create and maintain a specific identity (Drory & Zaidman, 2007, p. 290). In contrast, Becker and Martin (1995) express that there may be some incidents where people attempt to look bad to create a bad image on behalf of others (as cited in Mohamed & Gardner, 2004).

Impression management strategies help individuals to have desired outcomes while reducing undesired outcomes. Those outcomes may sometimes be social/personal such as authority, relationship, assistance, approval. In another way, some outcomes may be material like promotions, salary increments (Leary & Kowalski, 1990). Despite, Schlenker (1980) expresses that motivation behind impression management increases when there is a person who is more powerful, authoritative and nice-looking than the one who forms impressions (as cited in Leary & Kowalski, 1990). Further, the increased confidence level of the

impression former (actor) is another motive behind impression management. So, individuals are motivated to engage in impression management when there are reactions from others which increase their self-esteem (Schneider, 1969, as in Leary & Kowalski, 1990). On the other hand, shame and lack of success increase motivation towards impression management (Leary & Kowalski, 1990). Moreover, impression management is used to accomplish the requirements based on the situation that the person is in (Scott, 1981, p. 582). As this highlights, motives behind people to engage in impression management may depend on the situation.

When it comes to educational institutes, some attributes such as designation, sense, intellect, knowledge, appearance, personality, social status, economic well-being and generosity enhance impression management among academicians (Chaubey & Kandpal, 2017). Further, Shoko and Dzimiri (2018) suggest that the head positions in schools engage in impression management strategies to follow norms, to develop the identity of the school and about themselves, and to get approval from society.

Impression Management in Educational Institutes

Aside from being common in employment interviews and private organisations, impression management can be applied in educational organisations too (Shoko & Dzimiri, 2018). With that, there is a tendency to be engaged in impression management by academic communities when displaying their work (Ortbach & Recker, 2014). Academics who are extrinsically motivated for material rewards use impression management than the academics who are intrinsically motivated for achievement in Turkey (Khadyr & Caliskan, 2016). The study by Shoko and Dzimiri (2018) which is conducted in Zimbabwe, states that school heads spend more time during their leadership and management to manage impressions among teachers and stakeholders regarding their position and the school. Non-verbal behaviours also influence the concept of impression management in educational institutions. As an example when a lecturer enters the class with an untidy dress, students may form the impression that the lecturer is not capable of teaching and he/she may be lethargic in teaching. Similarly, facial expressions are also another important factor to understand how lecturers are maintaining the image in the class (Gaspar, 2016). Therefore, during academic activities, non-verbal behaviours and facial expressions affect a lot when forming an impression of a person.

Students spend more energy on managing self-impressions and avoiding negative impressions when targeting professors than peers in academic

performance (Haber & Tesoriero, 2018). Correspondingly, Valerius and Parr (1997) highlight students use impression management tactics to gain social goals such as obtaining recognition and personal contact with the instructor, rather than obtaining performance goals. And, students who are not that much knowledgeable receive good grades than they expect by the use of impression management tactics effectively with their teachers (Takei et al., 1998). Also, women are willing to manage impressions than men in the school environment (Haber & Tesoriero, 2018).

By reviewing the above literature, it can also be concluded that there is an opportunity to undertake a study on impression management with special reference to academicians within educational institutes. It further highlights the importance of carrying out this research study.

Methodology

To explore the impression management strategies and the aims behind those impression formations, I have chosen the qualitative approach to my research project. And, I have located this study on the paradigm of interpretivism. Interpretivism is where researchers make sense of the subjectivity and socially constructed meanings about the phenomenon they're researching (Saunders et al., 2016). The concept of impression management is much more behaviour focused and because of that, it is required to go to the field, observe and talk with the participants to come up with research findings. Therefore, as the researcher, I had to play an important role in the data collection process. So, it is adopted the inductive approach, where it contributes to a theory through own observations and data analysis. Hence, this study was carried out using a series of interviews as the research strategy.

Academicians were considered as the primary data source because they are the repositories who possess the knowledge to address the research questions. Books, journal articles, conference proceedings, theses, statistics, reports, and online websites have been used to collect data as secondary data sources. All the academics in the selected state university were identified as the population of this study. Among them, eight academics of a leading Management faculty were selected as the sample using the 'purposive sampling technique'. According to Saunders et al. (2016), purposive sampling requires to use researcher's judgment to choose cases that will help to answer the research questions. So, academicians who are willing to talk and share ideas, their designation and the experiences, the department in which they are attached, and gender were set as

criteria to draw the study sample.

Data collection was done using the interview method. Face-to-face and semi-structured interviews with time duration of around 30-45 minutes were conducted among the selected academicians. Follow-up questions were used to come up with a rich collection of data. Also, the data were analyzed using the ‘thematic analysis technique’. Braun and Clarke (2006) define thematic analysis as a method of identifying, evaluating, and reporting patterns or themes in a dataset. Within the analysis process, all the transcripts were read in between lines to investigate different patterns, themes, and trends. Then those were coded under different themes with the support of the literature review. By analyzing the most significant codes and themes, the accurate findings to answer the research questions of this study were identified. The details of the participants are depicted in Table 1

Table 1: Details of the Participants

No.	Name	Age	Gender	Designation (Level)	Educational Level
01.	Ms. Ayomi	41-55 years old	Female	Senior Lecturer (Grade II)	Up to PhD
02.	Ms. Amali	41-55 years old	Female	Professor	Up to PhD
03.	Mr. Madhushan	25-40 years old	Male	Lecturer (Probationary)	Graduation Degree
04.	Ms. Priyani	56-65 years old	Female	Senior Lecturer (Grade II)	Up to PhD
05.	Mr. Sadeep	25-40 years old	Male	Lecturer	Master’s Degree
06.	Mr. Sandun	25-40 years old	Male	Lecturer	Graduation Degree +Additional Academic Qualification
07.	Ms. Siluni	25-40 years old	Female	Lecturer (Probationary)	Graduation Degree
08.	Mr. Thulada	41-55 years old	Male	Senior Lecturer (Grade II)	Up to PhD

It has been considered the ethical issues and taken actions to address them too. Before the selection of the research topic, it was analyzed whether any parties are negatively affected by conducting this study. Pseudonyms have been used to protect the privacy and confidentiality of the participants and the entities. Also, in the data collection satge, consent forms were administered to all of the participants prior to the interviews. During the interviews, all the questions were

asked with the intention of not to harm/ embarrass the participants. The participants were allowed to express their ideas freely, and to stop the discussion at any time. Further, when analysing the data, it was given the priority to the voices of the participants rather than my expectations regarding the findings. Moreover, all the literature were properly acknowledged by adhering to the citation and referencing guideline of the American Psychological Association (2019) - 7th edition.

Results and Discussion

A thematic map (Figure 1) was developed to present the research findings. Findings were arranged into five main themes that are in line with the two research objectives. Direct ways of impression formation to create a favourable image, direct ways of impression formation to defend an unfavourable image, indirect ways of impression formation, and non-verbal ways to impress others are the four themes under the objective of exploring the impression management strategies adopted by the academicians in the selected state university. Then, the final theme which is the aims of impression management behaviours was organized to examine the motives behind academicians to adopt those strategies, which is the second objective of this study. The following section presents the findings of the study under each theme.

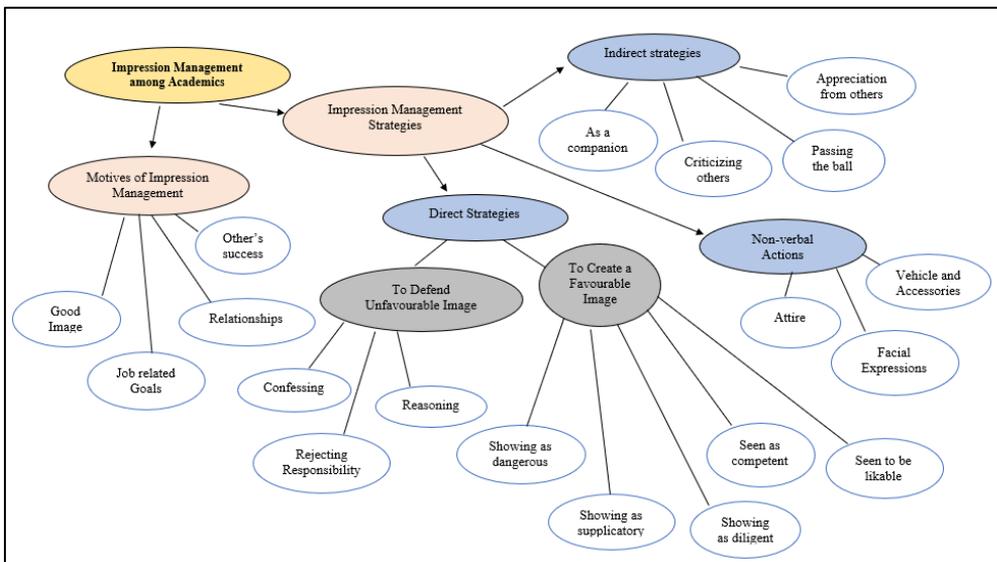


Figure 1: Thematic Map

Source: Author Compilation

Note: The size and the distance between bubbles do not indicate any thematic relationship

01. Direct Ways of Impression Formation to Create a Favourable Image

The findings of this theme of direct ways of impression formation to create a favourable image are interpreted using the five sub-themes of present the self as a well competent person, present the self to be likable, present the self as diligent, present the self as supplicatory, and present the self as dangerous and tough.

Present the Self as a Well Competent Person

According to Gwal (2015), self-promotion is a process where individuals present things to display their competencies to the target audience. Almost all the participants in their self-introduction went on to say their capabilities and competencies. Mr. Madhushan recounted his performance during the interview as, “Due to having a 1st class I was able to join the staff after passing out”. Similarly, the senior lecturer Ms. Priyani explained, “My works are so neat at those times. Still like that [smiling proudly] ...Normally before starting to teach a subject I prepare the whole plan for that subject and handover it”. Considering the excerpts of the participants, I came up with a finding where academics in my context use this strategy of promoting their own competencies and capabilities to impress others by stating their performances, designations, previous employments, expressing their strengths, sharing achievements among others.

Present the Self to be Likable

People use flattery or do something in favour with the intention of perceived good in front of others. According to Mr. Sandun, he uses exaggeration as an art to impress others with the excerpt of, “No, I’m not calling it as ‘butter ganawa’. I say it as an art. It’s the art of dealing with people. That sometimes uh...one word is enough. If I say ‘aiye meka karala denna’, non-academic will do it definitely”. And Ms. Siluni gave her voice, “Uh...I’m like this, I do ‘butter ganawa’ with my closest set of people only. Within my professional capacity, within student-teacher capacity, I do not use it”. The findings of this study revealed that all the participants use flattery to impress others to some extent. Most of the time male lecturers use it for lower-level employees like non-academics, while female lecturers use it among friendship groups. Also, academics in my sample respect others and try to be compatible with the university values to create a good image of them in others’ eyes. Further, those

academicians have an indirect expectation behind joking where if students are having such a relaxed environment with jokes, they tend to create a good impression regarding the particular academician as well. In a conclusion, it can be interpreted that the academics of the study sample not only use flattery and do favour as to existing literature, but they also use some uncommon behaviours such as greetings, sharing, and respecting others. By doing so they try to show that they want to maintain a favourable image in front of others.

Present the Self as Diligent

During interview discussions, most of the participants emphasized the huge workload which they are engaging with to express how much they are hardworking. Moreover, I came across different stories narrated by the participants regarding the hard effort that they have taken to put students to their success. With that, it is implied that they wanted to be perceived as moral characters which agrees with the existing literature, where individuals try to communicate with others that they are hardworking and they try to show that they are moral characters using this strategy (Jones & Pittman, 1982; Khadyr & Caliskan, 2016). Ms. Amali emphasized that “I’m not going to mention it again and again especially. Never saying ‘Ammoh I have done this much’. Uh...but I work, and that work should be foreseen in front of others. And they should feel that. That means I don’t think that it should highlight time to time.” With this, it is demonstrated that though academics of the study context do hard work and try to show that they are moral characteristics, they do so with real intention and not to pretend.

Present the Self as Supplicatory

The strategy of supplication is in which a person exploits his weaknesses and dependencies to get the help or favour from the target (Jones & Pittman, 1982). An interesting result is found where all the academics that I have studied express their incapacities with the idea of getting help from others. When I asked the question whether you are sharing the unknowingness of a particular aspect with others, Ms. Amali went on saying “Definitely. If I don’t know I say it. That’s it for students too. In a lecture also, if students ask something if I don’t know, it is better to say, ‘I don’t know’ rather telling a lie”. But when taking assistance, they don’t seek it only from a higher-level position as in the existing literature. They prefer to get assistance from any level of the career. A similar answer was given by Mr. Thulada, “I ask if I assure that the person has some kind of knowledge...That person may be in a higher position than me or maybe

a lower position”.

Present the Self as Dangerous and Tough

Basically, this strategy is used by individuals to create an image as they are authoritative than others. I asked my participants in what situations they have to use their power in front of others. There, Mr. Sadeep encountered, “That means we have to give them (non-academic staff) a chance know? there if they don’t behave, then have to say it a bit more hard than forcing”. Through findings, it is proved that if the academics are to use power, they use it to lower-level academics or to the non-academic staff. Shoko and Dzimiri (2018) highlight school heads have used the intimidation tactic when the good impression management tactics couldn’t give better results. In line with this, academics in the context use a little or no intimidation strategy when the other positive tactics are failed to achieve their expectations. As the final interpretation, it is proved that although there are some situations for academics of my study sample to use power, they use it less and they generally use it for lower-level employees. But they don’t like to seem like intimidators in others’ minds.

02. Direct Ways of Impression Formation to Defend an Unfavourable Image

Defend the self as an apologizer, defend the self by reasoning and defend the self by rejecting responsibility are the three sub-themes that have been developed to present the research data within the theme of direct ways of impression formation to defend an unfavourable image.

Defend the Self as an Apologizer

Apologizing is defined as a confession of responsibility for a negative action/event done by the actor which is guilty (Tedeschi & Lindskold, 1976, as cited in Lee et al., 1999). According to this definition, the strategy of apology is used by individuals to express pardon for a negative action done by them. With the statements raised by the participants, I came up with a finding where academics use apology as a defensive strategy to repair their bad image. Because all the participants emphasized that they will say ‘sorry’ to anyone, regardless of their position, for the wrong actions that they have done.

Defend the Self by Reasoning

Justification involves giving reasons to justify a negative action done by the actor while accepting the responsibility for the negative behaviour (Scott & Lyman, 1968, as in Lee et al., 1999). Giving reasons for the wrong action done

is another way of impression management to defend the negative image. During the interview discussions, the study sample ended up saying that they provide reasons for the wrongdoing if they have so. “I will explain the situation I was in. That means if a mistake happens to someone by me, I will apologize and give reasons that this happened due to these reasons”, expressed by Ms. Siluni. So, it ended up with the finding that the academics are using the strategy of justification to defend an unfavourable image being created about them in the Sri Lankan context too.

Defend the Self by Rejecting the Responsibility

In my study context, academics reject the responsibility of a negative action if the circumstance is reasonable to deny the responsibility of an undesirable action. They specifically underlined that, though others see their actions as wrong, if they don't see it as wrong, and then they would strongly reject it. Ms. Priyani was trying to reject the responsibility of a negative action during the conversation by saying, “All of us don't have the same mental level. Sometimes due to physical conditions, mental problems, we may come across days where we are not fully fit with the conditions... In such situations, mistakes may happen. Those arise naturally.” Therefore, results demonstrated that academics use excuses as a defensive strategy of impression management in the study context to protect their image if there are only acceptable reasons for them to do so.

03. Indirect Ways of Impression Formation

As stated in the literature review phase, people use the information of others to create a good image of them (Cialdini & Richardson, 1980, as in Mohamed & Gardner, 2004). To interpret the data of my research regarding the indirect ways of impression formation, I have divided the theme into main four sub-themes including, improve the self as a companion, improve the self by criticizing others, improve the self with other's appreciation and reduce the negative image by 'passing the ball'.

Improve the Self as a Companion

“Association is whereby individuals enhance or protect their image by managing information about people and things that they associate with” (Shoko & Dzimiri, 2018, p. 255). When it comes to the findings of my study, it is found that irrespective of the situation whether it is official or not, the sample of my study promotes the university to create a good image for them. As Mr. Sadeep

explained, “That’s a prestige for us. I’ll take it (the opportunity of getting prestige) definitely. That means, wherever I say that I am a lecturer at this university...I think that is not maintaining status in the wrong way...But we have got a prestige... I use it.” Further, some of the academics enhanced their families and with that, they tried to have a favourable image for them. In this sub-theme of presenting the self as a companion, academics don’t associate with others to create a good image for them. But academics use the enhancement of the university and the family enhancement as the indirect ways of impression management.

Improve the Self by Criticizing Others

I came across some situations where my participants criticize others intending to build a good image of them. People try to damage the image of others or business organizations to enhance their own image (Cialdini & Richardson, 1980, as in Mohamed & Gardner, 2004). Some participants criticized the actions of others where they are not involved, some discussed the situations where they see others as wrong. As an example, Ms. Priyani criticized others in the department when she joined the staff with the excerpt, “When the time I join the staff, I had a hard time. No one was there to welcome me with beautiful roses. I only had ‘Katu Akulu’. So, with lots of fights, disrespects I joined here”. Therefore, it can provide a finding where criticizing others is another indirect type of strategy used by academics in my study context to create an image about them in other’s eyes.

Improve the Self with Other’s Appreciation

This strategy is a unique one where it does not direct with existing literature. Some participants express how well they have done their job in coordinating/teaching by stating how they got appreciation from others. Also, Mr. Sandun spoke about how his teaching skill is being recommended by friends, “Even from before passing out, I taught the difficult things to my friends. Then they said that I have a teaching skill”. These indirectly create a good impression about them. Considering the voices given by the sample of participants, it ended up with a new finding where the academics in the present context use others’ appreciations and recommendations to show that they are favourable and pleasant in front of other people.

Reduce the Negative Image by ‘Passing the Ball’

This sub-theme is also another interesting finding in my study. With the raised

voices during interviews, I understood that there are some situations where academics wanted to prevent being created a bad image by passing the fault to another person. As an example, Ms. Ayomi explained her experience regarding a situation where she had to blame another person, “He was not in a good situation. That means by standing in a wrong point he asked a wrong question...at that time I can remember, I told him in a serious manner ‘why are you doing this? Here this is right?... That day I don’t know I was a bit in a tension mood with the paper packets. Uh...then he asked me about available information what he knows already”. So, it allowed me to present a unique finding that academics in my study context are trying to defend creating a bad image of them by pointing out other’s faults.

04. Non-verbal Ways to Impress Others

Under this theme, it presents the findings relating to the non-verbal strategies used by academics with some sub-themes. Attire to present the self, vehicle and other accessories to impression formation, and facial expressions are the sub-areas that have been touched in the interpretation as the non-verbal ways to impress others.

Attire to Present the Self

Almost all the participants agreed that the dress of an academician affects the impressions of students regarding that particular lecturer. During the interview discussion Mr. Sadeep expressed his idea about the attire, “Now if we are coming like with a tattoo, with a tinted or spiked hair, having earrings...then, by coming so it damages the image based on how others perceived”. According to Preves and Stephenson (2009), teachers try to maintain their identity within a classroom through symbols like attire (as cited in Gaspar, 2016). So, it was clear that in the current context also academics give reasonable attention to their attire as it affects the impression that others form of them as academics in a particular university.

Vehicle and Other Accessories for a Good Looking

Teachers use symbols such as vehicles, their appearance, and manner of behaviour to form impressions within a classroom (Preves & Stephenson, 2009, as in Gaspar, 2016). My sample of participants gave a different idea about the non-verbal strategy of using vehicles and other accessories to create impressions. Ms. Amali went on saying, “That means I’m not going to maintain my status using a vehicle. I had a big vehicle, and I got the permit as well...then

I thought that I don't get mental happiness. I change to the point after realizing that my vehicle should use for my easiness and not to maintain status". Like Ms. Amali, all the participants stated that they don't use those to maintain their status. Therefore, it can conclude that academics in the study context do not use vehicles and other accessories as non-verbal aspects to manage their impressions.

Facial Expressions to Impression Formation

During interviews, all the participants emphasized many times the importance of maintaining facial expressions to form impressions in classrooms, consistent with Cuddy et al. (2011, as cited in Amaral, 2018) individuals who use non-verbal cues including smiling, nodding, and leaning are perceived as likable and friendly. Ms. Priyani emphasized, "... our facial expressions, the way we move with the students, the way we talk with them, the language we use are very important for student-teacher interactions". So, it is proved that facial expressions help academics to create good impressions as a non-verbal strategy in the Sri Lankan educational context.

05. Aims of Impression Management Behaviours

The final theme of 'aims of impression management behaviours' has been arranged to answer the second objective of this research study. To interpret the results, it is arranged in sub-themes including to present a good image, to maintain good relationships, to achieve job-related goals, and for other's success and well-being.

To Present the Good Image

The main goal of impression management is to present the self in a way that they like to be perceived by others (Drory & Zaidman, 2007). The study sample mainly pointed out that they want to seem good in front of others every time when interacting. Also, they expressed that they don't want others to see them as a bad person. As a good example, Ms. Siluni stated, "I like others to have an impression about me like this is a good person. Even when we die, I like them to tell that I am a good person. So that is the idea I have in my mind". Similarly, Mr. Madhushan highlighted maintaining a good image with the excerpt, "So, when we work with them (students), I believe that it's very important to maintain the image". Considering all the statements of participants, it is identified that academics manage impressions to present a good image of them. But they don't manage impressions in a situation where others perceive them wrong as they expect.

To Maintain Good Relationships

Findings disclosed that academics are motivated to manage impressions to build rapport among others. Not only that but also the sample of academics expressed some unique ideas regarding their intention of impression management. Ms. Amali recounted the reason to manage impressions as, “After that must maintain a good network with others”. Not only that, but Ms. Priyani also discussed about trust and closeness, “Students build trust upon us like ‘this teacher is like this, this type, very good, we are taught like this...’ etc. That trust is important”. Maintaining closeness, trustworthiness, and openness when interacting with others are some intentions that led them to manage a good impression about themselves in front of others in this study sample. So, it can be said that academics are motivated to manage impressions to have good relationships, close interactions, build trust, and openness to conversation.

To Achieve Job Related Goals

Most of the participants emphasized career development and career growth as job-related goals to engage with impression management. Not only that, but some of the participants also pointed out job security as another job-related goal, which motivated them to manage impressions. As to the voices of the participants, it is identified that impressions are managed when going to gain power, authority, and positions in the career. Therefore, it is implied that impression management is important in the current study context to achieve job-related goals such as career growth, job security, power, and position gain in the career ladder.

For other’s Success and Well-being

This is one of the unique findings that I have captured in my research data, where it doesn’t match with the existing literature. During interview discussions, participants emphasized that they use impression management basically to facilitate mental happiness to the students as well as to motivate them. According to Ms. Amali, “We have to show that this is how we work, this is how we handle problems, ah... this is how we balance the timetable likewise. If we give an example like that, they will also do that”. In addition to that Ms. Priyani highlighted the mental happiness by saying, “Sometimes students become hopeless and give up their degrees. In such situation I hug them, kiss them and asked them ‘don’t do this ‘putha’. let’s finish this’”. With that, a finding can be interpreted where academics in the current study manage impressions especially to facilitate, motivate and guide students for their success rather than considering the academic’s own interests.

Implications and Conclusion

The current study contributes to the field of impression management as it strengthens the existing theories as well as provides unique findings. The findings proved that impression management can be practiced either directly or indirectly as stated by Mohamed et al. (1999, as in Terrell & Kwok, 2011). Also, all of the participants use the five strategies introduced by Jones and Pittmans (1982). And, the motives behind academics to manage impressions are in line up to some extent with the model developed by Leary and Kowalski (1990).

In addition to the existing literature, this research study provides unique theoretical implications to the impression management field. Academics in the study context share their achievements and competencies basically to motivate others which is a little bit different from the existing literature. Not only the flattery and exaggeration, but some unique actions such as greetings, sharing, and respecting others are adopted by academics of the study sample to be seen as likable in front of others. Also, they like to show that they are hardworking but in a real manner and not to form fake impressions. Trying to improve the own image through other's appreciation and trying to reduce the negative image by pointing other's faults are two unique indirect impression management strategies that have been identified through research findings. Another interesting implication of this research is, almost all the academician's intention to manage impressions are to facilitate and motivate students to their success rather being considering their own self-interests.

Moreover, this study provides managerial implications to academics and other authoritative parties in the educational sector to improve the effectiveness of the interactions among others. Findings provide implications for individual academics to present/ create a good image that may help to achieve inner peace and attraction of others in both career and personal lives. Further, this study provides implications to any person in the educational sector or organizational sector, who has an interest to conduct a study on impression management behaviours.

Although this study provides insights into impression management strategies and the motives behind them in the Sri Lankan context, there are some limitations too. One of the limitations I encountered when conducting the study was presenting me, as I am a beginner to this field of research. As I am a student in the beginning stage of doing research, I faced difficulties when making

appointments to have interview discussion and when collecting data for the study. The incapability of doing observations with the time constraints also limited to bring more rich findings regarding the study.

Finally, some avenues can be suggested for future studies in this area. It is better to conduct a study in the field of impression management by capturing the area of private universities as this research is focused and limited to a selected state university in Sri Lanka. Because this impression management concept is much more behaviour focused and the controlling mechanisms used by private and state universities are different. So, by doing that, there is another opportunity to do a comparative analysis by capturing the differences of impression management behaviours of academics in state universities vs private universities.

Further, future researchers should connect the situational factors which are prevailing in contemporary society such as the COVID-19 pandemic, to the field of impression management. Because due to these circumstances it allows people to connect virtually. Therefore, it is recommended for prospective researchers to find out how impression management techniques are used in online work settings and/or work-from-home contexts.

Declaration of Conflicting Interests

The author declared no potential conflicts of interest with respect to the research, authorship, and publication of this article.

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The Impact of Organizational Environmental Support on Organizational Sustainable Performance: The Mediating Role of Employee Green Behaviour in selected Commercial banks in Batticaloa Region of Sri Lanka

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Abstract

Sustainability is a major global concern and there has been increased pressure on organizations from the stakeholders to broaden the focus of business performance beyond financial performance. Companies should have a balance among financial, social and environmental performance in order to be competitive and survive in the long term. Committed employees are the key asset of every organization and organizations can engage employees in improving their sustainable performance. This paper aims to provide empirical evidence of the associations between organizational environmental support and organizational sustainable performance with the mediating role of employee green behaviour within the selected commercial banks in the Batticaloa Region of Sri Lanka. Data collection was made from 173 employees who are working in commercial banks in the Batticaloa Region of Sri Lanka. Univariate, bivariate, and multi-step mediation analyses have been used to analyze the data. The results indicate that there is a significant positive association between organizational environmental support, employee green behaviour and organizational sustainable performance. It is also concluded that employee green behaviour significantly mediates the relationship between organizational environmental support and organizational sustainable performance. The research concerns the understanding of various environmental support initiatives and sustainable performance from the viewpoint of employees in the banking sector at imparting employee green behaviour as one of the important factors to meet challenges relevant to environmental sustainability in the

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dynamic banking sector. This study contributes to the field by bringing together the concepts of employee green behaviour with organizational environmental support and organizational sustainable performance in the context of the Sri Lankan banking sector and suggests the banks provide resources and a supportive environment for the employees to implement eco-initiatives.

Keywords: *Employee Green Behaviour, Organizational Environmental Support, Organizational Sustainable Performance*

Introduction

Environmental concern is an emerging concept today, and it is necessary for each and every organization to adapt its practices to conform to this trend. Currently, with the increasing consumers' environmental awareness and appropriate government regulatory constraints, great pressure is being faced by the firms regarding their environmental policies and procedures (Mathiyazhagan, Govindan & Haq, 2014; Mumtaz, Ali & Petrillo, 2018). Companies have begun to address these pressures by adopting sustainability pillars and publishing reports on social and environmental issues. In addition, it requires all the functional departments in the establishment to nurture an eco-friendly organizational culture by setting sustainability goals for transforming enterprise operations. A growing number of companies have begun to transform themselves into more sustainable ones (Tideman, Arts, & Zandee, 2013). Equal consideration for economic, social, and environmental aspects is now needed for a standard of sustainable development.

A company's sustainable performance is generally measured in terms of three aspects of sustainability: economic, social, and environmental performance (Khan & Quaddus, 2015). Through legislative and regulatory frameworks there is increasing pressure on policymakers to urge the banking industry to design its products and services with customers in mind while also acting proactively to address potential economic, environmental, and social issues (Azevedo, Godina & Matias, 2017). Although the finance sector is regarded as an environment-friendly sector, it should take into account social and environmental results besides economic effects and engage in the process of sustainable development. The banking industry is equally accountable for its actions that have an adverse impact on the economy, society, and the environment, and it owes it to itself to take this accountability seriously in everything it does. Hence, the idea of Green Banking has lately been initiated and has begun to spread across Sri Lankan

private and state banks.

The creation of new financial products that open up new business prospects and boost its competitiveness is a component of the link between the banking industry and the environment. However, this connection also relates to how it maintains, adjusts, and communicates its environmental plans in relation to its environmental footprints, such as the management and consumption of energy, materials, and water (Evangelinos, Skouloudis & Nikolaou, 2009). Despite not being regarded as a polluting industry, the banking industry's increased turnover and, by extension, all banking activities, have a negative impact on the environment. The adoption of corresponding technology, procedures, and goods that can improve sustainability and the environment has also resulted in green banking as a result of banks' environmental and social responsibilities (Bhardwaj, & Malhotra, 2013).

One of the main observations is that despite the presence of many general standards, the banking service lacks common methodologies and standards to tackle sustainability (Korzeb & Samaniego-Medina, 2019). Due to these reasons, in this study, the banking sector has been selected to study sustainable performance while taking into account of the role employees, since past research has revealed that employees' eco-initiatives can have a significant impact on business performance and determine the success of organizations' efforts to implement environmental management objectives (Kolluru, 1994). An organization's performance directly depends on the individuals it employs.

Employee perceptions of environmental sustainability policies, procedures, and practices of an organization have the potential to capture the contextual influences on green behaviour and are a significant research area (Jackson, et al., 2011). Human behaviours are regarded as the cause of tacking the deteriorating environment (Boeve-de Pauw & Van Petegem, 2017). However, one area of weakness in the literature is the absence of studies that links individuals to corporate sustainability (Orlitzky, Siegel & Waldman, 2011) and the studies interconnecting employee behaviour and sustainability performance, which is relatively new (Ruepert et al., 2016). This indicates there is an empirical *knowledge gap* concerning these issues.

Moreover, past research studies have examined the factors affecting green behaviour, and it is suggested that future studies can examine the outcomes of green behaviour (Safari, Salehzadeh, Panahi & Abolghasemian, 2018) because in order to promote employee green behaviour (EGB) in the workplace such

evidence is critical for practitioners and those working within organizations. Ones and Dilchert (2012) note that, although researchers have been interested for some time in why individuals act in environmentally friendly ways in private, interest from organizational researchers is relatively recent. Especially, there is a need to focus on the mechanisms through which various personal and contextual antecedents influence employee green behaviour. Therefore, it is quite there is an *empirical gap* exists in the research topic.

In addition, the research that regarded sustainability incorporation throughout the organization typically consists of case examples and qualitative analyzes (e.g., Bansal, 2003; Mirvis, 2012; Hockerts, 2014), as it is common and appropriate with uncharted phenomena. This means there is a *methodological gap* and other methods can be utilized to explore the phenomena.

Hence, this study addresses these research gaps as an issue for investigation. Therefore, the purpose of this study is to highlight the importance of engaging the employees in sustainability initiatives of the organization and investigate the relationship between organizational environmental support on the organizational sustainable performance with the mediating role of employee green behaviour as it presents that the sustainability performance of an organization can be enhanced by involving employees to implement sustainable practices. The specific objectives of this empirical investigation are to assess:

- the relationship between perceived organizational environmental support and organizational sustainable performance
- the relationship between perceived organizational environmental support and employee green behaviour.
- the relationship between employee green behaviour and organizational sustainable performance.
- the mediating effect of employee green behaviour in the relationship between perceived organizational environmental support and organizational sustainable performance.

Further, the present paper proceeds as follows. The first section provides a review of the literature followed by the development of hypotheses and a conceptual model. The next section describes the method, which is followed by the results, discussion, and a conclusion. Finally, presented implications, recommendations, the main limitations of the study and directions for further research have been provided.

Literature Review

Organizational Environmental Support

Lamm, Tosti-Kharas and King (2015) defined Perceived Organizational Support (POS) as “the specific beliefs held by employees concerning how much the organization values their contributions toward sustainability” (p. 209). When an employer provides the resources they require, an employee feels supported in the context of corporate greening (Cantor, Morrow & Montabon, 2012). In accordance with the environmental literature, resources provided by the employer may refer to tangible or material aid that enables people to act sustainably and practice environmental practices (Ramus & Steger, 2000); to meet the socioemotional needs of employees by sharing and sustaining their environmental concern by allowing them to use their personal resources while working, such as time and energy (Paille & Raineri, 2015).

POS refers to the degree to which an employee believes that the organization values their contributions and cares about their well-being at work (Eisenberger, Cummings, Aemeli & Lynch, 1997). Organizational support theory states, that commitment is increased by perceived organizational support and it encourages maintaining positive behavioural patterns rewarded and/or recognized by the organization (Eisenberger et al., 1997). Some studies underline the positive relationship between perceived organizational support and organizational citizenship behaviour (OCB) (Boiral, 2009), noting that an increase in perceived support could lead to an increase in organizational citizenship behaviours (Boiral, Talbot & Paillé, 2013).

When considering environmental issues concerning OCB, a similar process can occur. The employer’s commitment and support to environmental protection fulfil the requirements of employees relating to their environmental concerns, encouraging them to engage in extra-role environmental behaviours in exchange for fair treatment (Paille, Boiral & Chen, 2013). Organizations can thus achieve those employees would perform Work Place Environmentally Friendly Behaviour (WEFB) (Boiral, Paille & Raineri, 2015; Roy, Boiral & Paille, 2013) by the way of demonstrating their support for environmental practices and application of eco-policies (Cantor, Morrow & Montabon, 2012).

Organizational Sustainable Performance

Takala and Pallab (2000) suggested that the performance of corporate sustainability usually focuses on the economic, social, and environmental performance of sustainable development. There are alternative terms such as social sustainability, environmental sustainability (Iqbal & Hassan, 2018; Iqbal, Ahmad, & Akhtar, 2017), ecological sustainability, human sustainability, and sustainable development used; regardless of this, corporate citizenship and corporate social responsibility have been used discuss the sustainability.

Schaltegger and Wagner (2006) define sustainability performance as a firm's performance in all dimensions and for all corporate sustainability drivers. In summary, sustainability performance includes performance linked to emission rate and saving of natural resources; other environmental operations and initiatives; employment characteristics; occupational health and safety; social and community relations; stakeholder participation; and economic effects of the organization other than those financial assesses applied in the financial accounts (Burawat, 2019). However, there is still a lack of research that simultaneously considers the triple bottom line dimensions (*i.e.*, environmental, economic, and social aspects) in evaluating the effect of sustainable initiatives implemented in the industry on sustainability performance.

Employee Green Behaviour

According to Opatha (2019), Employee Green Behaviour (EGB) means the extent to which a particular employee takes action in respect of greening. It includes green actions and activities of employees. A similar view was expressed by many authors (Vinojini & Arulrajah, 2017; Opatha & Kottawatta, 2020a; Opatha & Kottawatta, 2020b; Thevanes & Arulrajah, 2020; Weerakoon et al., 2021) who conducted research works regarding employee green behaviour in Sri Lankan context. The success of environmental sustainability initiatives of organizations depends upon individual employees' behaviour (Norton, Zacher, & Ashkanasy, 2014). Essentially, researchers (Norton et al., 2015) emphasize that there is a need to understand the personal and contextual factors that influence EGB from a multilevel perspective.

EGB is described as any observable individual behaviour that aids in achieving environmental sustainability in the workplace (Norton, Zacher & Ashkanasy, 2015). Ones and Dilchert (2012) argued that organizational scholars need to give more consideration to employee behaviours that contribute to environmental sustainability and also to the forces that induce them. Environmental Behaviours in general are individual behaviours that contribute

to environmental sustainability (Ones & Dilchert, 2012).

Given the nature of EGB, researchers working in this field (e.g., Robertson & Barling, 2013; Kim, Vaswani, Kang, Nam & Lee, 2017) have tended to concentrate on the role of organizational factors such as employee commitment to sustainability, leadership (Andersson, Shivarajan, & Blau, 2005), and incentives (Graves, Sarkis & Zhu, 2013).

Hypotheses Development

Organizational Environmental Support and Organizational Sustainable Performance

As stated by O'Donovan (2002), companies are interested in improving environmental performance with the ultimate goal to improve profits earned, as they believed their impact on the company's finance, the businesses become very concerned about environmental aspects. Researchers argue that environmental performance will have positive consequences on financial outcomes (e.g., De Burgos-Jiménez et al., 2013). Cost reduction can be achieved by increasing resources and reducing environmental incidents, while revenue growth can be achieved by enhancing business credibility and image, improving market access, and increasing product quality (De Burgos-Jimenez et al. 2013). Salama (2005) found that a positive relationship existed between environmental performance and firm financial performance. Similarly, other findings hold that environmental management investment results in improved firm performance by managing stakeholders (Artiach, Nelson & Walker, 2010). Maintaining a swan pond, and watering plants and shrubs is not just a sustainable activity but it can also help the employees to relieve their pressure. Besides these, it is a recreational activity that is important for the health and mind of the employees and also for the employees' rejuvenation. As mentioned by Whitelaw, Teuton, Swift, and Scobie (2010), green spaces have a beneficial effect on psychological well-being and cognitive function through both physical access and use and access to views ultimately lead to enhanced social performance of firms. Based on the empirical evidence and discussion, this study develops the following hypothesis:

H₁: There is a positive relationship between Organizational Environmental Support and Organizational Sustainable Performance.

Organizational Environmental Support and Employee Green Behaviour

According to Ramus (2002), in order to focus their creative energy on organizational environmental problem-solving employees need supervisory support (daily behaviours aimed at encouraging environmental actions). Employees' perceptions of policies, procedures, and practices of an organization toward environmental sustainability have the potential to capture the contextual influences on green behaviour; and are a significant area for research (Jackson et al., 2011). On the other hand, an employee might hold ambivalent or resistant attitudes towards green behaviour but nonetheless engages in these behaviours because their company has a strong green culture, or because the environmental activity is included in the nature of the work required in their role.

The significant positive relationship between perceived organizational support for the environment and involvement in environmental management (i.e., required EGB) as well as promotion of initiatives and innovative environmental behaviours (i.e., voluntary EGB) is reported by Cantor, Morrow, and Montabon (2012). Norton, Zacher and Ashkanasy (2014), found positive relationships between the perceived presence of an organizational sustainability policy and self-report task-related and proactive EGB. They might believe that showing EGB is appropriate or typical in their workplace (Norton, Zacher, & Ashkanasy, 2014). Robertson and Barling (2013) reported that subordinates' EGB is directly and positively influenced by the environmental behaviour of leaders, as well as positively and indirectly via the environmental passion of subordinates.

When the organization values the environmental efforts and accomplishments of its employees, the employees feel supported in their job. Employees gather information and make observations about the company's investment in environmental sustainability and green activities. If they perceive that the organization dedicates great importance to environmental contributions and green activities, such employees carry out their tasks effectively and exhibit discretionary behaviours such as OCB. Based on the empirical evidence and discussion, this study develops the following hypothesis:

H₂: There is a positive relationship between Organizational Environmental Support and Employee Green Behaviour.

Employee Green Behaviour and Organizational Sustainable Performance

Given the interconnectedness of economic, environmental, and social issues that form the pillars of sustainability, various stakeholders must be even more

involved in organizations (Van Kleef & Roome, 2007). Environmental sustainability is a serious concern at the organizational as well as national levels. Hence, every organization requires making all its employees green to improve environmental performance (Opatha and Arulrajah, 2014; Opatha, 2015). Scholars (Ones & Dilchert, 2012) propose that the success of organizational environmental initiatives depends on the engagement of the employee. As a result, organizations seek to engage employees in sustainability (SHRM, BSR, & Aurosoorya, 2011). Encouraging employee environmental behaviour is a critical component of implementing successful environmental programs in the workplace (Young et al., 2015).

Employee behaviour makes significant contributions to organizational environmental performance (Boiral, Talbot, & Paillé, 2015), waste reduction and cost-saving, and competitive advantage. Ultimately this can increase the company's profitability. This can ultimately increase the productivity of the company. In addition, the more skills and values workers have recorded being moved from work to family, the healthier their mental health and higher their job satisfaction (Hanson, Hammer, & Colton, 2006) and the higher their commitment to their roles and employers. This can ultimately increase the social performance of the company.

H₃: There is a positive relationship between Employee Green Behaviour and Organizational Sustainable Performance.

Mediating Role of Employee Green Behaviour

Scholars argued that introducing an effective environmental management system in an organization would lead to improved economic performance (Abdel-Maksoud, Kamel & Elbanna, 2016). Thus, the successful integration of green concerns into the business strategy will not occur without clear leadership, resource commitment, and active support from the company's management (Fugate, Autry, Davis-Sramek & Germain, 2012). Zailani, Jeyaraman, Vengadasan, and Premkumar (2012) found a positive correlation between sustainable procurement practices and social, economic, and operational performance.

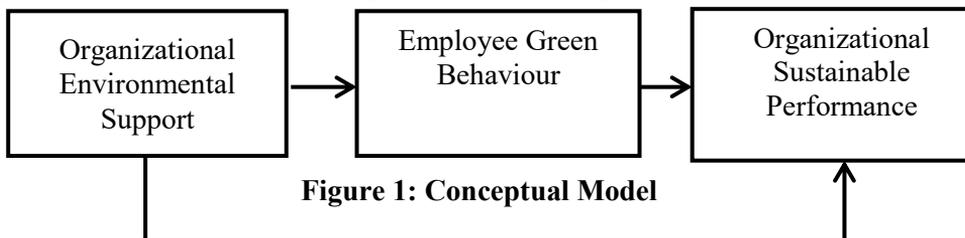
The organization's environment should serve as an aid to improve the health of the workers. Some of the ways employees engage in pro-environmental behaviour include the availability of healthy behavioural options (e.g., healthy food choices), enhanced and optimized safety, sustainability and stewardship of the environment, and the opportunity for contact with nature at work (Engbers,

van Poppel, Paw, van Mechelen, 2005). This employee satisfaction can be attained by giving them sufficient authority to function freely and become involved in the environmental tasks of the organizations; in other words, empowerment (Gutowski et al., 2005). This has a positive impact on the social aspect of sustainability. Accordingly, Messmer-Magnus et al. (2012) argued that “organizational sustainability and environmental sustainability can be concurrently achieved when employees and organizations are both committed” (p. 157). From the employees' viewpoint, environmental support received from their organization is perhaps the best expression of the organization's commitment to helping them preserve the natural environment. Based on the empirical evidence and discussion, this study develops the following hypothesis:

H₄: Employee Green Behaviour mediates the relationship between Organizational Environmental Support and Organizational Sustainable Performance.

Conceptual Model

Based on the review of the literature, this study proposes to test the following model illustrated in Figure 1, to examine the relationship between organizational environmental support and organizational sustainable performance with the mediating role of employee green behaviour.



Theoretical Support for the Conceptual Model

Social Exchange Theory (SET)

According to Cropanzano and Mitchell (2005), social exchange theory is one of “the most influential conceptual paradigms for understanding workplace behaviour” (p. 874). The conceptual model of this study proposes to examine the extent to which an organization may encourage its employees to develop pro-environmental behaviour by promoting social exchange principles. Ones, Dilchert, and Biga (2010) have found a significant positive but moderate direct

relation between perceived organizational support (POS) and employee green behaviours.

As noted earlier, the adoption of principles of social exchange contributes to generating a scenario where employees are likely to reciprocate by performing behaviours valued by their organization (Lavelle, Rupp, & Brockner, 2007). However, employees must be aware that to some extent their organization is, concerned with environmental sustainability in order to reciprocate appropriately (i.e., by performing pro-environmental behaviours). Therefore, this means that employees will engage in pro-environmental behaviours in the workplace when they view their organization as concerned about environmental sustainability.

Methodology

The objective of the study is to identify the relationships among organizational environmental support, employee green behaviour and organizational sustainable performance and examine whether employee green behaviour mediates the relationship between organizational environmental support and sustainability performance in selected commercial banks. This study employs a deductive methodology, whereby the researcher first develops a theory about the subject of interest, then refines that theory into more precise hypotheses and conducts the study in a non-contrived study setting. The empirical data for the current study were gathered from prominent banks that take the initiative and invest a significant amount of money to secure their organization's sustainable performance and have been recognized for it. Based on the sustainability initiatives of the banking sector, this study has selected employees of five particular banks that operate around the island.

The study involves a survey of 236 employees (total population of the study) at all hierarchical levels ranging from banking trainees to managerial level people of five selected commercial banks in Manmunai North and Eravur Pattru Divisional Secretariat (DS) in Batticaloa District of Sri Lanka. Given that sustainability issues and employee green behaviour are intertwined with all employees in the organization, this study includes all hierarchical levels of employees. Furthermore, the rationale for picking two specific district secretariat areas in Batticaloa district is the fact that the majority of the bank branches in Batticaloa District are concentrated in these DS regions out of 14 DS divisions. Since the population of this study consisted of a small number of

employees from chosen banks, the stratified random sampling technique was employed to validate and achieve the objectives. The details about the study population and sample size are given in Appendix 1. Every single employee is considered as a unit of analysis.

A quantitative research design was adopted in this study. To gather primary data, a self-reporting questionnaire was issued to all employees, and 173 questionnaires were returned. In addition, secondary data were collected based on various sources such as journal articles and published papers, web sites of the relevant institutions. In order to achieve the objective of the study, this has employed univariate, bivariate, and multi-step mediation analysis to analyze the collected data in SPSS version 22.0. In order to achieve the mediational effect of employee green behaviour on the relationship between organizational environmental support and sustainability performance, this study has followed four steps of the mediational processes of Baron and Kenny (1986) in which several regression analyses are conducted and the significance of the coefficients is examined at each step.

Testing for mediation Baron and Kenny (1986) proposed a four-step approach in which several regression analyses are conducted and the significance of the coefficients is examined at each step. Step 1 is conducting a simple regression analysis with X predicting Y to test for path c alone. Step 2 is conducting a simple regression analysis with X predicting M to test for path a. Step 3 is conducting a simple regression analysis with M predicting Y to test the significance of path b alone. And finally, if one or more of these relationships are not significant, researchers usually conclude that mediation is not possible or likely (although this is not always true). In contrast, if there are significant relationships from Steps 1 through 3, one proceeds to Step 4, which is to conduct a multiple regression analysis with X and M predicting Y.

Following Baron and Kenny (1986), if M mediates an X-Y causal relationship then:

- (1) X significantly predicts Y (path c is significant)
- (2) X significantly predicts M (path a is significant)
- (3) M significantly predicts Y in the presence of X (path b is significant)
- (4) when M is in the model, the effect of X on Y is reduced (c' is less than c).

With complete mediation, path c' is zero. If c' is smaller than the regression weight c in the first model, then M is said to 'partially mediate' the effects of X

on Y. If M is not significant then there is no mediation. Further. The mediational effect is measured using the test of statistical significance as proposed by Sobel (1982).

Measures

Items used in the survey to measure the variables of interest in this study were adopted from the extant literature. To measure *Organizational Environmental Support*, five-question items were adopted from a prior empirical study by Straub (2009). Similarly, five-question items were employed to quantify the *Employee Green Behaviour* from prior empirical studies by Kaiser, Oerke and Bogner, (2007), Robertson and Barling (2013), and Kim, Kim, Han and Holland (2016). A study by Khan and Quaddus (2015) was used to measure the *Sustainability Performance* of the organizations where fifteen question items have been adopted. The survey items were graded on a five-point Likert scale, with 1 referring to strongly disagree and referring to strongly agree. Table 1 shows the details of the study variables, number of question items, measurement scale and literature sources.

Table 1: Variables and Measures of the Study

Variables	Indicators	Source
Organizational Environmental Support	Programmes and policies	Straub (2009), Saifulina and Carballo-Penela (2016), Raineri and Paillé (2016)
	Help employees	
	Money and effort	
Employee Green Behaviour	Easy to find Information	Kaiser, Oerke and Bogner, (2007), Robertson and Barling (2013), and Kim, Kim, Han and Holland (2016)
	Suggestions and ideas	
	Taking part	
	Knowledge sharing	
	Questioning	
Organizational Sustainable Performance	Voluntary act	Khan and Quaddus (2015)
	Employment	
	Sales growth	
	Income stability	
	Return on investment	
	Profitability	
	Family needs	
	Social recognition	
	Empowerment	
	Freedom and control	
Child labour		
Utilities		
Waste and emission		
Waste management		

Space
Hygienic factor

Moreover, Table 2 shows that the Cronbach Alpha for the factors was acceptable at a level of 0.7 or above. Therefore, all items which are considered in this study are to be reliable, which suggests that the internal reliability of the instrument for satisfactory (Hair, Black, Babin & Anderson, 2010). This study has used already tested and validated questionnaires to achieve its objectives.

Table 2: Reliability and Validity Analysis for Overall Variables

Variables	Number of Question Items	Cronbach's Alpha Value	Composite Reliability (CR)	Average Variance Extracted (AVG)
Organizational Environmental Support	05	0.870	0.906	0.658
Employee Green Behaviour	05	0.783	0.854	0.542
Economic Sustainability	05	0.854	0.896	0.633
Social Sustainability	05	0.799	0.863	0.559
Environmental Sustainability	05	0.762	0.844	0.522

(Source: Survey Data, 2019)

Table 2 shows the Reliability and Validity of the Study. Reliability was measured using Cronbach's Alpha (Alpha values > 0.7) and composite reliability (values > 0.7). Average Variance Extracted (AVE) (values ≥ 0.5) was used to measure the convergent validity. All the instruments had Cronbach's Alpha values above 0.70. Hence, the instruments had good reliability. As shown in Table 2, AVE for all variables is over the agreed-upon lower limit. Hence, the study variables have convergent validity. Therefore, the reliability and validity of the measurement are assured.

Further, Table 3 shows KMO and Bartlett's Test to check the adequacy of the sample. As the KMO value is between 0.8 and 1 indicates that the sample is adequate.

Table 3: KMO and Bartlett's Test

KMO and Bartlett's Test		
Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin Measure of Sampling Adequacy.		0.904
Bartlett's Test of Sphericity	Approx. Chi-Square	2309.257
	df	300
	Sig.	0.000

(Source: Survey Data, 2019 Dec.)

Results

Demographic Profile of the Respondents

The demographic profile of the respondents is detailed in Table 4. According to the table, 14.5% of the 173 employees work for Bank 1, 13.3% for Bank 2, 12.7% for Bank 3, 27.7% for Bank 4, and 31.8% for Bank 5. Further, the table shows that the majority of the respondents fall under the age group of 29-38 (48.6%), and only 2.3% of the respondents fall under the category of over 49 years which is the lowest category. And also, among the total 173 employees, 48.6% of the respondents are male and the remaining 51.4% of the respondents are female. This signifies that female employees outnumber male employees.

Table 4: Demographic Profile of the Respondents

Demographic Factor	Bank Name	Number of Respondents	Percent (%)
Employee's Bank	Bank 1	25	14.5
	Bank 2	23	13.3
	Bank 3	22	12.7
	Bank 4	48	27.7
	Bank 5	55	31.8
	Total	173	100.0
Age group	18-28	64	37.0
	29-38	81	46.8
	39-48	24	13.9
	Over 49	4	2.3
	Total	173	100.0
Gender	Male	84	48.6
	Female	89	51.4
	Total	173	100.0
Educational Qualification	Advanced Level	49	28.3
	Diploma	28	16.2
	Bachelor's Degree	45	26.0
	Master's degree	11	6.4
	Others	40	23.1

THE IMPACT OF ORGANIZATIONAL ENVIRONMENTAL SUPPORT ON ORGANIZATIONAL
SUSTAINABLE PERFORMANCE: THE MEDIATING ROLE OF EMPLOYEE GREEN BEHAVIOUR IN
SELECTED COMMERCIAL BANKS IN BATTICALOA REGION OF SRI LANKA

	Total	173	100.0
	Banking Trainee	22	12.7
	Banking Assistant	72	41.6
	Executive	16	9.2
Job Position	Officer	24	13.9
	Assistant Manager/ Manager	31	17.9
	Others	8	4.6
	Total	173	100.0
	Below 2 years	27	15.6
	2-5 years	28	16.2
Experience	6-8 years	36	20.8
	More than 8	82	47.4
	Total	173	100.0

The educational qualifications of employees are divided into six categories. Among the total 173 employees 28.3%, 16.2%, 26.0%, 6.4% and 23.1% respondents have GCE Advance Level, Diplomas, Bachelor's Degree, Master's Degree and other professional qualifications such as IABF/DABF, CIMA, ICASL and ACCA as respectively. Based on the analysis, the majority of the respondents possess Advance Level qualifications and the least number of respondents possess a Master's Degree. It is also found that out of the six categories 12.7% are banking trainees, 41.6% are banking assistants, 9.2% are executives, 13.9% are officers, 17.9% are assistant managers or managers and 4.6% are other personnel. This suggests that the number of banking assistants is higher in the selected institutions. Finally, 15.6% of employees have less than two years, 16.2% of employees have 2 to 5 years, 20.8% have 6 to 8 years, and 47.4 % have above 8 years 121 of experience respectively.

Correlation Analysis

In order to analyze the first three hypotheses to test the associations between various study variables that are postulated in Section 2 of the paper, Pearson's correlation analysis was used. According to Gogtay & Thatte (2017), the correlation coefficient value (r) ranges from 0.10 to 0.29 is considered weak, from 0.30 to 0.49 is considered medium and from 0.50 to 1.0 is considered strong.

Table 5: Correlation Matrix

	Relationship	Pearson Correlation coefficient	Significant Value
1	Organizational Environmental Support and Organizational Sustainable Performance	0.665**	0.000
2	Organizational Environmental Support and Employee Green Behaviour	0.604**	0.000
3	Employee Green Behaviour and Organizational Sustainable Performance	0.686**	0.000

**Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

Results of the analysis present that the correlation coefficient (r) value is 0.665 between organizational environmental support and sustainability performance and significant at a 1% level of significance indicating that there is a strong positive and significant relationship between organizational environmental support and sustainability performance. Further, results indicate that the correlation coefficient (r) value is 0.604 between organizational environmental support and employee green behaviour and is significant at a 1% level of significance. It means there is a strong positive and significant relationship between organizational environmental support and employee green behaviour. Finally, the correlation coefficient (r) value is 0.686 between green behaviour and sustainability performance and significant at a 1% level of significance and there is a strong positive and significant relationship between employee green behaviour and sustainability performance as the values of the correlation coefficient falls under the coefficient range of +0.5 to +1.00.

Mediation Analysis

In Table 6, step 1 shows that 44.2% of the variation in organizational sustainable performance is explained by organizational environmental support. The remaining 55.8% of the variation is explained by other factors which are not taken into consideration and if organizational environmental support is increased by one unit organizational sustainable performance will improve by 0.500 units. Thus, step one concludes organizational environmental support significantly and positively predicts organizational sustainable performance and the first condition necessary for the mediation is satisfied.

Table 6: Simple Mediation Analysis

Step	Path	Independent Variable	Dependent Variable	R ²	B	Sig.	F-statistic
1	c	Organizational Environmental Support	Sustainable Performance	0.442	0.500	0.000	135.218
2	a	Organizational Environmental Support	Employee Green Behaviour	0.365	0.556	0.000	98.305
3	b	Employee Green Behaviour	Sustainable Performance	0.471	0.561	0.000	152.019
4	c'	Organizational Environmental Support	Sustainable Performance	0.569	0.296	0.000	112.251
		Employee Green Behaviour			0.367	0.000	

(Source: Survey Data, 2019 Dec.)

Step 2 shows that 36.5% of the variation in employee green behaviour is explained by organizational environmental support. The remaining 63.5% of the variation is explained by other factors which are not taken into consideration. Further, if organizational environmental support is increased by one unit, employee green behaviour will increase by 0.556 units. Thus, step two concludes organizational environmental support significantly and positively predicts employee green behaviour and the second condition necessary for the mediation is satisfied.

Results of step 3 indicate that 47.1% of the variation in organizational sustainable performance is explained by employee green behaviour. The remaining 52.9% of variation is explained by other factors which are not taken into consideration. And also, when employee green behaviour is increased by one unit, organizational sustainable performance will increase by 0.561 units. Thus, step three concludes employee green behaviour significantly and positively predicts organizational sustainable performance and the third condition necessary for the mediation is satisfied.

Step 4 indicates that 56.9% of the variation in organizational sustainable performance is explained by organizational environmental support and employee green behaviour. The remaining 46.4% of the variation is explained by other factors which are not taken into consideration. Further, when

organizational environmental support is increased by one-unit, organizational sustainable performance will increase by 0.296 units. It also indicates that the B coefficient for employee green behaviour is 0.367, which means when employee green behaviour is increased by one unit, organizational sustainable performance will increase by 0.367 units.

Finally, the results of this study show that since organizational environmental support was still significant when employee green behaviour is controlled but the strength of the relationship has reduced from 0.500 to 0.296, that employee green behaviour partially mediates the relationship between organizational environmental support and organizational sustainable performance. As there is a partial mediation, mediation effect or indirect effect is calculated as the product of coefficients of the path *a* and *b* as suggested by Sobel (1982).

$$\begin{aligned} \text{Indirect Effect} &= a \times b = 0.556 \times 0.367 = 0.204 \\ \text{Total Effect (c)} &= \text{Direct Effect (c')} + \text{Indirect Effect (ab)} \\ &0.500 = 0.296 + 0.204 \end{aligned}$$

The indirect effect is 0.204, which indicates on average 0.204 units of the overall difference since organizational environmental support on organizational sustainable performance can be attributed to the difference in employee green behaviour.

The statistical significance of the mediation has been tested with a test of statistical significance proposed by Sobel (1982). Values of regression coefficients have been applied to the Sobel calculator and the results are as follows:

$$\begin{aligned} Z &= \frac{ab}{\sqrt{b^2 S_a^2 + a^2 S_b^2}} \\ Z &= \frac{0.204}{\sqrt{0.367^2 \times 0.056^2 + 0.556^2 \times 0.052^2}} \\ Z &= 5.752 \end{aligned}$$

According to Mallinckrodt, Abraham, Wei, & Russell (2006), since the z-score (5.752) is greater than 1.96, the mediation is said to be statistically significant at a 5% level of significance. That means employees' green behaviour significantly carries the influence of organizational environmental support on organizational sustainable performance. As per the Sobel test, since mediation is statistically significant, the proportion of the effect that is mediated is calculated

with the use following formula,

$$\begin{aligned} \text{Proportion of mediation effect} &= \frac{ab}{c} \quad \times 100 \\ &= \frac{0.204}{0.500} \quad \times 100 \\ &= 40.80\% \end{aligned}$$

The proportion of the partial mediation is 40.80% which indicates that 40.80% of total variation caused by organizational environmental support in organizational sustainable performance is explained by employee green behaviour. It can be concluded from the findings; that employee green behaviour partially mediates the relationship between organizational environmental support and organizational sustainable performance.

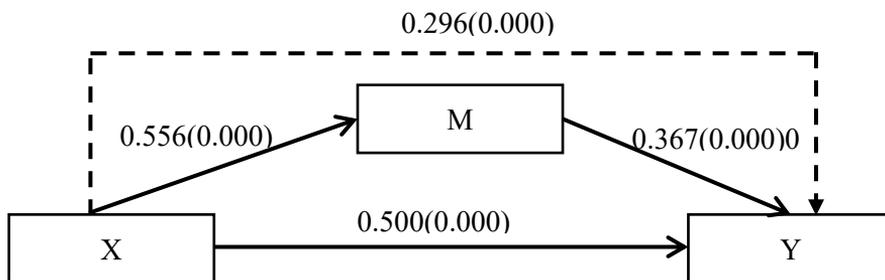


Figure 2: Results of Mediator Model

Discussion and Implications

The results of the H_1 analysis indicate that the correlation coefficient (r) value is 0.665 between organizational environmental support and organizational sustainable performance and is significant at a 1% level of significance. The finding empirically supports the finding of Barnett (2007), who found that engaging in environmental management practices outweighs the costs involved in the long run and investing in environmental management practices can lead to better relationships with stakeholders like local communities, lenders, and governments. Further, as mentioned by Whitelaw, Teuton, Swift, and Scobie (2010), green spaces have a beneficial effect on psychological well-being and cognitive function through both physical access and use and access to views, ultimately leading to enhanced social performance of firms. Therefore, it can be concluded that there is a strong positive and significant relationship between

organizational environmental support and organizational sustainable performance. This indicates that businesses looking to boost their sustainability performance should concentrate on improving their environmental initiatives and supporting the initiatives made by their employees. Further, in order to save time and also inculcate a sense of green management in staff, HR administrators need to turn to online training courses and more digitization, rather than a conventional pen-paper curriculum.

The results of the H₂ analysis suggest that the correlation coefficient (r) value is 0.604 between organizational environmental support and employee green behaviour and is significant at a 1% level of significance. In literature, authors have found a significant positive relationship between perceived organizational support for the environment and involvement in environmental management (i.e., required EGB) as well as promotion of initiatives and innovative environmental behaviours (i.e., voluntary EGB) (Cantor, Morrow & Montabon, 2012). Therefore, it can be concluded that there is a strong positive and significant relationship between organizational environmental support and employee green behaviour. According to the findings of this study, managers should assist their workers' environmental endeavours by developing their green skills and motivation and providing them with opportunities to establish a sense of organizational environmental support. Furthermore, HR administrators may consider offering praise and recognition by granting non-monetary awards to encourage employees' active participation in eco-friendly activities.

And also, Norton, Zacher and Ashkanasy (2014), found positive relationships between the perceived presence of an organizational sustainability policy and self-report task-related and proactive EGB. Ramus and Steger (2000) argue that the workers view the implementation and coordination of corporate environmental strategy as interpreted employees as a form of organizational support, encouragement, and support of environmental values and, thus, increases their engagement in eco-initiatives (a proactive form of EGB).

Finding related to H₃ shows that the correlation coefficient (r) value is 0.686 between green behaviour and organizational sustainable performance and is significant at a 1% level of significance. Daily et al. (2009) indicated that environmental actions employees, such as waste reduction, should help firms to meet environmental goals and improve overall environmental performance. Green behaviour involvement can act as a stress buster. This will contribute to the firm's social performance. (George & Jayakumar, 2017). Therefore, it can be concluded that there is a strong positive and significant relationship between

employee green behaviour and organizational sustainable performance. As a result, it has practical ramifications for enterprises, as managers should discuss their company's green culture with potential employees because working for an ecologically friendly company is crucial for certain job seekers who want their employers' values to match their own.

The findings related to H₄ verify the impact of organizational environmental support on organizational sustainable performance through employee green behaviour and the results of this study show that since organizational environmental support is still significant when employee green behaviour is controlled but the strength of the relationship has reduced from 0.500 to 0.296. Scholars (Ones & Dilchert, 2012) propose that the success of organizational environmental initiatives depends on the engagement of the employee. And also, it is argued that introducing an effective environmental management system in an organization would lead to improved economic performance (Abdel-Maksoud, Kamel & Elbanna, 2016). Zailani, Jeyaraman, Vengadasan, and Premkumar (2012) found a positive correlation between sustainable procurement practices and social, economic and operational performance. Therefore, it can be concluded that employee green behaviour partially mediates the relationship between organizational environmental support and organizational sustainable performance. Managers should encourage their employees to utilise organisational environmental support and consider it as a way to harness human potential to create innovative solutions to environmental challenges. Employees are more inclined to adopt creative techniques to achieve their environmental goals when they perceive management backing. It is proposed that in order for banks' environmental initiatives to thrive, extra elements such as resources, incentives, and goals to enable employees to engage in sustainability are required. Such organizational resources reflect a supportive environment and provide incentives to promote specific behaviours as workers see them as reflecting the ideals of the bank.

The findings of the study suggest that environmental initiatives of an organization are an important predictor of the sustainability performance of an organization and the relationship is mediated by employee green behaviour.

This study contributes to filling out the *knowledge gap* to some extent by highlighting the role of psychological mechanisms previously overlooked that underlie the relationship between organizational policies and behaviour which was identified as a gap that needs to be further explored by Ramus and Steger,

(2000) and Whitmarsh (2009). Further, this study has interconnected employee behaviour and sustainability performance, which has been identified as a relatively new area of study by Ruepert et al. (2016). Further, most of the past research studies have examined the personal factors affecting green behaviour, this study has focused on the mechanisms through which various contextual antecedents influence employee green behaviour where it was found that employee green behaviour is having a strong relationship with organizational environmental support. In this way, this study contributes to filling the *empirical gap* to some extent. And also, most previous studies in sustainability performance are qualitative and this study is quantitative in nature, which contributes to filling the *methodological gap* to some extent.

Directions for the Future Research

It is acknowledged by the researcher that, as with all research, the study is subject to certain limitations. While the findings of this study provide a good estimate of the model proposed, additional variables may be added to improve the predictability of the proposed model. Further, assessing sustainability performance with the Triple Bottom Line (TBL) alone is not comprehensive (Bond & Morrison-Saunders, 2011) because the TBL focuses alone on the environment, society and economy. Wu et al. (2018) argued that it is not enough for companies to consider TBL practices in their sustainable development and that the sustainability requirements of the TBL overlap areas must also be taken into account. Wu et al. (2018) suggested the theory of overlap bottom line (OBL) that includes the socio-environmental, eco-efficiency and socio-economic sustainability dimensions. Thus, future studies can be undertaken by considering overlapping areas of sustainability.

Thus, this study used a broad measure of EGB. Recently, there has been a trend towards more detailed conceptualizations of the construct. Findings (Bissing-Olson et al., 2013; Norton, Zacher & Ashkanasy, 2014) demonstrate that task-related and proactive forms of EGB, respond differently to different antecedents although highly interrelated and that can be taken into account by future studies. This research could not be generalized at the national level, since the study was conducted only in two divisional secretariat areas in Batticaloa District. Therefore, future research could study the whole Batticaloa district and studies can be extended at the national level.

Furthermore, each employee at the chosen commercial bank was used as the unit of analysis in this study. Because the research problem is about

organization, 'organization' should have been utilized as a unit of analysis. As a result, future studies might take this fact into consideration and conduct research using companies as a unit of analysis. The final limitation is that the study has used only the quantitative approach, using a qualitative research approach such as interviews, and observation will be effective to get more explanation regarding the study variables.

Declaration of Conflicting Interests

The authors declared no potential conflicts of interest with respect to the research, authorship, and publication of this article.

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Appendix-I: Study Population and Sample Size

Staff Category	Bank-1		Bank-2		Bank-3		Bank-4		Bank-5		Total Population	Total Sample
	Population	Sample										
Banking Trainee	02	01	09	06	08	7	08	05	03	03	30	22
Banking Assistant	20	14	12	08	08	5	17	14	41	31	98	72
Executive	06	05	02	01	02	2	07	05	05	03	22	16
Officer	04	02	03	02	04	2	16	14	06	04	33	24
Assistant Manager/Manager	03	03	04	03	06	6	15	10	14	09	42	31
Others	-	-	03	03	-	-	01	-	07	05	11	08
Total	35	25	33	23	28	22	64	48	76	55	236	173

(Source: Collected by the researchers from the banks which are operating in the selected two DS areas of Batticaloa)

Efficacy and Concerns of Technical Project in Bangladesh: An Assessment of the Managing at the Top 2 (MATT2) Project

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Abstract

Least-Developed Countries (LDCs) and developing countries receive various supports for their development and technical projects from developed nations and development partners. Bangladesh is no exception. Managing at the Top 2 (MATT2) is a technical development project that was designed in collaboration with the governments of the UK and Bangladesh and carried out in Bangladesh with funding of the UK. The primary aim of the project was to provide practical training for approximately 2000 top-level officials of the Bangladesh Civil Service to enhance their efficiency in developing and implementing innovative projects to deliver public services. In this paper, the purpose, process and results of the project are analyzed using a qualitative approach to understand the benefits and barriers of the project. It was found that MATT2 produced remarkable success, with 305 performance improvement projects (PIPs) were developed and implemented by the participating bureaucrats. Government employees were benefitted from practical knowledge on project preparation, skill development and the citizens were benefitted from the outputs. Although the project claims 100% success in terms of implementation, projects were influenced by some bottlenecks that include unsuitability of PIPs, lower reform value, monetary motivation and selection of project area out of the participants' jurisdiction. The authors suggest considering the intended and unintended

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consequences of the MATT2 to undertaking similar projects in the future.

Keywords: *Bangladesh; Civil servants; Development; Experiential learning; PIPs; Skill development*

Introduction

Bangladesh receives support for technical and development projects from development partners such as United Nations Organizations as well as individual organizations such as the World Bank, International Monetary Fund, Asian Development Bank, Islamic Development Bank, United States Agency for International Development (USAID), the Department for International Development in the UK, the Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA), Korean International Cooperation Agency (KOICA) and so forth. Currently development partners are more likely to invest in technical projects rather than development projects in Bangladesh to develop human resources capacities through training and education (Hasler, 2006; Karim, 2020).

Managing at the Top 2 (MATT2) is a such technical project designed jointly by the Government of Bangladesh (GoB) and Department for International Development (DFID), which is now known as FCDO in the UK at a cost of approximately 23 million USD. The broad purpose of this project was to increase efficiency among selected government officials to enable them to deliver better services, disseminate knowledge and learning among fellow officials and create a critical mass of reform-minded civil servants who would be instrumental in enacting administrative reform from inside the Bangladesh Civil Service (Garavan, 2009; Karim, 2019; Majeed, 2011; Ullah et al., 2018). The MATT2 project is found as a project with the similar fate of such other policy initiatives taken by the government. As such, from the design to implementation, MATT2 is influenced by the theoretical assumptions. In Bangladesh any project or programme is affected by the political agenda, bureaucratic procedure, and more importantly top-down approach. Similarly, implementation of policy initiatives is usually done by the different actors such as street level bureaucrats, political entity, business community, local people and civil society organisations. Researches evidence that implementation is influenced by myriad factors where the input of a project contributes a lot.

Policy implementation is the political process dealing with the decision-making process that includes bargaining, exchanging and compromising among the interest groups (Burgess, 2012; Karim, 2022). Literature depicts those four key assumptions such as diversion of resources, dilemma of administration, deflection of goals and dissipation of energies serve as the grouped independent variables to influence the implementation of public policies (Bardach 1978; Pressman and Wildavsky, 1984). Resources are diverted through spending more taxpayers' money, which the implementers think as easy money to get and spend. This free flow of money encourages involved people spending for non-prioritized functions and eventually it compels people involved to indulge in manipulation. The deflection of goals results in implementation botch leading to policy flop as of pillion on that is the adding up more goals in the implementation process, up for grabs that policy mandate may have been the result of strong pressure on government to do something without thinking the real need. Different issues of administration expose as dilemmas in the environment contributing to the implementing policies. Tokenism is considered as the most important one that appears to benefit a programme element publicly while privately conceding only a small contribution. It also serves as the procrastinating any contribution as the inferior quality. Massive resistance from the implementer hinders the implementation by withholding critical programme elements, which is done through evading the responsibilities specified in the policy mandate. It is the product of self-conscious coordination or on numerous uncoordinated and independent derelictions that can often cause the control system to collapse entirely. The management game of holding authority and power at the central and manipulating some issues like budget authorities, government auditors and accountants, fiscal committees in the legislature leading to implementation delay thus makes policy failure (Bardach 1978; Pressman and Wildavsky, 1984).

The dissipation of energies produces the outcome as the underperformance encountering to mandated goals. The tendency of thinking the issue as not our problem among the bureaus leads to failure, as they are the key performers of augmenting budget and utilising it. They do not want to expand the work thinking that it will increase their workload or create the difficulty to implement projects or bring controversy. This evasion of accepting challenge and keeping the extended work for others contributes to poor performance of the policy (Karim, 2021; Karim, 2022). However, if anybody works effectively and outperforms his teammates, he is treated as odd man and others try to get him

out of the project. As a result, policy lacks motivated and innovative personnel to carry forward the project.

MATT2 has been a highly successful technical project in Bangladesh that has built the capacity of civil servants and enhanced the capacity of government institutions to adopt civil service reforms. However, the project has often been criticized due to its huge cost compared to its outcomes and the amount of effort or resources it consumed. These criticisms are based on the assumptions of implementation theory (Alam et al., 2014; Fernando, 2006; Karim, 2019). In this paper, the efficacy and concerns of MATT2 are assessed to understand what the civil servants of Bangladesh have gained from the project and what unintended and unwelcome consequences arose. Policymakers can utilize the findings and recommendations in this paper as they consider adopting similar projects in the future.

MATT2: Process, People, PIPs and Their Interaction

MATT2 was initiated with the financial assistance of the DFID. It aimed to train 2000 Bangladesh Civil Service officials ranging from Joint Secretary to Senior Assistant Secretary positions from 2006 to 2013 (Alam et al., 2014; Bowornwathana, 2000; Bowornwathana, 2010; Karim, 2008, 2019; Ullah et al., 2018). The participants of the project were the civil servants who developed workplace related Performance Improvement Projects (PIPs) during the four-month workshop and formally presented outcomes of the PIPs to a MATT2 monitoring panel for assessment against the performance-based key criteria. In order to bring changes in policy design and implementation process, PIPs were designed to be specific, measurable, attainable/achievable, realistic/rational in six weeks and implemented in four months. The duration is thought to be reasonable to bring substantial changes in the behaviour of implementers and beneficiaries.

There were forty batches of the participants in MATT2. Each batch was assigned to focus on problem-solving issues that could lead to reforms of the civil service. Participants were trained to understand and respond to clients. In the first three weeks of each section, teams of 6-8 members were constituted to develop the PIP focusing on an area with high reform value. Although it is not clear that teams were formed following the fundamental criteria of team

formation, they were mandatorily given the task of designing and implementation project. Participants were at liberty to choose the area of undertaking PIPs that was influenced by comfortable area, not necessarily having the higher reform value. After identifying the area, they used to develop the project following a bottom-up approach based on the planning and implementation cycle (Googin et al., 1990; Lipsky, 1971; Stewart et al., 1998; see Fig.1).

This bottom-up approach is different from the traditional top-down approach in the policymaking process in Bangladesh. However, implementation of PIPs followed the top-down approach for smooth and easy implementation so that team members could exercise power from the top. The street-level bureaucrats were obligated to follow the instructions of hierarchically positioned senior officials included in the team. The involvement of various stakeholders in the design phase enhanced the process.

All PIPs were designed and implemented in light of the four pillars of MATT2: (i) the individual participant, (ii) personnel around the participant who were supposed to work for PIPs, (iii) the participant’s organization and (iv) the clients who would be served or benefitted from the improved performance.

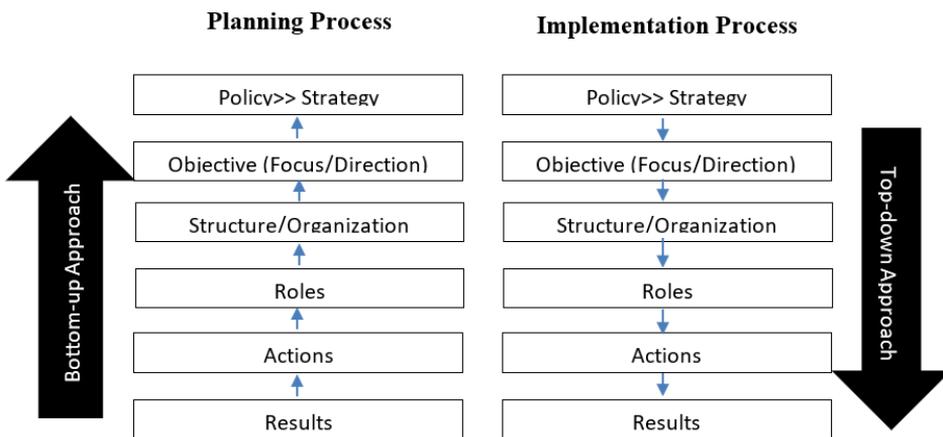


Figure 1: Planning and Implementation Process (Karim, 2008)

The four pillars of MATT2 epitomizes the capacity development and are significantly influenced by experiential learning approach. Participants gained practical knowledge and skills that they utilized in their day-to-day official work. Experiential learning is a process by which participants learn techniques

that help them utilize their vast experience with reflective observation, leading to abstract conceptualization and experimentation (Alam et al., 2014; Editor, 2013; Gosen and Washbush, 2004; Kayes, 2005; Kolb and Kolb, 2008; Piercy, 2013). Experiential learning theory involves all the bases of the learning cycle such as experiencing, reflecting, thinking, and acting in such a way that that knowledge is retained. This technique process assists the participants' personal growth as well as their knowledge acquisition including discovering their strengths and weaknesses through psychological tests and writing individual learning diaries to develop participants' action plan for how to overcome their weaknesses. Since individuals' learning experience is influenced by their beliefs, surrounding environment, power-infused authority and political context, their experience may be biased and may not always fit to the theory.

Civil servants are recruited by the Government of Bangladesh to provide better services to public through policy initiatives financed by public money. All projects' initiatives must be guided by the public interest. This means that government employees should understand citizens' needs and act accordingly. The MATT2 process encourages public servants to be pro-client and citizen-centric though bottom-up planning with significant involvement of clients (Karim, 2008, 2019; Majeed, 2011). The motivation of policy implementers is either financial or non-financial. Moreover, every team was assigned to visit disadvantaged citizens so that they could internalize the real-world situation and design pragmatic initiatives. These exercises helped participants understand their clients' problems by heart and motivated them to develop effective projects. The criteria of selection, initiation and implementation of PIPs helped bringing positive changes in the administrative process and outputs that ultimately benefitted people. However, there is no mechanism of evaluating to what extent clients were benefited in terms of input-output ratio. Moreover, there is no system of impartial evaluation by a third party. The benefits were all reported by people who themselves benefited from saying that their projects were successful.

Methodology

This study employed a qualitative approach. Data were collected from both primary and secondary sources. Primary data were collected from multiple stakeholders, including five civil servants out of 1631, six trainers from 28, and two officials from implementing agencies. The term "civil servant" refers to

those who participated in the training programme and implemented PIPs and SPIPs. Trainers being actively involved in the process, facilitated the participants to develop the PIPs. The Ministry of Public Administration and the Bangladesh Public Administration Training Centre (BPATC) were the implementing agencies to materialize the MATT2 project. A national consultant was also interviewed.

A purposive sampling technique was used to select interviewees from those who were associated with the MATT2 project. A list of participants, trainers and PIP team members kept at BPATC helped to identify and select interviewees. The selected participants were interviewed to identify aspects of the successfulness and barriers of the project. The interviews were conducted after the project was completed in 2013 so that the impact could be identified.

A thematic analysis was carried out on the basis of primary and secondary data (Creswell, 2013; Creswell and Poth, 2018). Since the study focuses on the MATT2 project, project documents including project pro-forma, project completion reports and summary reports prepared by the project office served as sources of secondary data. Project implementation-related research articles, implementation theory, learning theory and writings on MATT2 were also consulted. The criteria for successfulness and issues of failure matched with the secondary and primary data. The experiences of the authors as facilitators of the MATT2 project over the course of seven years provided additional data to analyze and interpret multiple dimensions to enrich the thematic analysis.

Results and Discussion

The gains as well as the unintended and unwelcomed consequences of the MATT2 project are presented in this section. According to the interviews and comments of consultants (both national and international), the participants and facilitators from the BPATC and Ministry of Public Administration gained numerous benefits, and citizens in general were benefited directly and indirectly from the implementation of the PIPs. The effects of the MATT2 project through implementation of PIPs were both financial and non-financial (Garavan, 2007). MATT2 is regarded as the most successful project not only in Bangladesh but also in the world because of its nearly 100% success rate of project preparation and implementation (Karim, 2008; Karim, 2019). As many as 1631 civil servants (including 225 women) were trained on preparing and implementing

305 PIPs since MATT2 was first initiated in 2008 (See Fig. 2). Additionally, a total of 361 civil servants (including 60 women, 16.62% of total participants) developed skills related to policy issues through the development of 71 SPIPs since 2013. SPIPs are the project initiatives with greater reform value undertaken by the top 10% of best implementers of PIPs. In the process of project participation, civil service members acquired theoretical and practical knowledge of project preparation and skills in implementation (Gibson, 2004). In spite of claiming successfulness, the study conducted by Alam et al. (2014) evidenced the contradictory findings that 58 out of 82 PIPs were fully implemented, 20 were partially implemented and only 2 were not implemented.

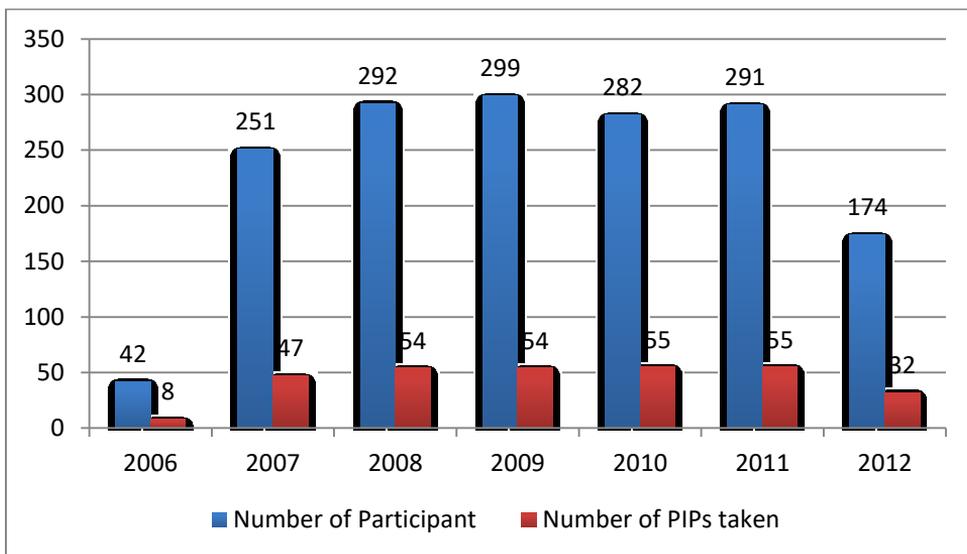


Figure 2: Number of participants and PIPs undertaken during 2006 and 2012 (Alam, et al., 2014)

To understand the efficacy and concerns of the MATT2 project, two PIPs (one successful and one unsuccessful) and are presented below as case studies. The participants of these PIPs contributed a lot to understanding the efficacy and concerns of the MATT2 project. Additionally, the explanation of two successful and unsuccessful projects was presented as case (Case 1 and Case 2) to depict the comparative picture.

The main purpose of each initiative was to develop capacity and bring benefit to the state and society as a whole. Each team member had the opportunity to think about bringing positive change to their workplace by undertaking an individual

action plan meant to improve their workplace environment and individual capacity. However, these individual actions were not limited to the workplace, and participants could contribute individually or professionally to serve society and the poorer members of their particular community.

Based on the data, the efficacy (positive outcomes) of the MATT2 project were categorized as (i) input-output ratio, (ii) developed participatory training method for civil servants of Bangladesh, (iii) develop project management skills (iv) competency-based team formation, (v) bottom-up approach-based project preparation, (vi) financial benefits for the participants/facilitators, (vii) facilitation of advanced training for women civil servants, and (viii) uplifting disadvantaged groups. The unintended and unwelcome consequences (negative outcomes) can be categorized as (i) confrontation among different levels and groups, (ii) conflict between participant and non-participant civil servants, (iii) negative effects on the host training institute, and (iv) unexpected results of the project. Both positive and negative impacts of the projects are discussed below:

Efficacy of the Project

The efficiency and effectiveness of the MATT2 project are characterized by individual and organisational capacity based on skills and knowledge, cultural orientation of business and a modern workplace development approach. This part is presented with the following thematic analysis as well as presentation of case 1.

(i) Input-output ratio of the Project

The MATT2 had mandatory provision of forming a 6-8 member team of civil servants and undertaking PIP and implement within four months. So each batch developed required number of PIPs, for example, total 305 PIPs were taken by 1631 participants in six years from 2006 to 2012. These 305 projects are about some changes in offering government services. The input and output ratio between the number of participants and PIPs is quite satisfactory.

(ii) Participatory Training Method for the Civil Servants of Bangladesh

MATT2 followed a participatory approach of learning, namely workshops where the participants having experience were the key persons to make comments to edit and modify their own PIPs or PIPs of other participants. The workshop format entailed several stages of presentation and further

development that prevented boredom and created enthusiasm for doing more. The study revealed from the interviews with the facilitators that MATT2 had demonstrated that the participatory training method was very useful for learning and concentrate in training for the civil servants of Bangladesh. Finding out the effectiveness of participatory method of MATT2, BPATC has adopted this training approach to deliver other training curricula. Before MATT2 most of the trainings were based on traditional way of classroom lecture, which is less effective for learning. Therefore, it can be interpreted that MATT2 enthused the trainers to take participatory training methods for the civil servants of Bangladesh. A facilitator mentioned:

No other training programmes like MATT2 can make participants more engaging in all activities. It is designed in such a way, they are bound to involve in all steps. Additionally, an eight member facilitation team assists them all time and stays around them to help their progress.

One of the interviews explained:

The MATT2 encourages and forces to take part in all actions, it allows to speak and contributes as they are given valued. The process asks to change team leader, presenter and team role so that their participation based on the skills or helps developing skills.

Case-1: Successful PIP

Title:

One Stop Service Centre for Urgent Endorsement of Passports in the Regional Passport Office (RPO), Dhaka

Description

This PIP is considered to be the most successful output of MATT2. It was initiated by the batch in 2007. The reform focused on minimizing the required time to get a passport and providing better service to citizens. Despite all government efforts, passport clients faced numerous difficulties and barriers such as the influence of Dalals (Brokers), lack of relevant information, deliberate delay, etc. This PIP aimed at eliminating these bottlenecks by rendering service with preferential treatment to women, the poor and the

disadvantaged through a one stop service centre at the Regional Passport Office (RPO) in Dhaka. The specific purpose was to ensure expeditious disposition of urgent passport endorsement applications in an effective, transparent and time-bound way. The PIP achieved remarkable results. Replication of the PIP at the midpoint of its project life to other operational areas and to some other districts indicates that the project is replicable, achievable and time bound. It has also proved to be sustainable. In the process, the Dalals (Brokers) are in the process of being eliminated. One survey revealed that the time required for disposition per case came down from 6.83 days in March 2007 to less than one day by September 2007. Currently, the PIP is fully implemented and is still been running. It is not only replicable in the passport service area but in other service areas as well. It is being, rolled it out in other regional passport offices.

Success factors

Highly motivated team members, demand from customers, especially the migrant workers, involvement of military in administration, use of information technology and demand for globalization are as the key success factors of this PIP. The PIP directly contributed to increasing foreign exchange and strengthening the livelihood of family members of migrant workers.

(iii) Project Management Skills

The development of project management skills necessary for mid- and top-level civil servants was an inbuilt mechanism of MATT2. It is important as they often act as the head of the development project in Bangladesh. However, according to the interviews, the participants did not actually have sufficient knowledge about project management when they initially took their positions. MATT2 project was an opportunity for them to learn project preparation, project planning, identifying stakeholders, recognizing risks, and mitigating techniques, testing feasibility, and implementing their projects successfully (Alam et al., 2014). One participant remarked:

This training is designed as result-oriented project that we have learned about how a project can be effectively designed and implemented within a specific time. We have learned practically through involvement of both trainers and training [contents and methods]. It also enhances our

analytical skills.

Another interviewee emphasized that this type of training programme was a good fit with what they actually did in their jobs:

I think this type of training programme should be run as this demonstrates practically. At this level, we need to emphasize much on practically done training that blends our learning and experiences and produces better results.

Participants felt comfortable because the process helped them develop analytical skills as well. MATT2 also taught the participant how to present a project proposal effectively to persuasively the stakeholders and decision makers.. Trainers remarked that the process is designed in such a way the participants mandatorily were required to learn the project managements and presentation skills.

(iv) Competency-based Team Formation

MATT2 taught the participants on how to form competency-based team to implement a project. Under the MATT2 project, the PIP teams were formed based on individuals' interest on issues rather than hierarchical positions, which helped create teams with similar expertise on specific areas. Everybody on the team was required to take part and contribute to preparing the PIPs. This process utilized the potentials of individuals. Sharing responsibility among the participants was another advantage of the training approach since the PIPs process involved team building and individual's participation according to their level of competency. Participants were active both in team formation and explication of PIPs. This active involvement was partially due to their knowledge that if their PIP was successful or evaluated highly they would rewarded with a trip to the UK (Alam et al., 2014). Getting chance of visiting UK and adopting another PIP of higher reform value were evidence of their superiors' recognition of their hard work and better performance. One participant remarked:

At the very beginning, we planed and formed a team with our like-minded

group so that we can smoothly and comfortably handle the project. However, the process of team formation did not keep that in-tact. Primarily, we were thinking the implementation, but the team latter formed based on area of interest, skills that helped utilize potentials. This process explored internal strength.

(v) Bottom-up Approach-based Project Preparation

Although planning process of policy initiative usually follows top-down approach, participants in MATT2 had exposed to learn development of a project based on bottom-up approach by involving multiple relevant stakeholders. In Bangladesh, the centralized decision-making process, top-down process in other words is usually followed that does not engage on the involvement of street-level bureaucrats (Lipsky, 1971). MATT2 emphasized bottom-up approach for planning PIPs in consultation with stakeholders. In this participatory approach participation of stakeholders in project preparation create a belongingness of the stakeholder and thus facilitated a smooth implementation. One of the experienced facilitators mentioned:

MATT2 helped developing the project proposal following the bottom-up that philosophically teaches to value those people who are frontline implementers having all understanding of the ground reality. So, after project proposal is done, they are finalized with the feasibility test and consultation with the stakeholders who are working at the field level.

(vi) Financial Benefits for the Participants and Facilitators

There was a financial benefits for not only the selected MATT2 participants but also the facilitators because of their intellectual involvement. Selected participants and facilitators received at least 2400 USD plus round-trip travel grants to visit Thailand or Singapore (Karim, 2008). Although monetary benefit is considered the lowest level of motivating factors in any training, but according to the respondents it worked very well as every participant and facilitator received a significant amount of honorarium in addition to their salary. It was a strong motivating factor as shown by the fact that the number of participants dropped from 45 to 22 when MATT2 reintroduced the programme without foreign exposure visit. Trainers of MATT2 and researchers of MATT2 found that financial benefits acted as one of the important motivating factors for

joining the project as participant or facilitator. One facilitator remarked:

Apart from the capacity development of a trainer, the involvement with the training provides financial benefits in addition to salary.

The financial benefit created the significant differences in terms of getting benefits and realizing the philosophy of the project. A facilitator of MATT2 management said:

This is the only training course that never lacks of participants and it always fulfills the target, which is different from the other courses regularly run at BPATC. Probably the financial gain matters and a foreign tour as well.

(vii) Facilitation of Advanced Training for Women Civil Servants

MATT2 facilitated advanced training for the women civil servants. Before MATT2, there was a less scope for the female civil servants to take part in advance training programme and contribute in higher position. MATT2 had the quota of nominating women civil servants by the department for each batch (Karim, 2008). This option of MATT2 allowed many junior women civil servants with the senior civil servants in MATT2 training. Consultants and trainers opined that the project benefitted women because of mandatory inclusion. This indicates mandatory inclusion helps developing the less-advantageous group through positive discrimination. However, this creates obstacles for merit-based development and brings dissatisfaction among the potential civil servants.

(viii) Uplifting Disadvantaged Groups

According to the respondent MATT2 created a scope of the participated civil servants to think of about the welfare of those who are the ultimate beneficiaries and taxpayers. PIPs were designed to serve the disadvantaged and vulnerable citizens. MATT2 trainers also arranged a visit to the vulnerable and disadvantage population in slum area, people affected by river erosion, prostitutes, tea garden workers, backward tribal community, elderly people and so forth to understand their socio-economic condition as well as incorporate women dimension in PIP that would seek for the short- and long-term solution of the problem. Consideration of poor women and their inclusion in any stage of PIP contributed to the inclusive development.

Concerns of the Project

Since the project was coupled with inherent important lucrative benefits for every participant, it had some setbacks. The respondents opined some concerns about the MATT2 project, which have been presented below. Reasons are also found in the case 2.

(i) Confrontation among Different Levels and Groups

The fair selection of participants for MATT2 was a concern for the participants as well as the facilitators. Bangladesh has 27-cadre service from which nearly all of the participants came from only one cadre service (i.e., BCS Administration) whereas most of the undertaken PIPs were related to the other services. For example, some PIPs pertaining to police and fisheries department were undertaken by the participant of administrative cadres. These PIPs were taken as the participants of the administrative cadre were in important position during implementation of the PIPs but once they left their position; the PIPs did not sustain. This is because people from other cadre services were not interested to implement the PIPs. The implementing agency officials thought the PIPs were initiated by the administrative cadres without the involvement of key stakeholders.

In addition, the selection of participants was criticized because of emphasizing one cadre officials and lack of transparency. About 75% of respondents mentioned that the selection process for MATT2 was not fair and transparent. In addition, because of the quota for women officers, many junior women officers got chance to participate in the training, which was not taken positively by many senior male officers. It seems traditional mental construct of male about female serves as the constraint which inhibits women development and creates difference between two streams.

Furthermore, as the enrolment in MATT2 required some conditions to fulfill such as minimum band score 5 in IELTS, priority to seniority and preference to women created another confusion. So, those who did not have the opportunity to participate because of obtaining low score in ILETS, they did not like MATT2 and its activities. This created conflict among the batches and cadres. This created conflict among the batches and cadres.

Lastly, experienced and competent faculty members from BPATC had the chance to be trainers and eventually got financial and other benefits which were not available for other faculty members. This was also an issue of concern since the conflict between the two streams of facilitators and general faculty members negatively impacted usual training programmes conducted by BPATC.

(ii) Tension Between stage 1 and stage 2 of MATT2 Participants

Participants having better performance in undertaking and implementing PIPs, had the scope of being selected for stage 2 where they got change to visit UK in addition to Singapore or Thailand. Participants of stage 1 always opined that they were deprived in term of monetary gain well as visiting a developed country like UK. Moreover, stage2 participants had the scope of undertaking projects with bigger impacts. Interviewers remarked that this created tension among the participants and induced a culture of influence to be included in the stage 2.

One experienced facilitator who had been involved since the beginning of the MATT2 remarked:

The main problem lies with the faulty design, particularly the evaluation process to select the participants for stage 2. Selection team emphasizes that participants are selected based on the evaluation of PIP, IAP and facilitator's marks, which is only 5% of the total marks. Similarly, other factors on which they are selected can be easily done by a third party. Moreover, the philosophy of MATT2 is to enhance capacity based on the performance objectively evaluated. Hence, the authoritarian role of the consultant team has a great influence.

Case-2: Failed PIP

Title

Introduction of monthly performance assessment to facilitate performance management in BPATC' aimed at establishing a system of measuring performance of employees to facilitate performance management in BPATC

Description

This PIP attempted to equip BPATC for the first time with little success, to

regularly assess the employees under them monthly, provide feedback immediately and thereby comfortably manage their performance. It was designed to achieve some results such as, i) System initially implemented for the Upper Division Assistants (UDAs) from December 2007; ii) The format designed encourages the supervisor to consider the gender and disadvantaged nature of the individual; and iii) The Office Order directs supervisors to consider the monthly assessment rating at year end as a basis of recommendation for honoraria. No impact has so far been recorded.

Reasons of failure

Key factors of failure of the PIP were faulty design, demotivated team members, transfer of team members, conflict between initiators and implementers, low reform value, lack of financial benefit for sustaining the project, lack of institutional drive. Failure of the project created conflict between the successful implementers and those who failed and thus created negative effects on BPATC as this institution was the key-role playing organization. Failure of team members belonging to BPATC posed a question of capacity that divided two groups among the faculty members.

Because of the design fault, there was a possibility of selecting such a person who had little contribution in formulation of PIP, and implementing it as well. Another interviewee rightly mentioned:

We have seen some of the officers who had little contribution because of their capacity, did not even present anything, which was also one of the factors, they were selected for the stage 2 that they did not deserve. This posed a question about entire MATT2.

The faulty selection process failed to select ideal candidates from BPATC.

(iii) Negative Effects on Host Training Institute

The main goals and objectives of BPATC are to provide training, particularly career training for civil servants. Due to the MATT project, the BPATC suffered in a myriad of ways. This project employed very competent faculty members as facilitators and engaged them full time so that they were unable to devote sufficient time to the main purpose of the BPATC, such as conducting sessions and organizing training programmes including Foundation Training Course,

Advanced Course on Administration and Development and Senior Staff Course. Here energies are dissipated because of project reputation, valuing MATT2 over other programmes, engaging most important faculty members for performing at the project. Facilitators from BPATC remarked that because of fulltime engagement with the MATT2 during the development stage of the PIPs, employed faculty members had difficulty managing the other various courses of BPATC. A faculty member mentioned:

What I have seen MATT2 requires a team of eight members who are selected from the list prepared by the MATT2 project team based on some criteria such as, good command on English, higher analytical skills or promising faculty members. They are the best trainers of BPATC and contribute to every course.

MATT2 did not only engage best faculty members but also maintained long working hour starting from 8:30am to 6:30pm which means faculty members became tired enough and hardly got time to contribute to other activities of the centre. A facilitator told:

The MATT2 is designed in such a way the whole day keeps someone busy and the time you return home you become so tired of doing anything let alone professional development. Interestingly, MATT2 management deducts honorarium for being absence in the MATT2 workshop and conducting class in core courses of BPATC. Deduction of honorarium negatively affects BPATC and trainees are deprived of teaching from the best faculty members.

(iv) Unsustainability of PIPs

Alam *et al.* (2014) found that most of the PIPs were unsustainable: only 23 PIPs out of 68 and only 16 individual action plans out of 63 continued. Informants mentioned that the key reasons for this unsustainability were low reform value of the proposed projects, lack of inbuilt mechanisms for sustainability and the lack of jurisdiction of team members over the area intended to be benefited. Projects were left with civil servants who were not involved in the creation of the PIP, which failed to create ownership. The lack of ownership meant that the intended implementers tended to ignore the PIP because it was “someone else’s issue” rather than their own.

Conclusion and Implications

This paper presents an analysis of the efficacy of MATT2 project and the unintended consequences of undertaking this initiative. MATT2 is deemed as a successful project in terms of developing human resources of the public sector in Bangladesh. No other single project has successfully trained more than 1600 civil servants who are the key persons in policy making and implementation. Nevertheless, only about 81.55% of the targeted 2000 civil servants set in the project document were reached (Alam, *et al.*, 2014; Fernando, 2006). Through PIPs, civil servants got practical knowledge on how to design result-based projects; built skills in teamwork, leadership, analytical approaches, language efficiency, bottom-up project design and systematic analysis; learned techniques to find key stakeholders; and obtained financial benefits. They were exposed to other ways of doing things in different countries. However, not all areas of learning were appreciably enhanced because of the training.

The PIPs acted as reform initiatives for positive changes in the public service delivery. Every PIP was developed in consideration of stakeholders' benefits, the people of the country. Some of the noteworthy PIPs include materializing quick passport service, improving the performance of civil servants, establishing day care centre, creating woman-friendly working environment, establishing one-stop service, finding alternative development processes and mainstreaming women and vulnerable groups. Nevertheless, the sustainability of the PIPs posed a big question mark. Both primary and secondary data evidence that PIPs were designed in 6 weeks and implemented in 4 months and this structure could hardly build the sustainability mechanism. Moreover, the PIPs were evaluated based on output, not outcome or impact. There was a significant gap between outcome and resource utilization. Approximately 23 million USD was spent for MATT2 project but only few PIPs sustained and replicated (Alam, *et al.*, 2014). This supports easy money concept of policy failure (Pressman and Wildavsky, 1984). Furthermore, the politics of emphasizing particular group created new dimension of discrimination among various groups. In addition, key assumptions of implementation theory including diversion of resources, dilemma of administration, deflection of goals and dissipation of energies significantly influence the implementation of the MATT2 project (Pressman and Wildavsky, 1984; Karim, 2022).

In terms of project sustainability of the PIPs, almost all were unsuccessful in the

long run, mainly because the financial benefit served as the lowest level of motivating factor (Alam et al., 2014; Karim, 2019). Since the officials from the BCS (Administration) cadre are not posted for a long period of time in the particular office where the PIPs were usually undertaken, the projects were discontinued as soon as the team members were transferred. Even more plaguing issue was the exclusion of key stakeholders who were responsible for the sustainable project.

This design fault raises question about the effectiveness of the project. Since these key personnel were not included and did not enjoy the direct benefits of participating in MATT2, they were reluctant to carry over the changes. This exclusion not only affected the implementation of PIPs but may have led to massive resistance from various actors toward undertaking similar projects in the future.

Development and technical projects are undertaken to enhance development of a country where the first one contributes to infrastructural development and second one emphasizes software development. In other words, technical projects are designed to develop capacity of human resources so that they can significantly contribute to skill formation and initiate better projects. The views of participants support this statement. MATT2 was such a project to cover big cohorts of the civil service who would be serving the government for a long time and contribute directly and indirectly. However, the ultimate results of MATT2 are questionable because of poor project effectiveness, efficiency, efficacy and sustainability (Alam et al., 2014; Karim, 2019).

Therefore, governments should consider the negative aspects and consequences of engaging in similar training when considering similar technical projects in the future. Efficient utilization of resources is important when the country is aspiring to become a developed nation by 2041.

Declaration of Conflicting Interests

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Is Political Instability an Obstacle to Economic growth? Evidence from South Asia

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Abstract

The nexus existing between the growth rate of countries and political instability has been subjected to increasing interest among academic scholars and policymakers in different contexts all around the globe. The current study examined the relationship between political instability and economic growth in both short and long-run, employing the Panel Auto Regressive Distributed Lag (PARDL) model. Through the efforts taken via the study to redefine the political instability and growth nexus in South Asia, it could be stated that despite the insignificant impact of political instability on economic growth in the short run, countries gain the capability in elevating the growth level by maintaining stable political regimes in the long run. The results suggested that there is an overall negative and also a significant linkage between political instability and the long-run growth rate. The holistic analysis highlighted that regulatory quality and civil liberties needed to be well ensured to attain economic growth in the long run as they showed a significant positive relationship with the growth of the South Asian region. The short-run analysis of the variables depicted that there is no strong linkage between the growth and instabilities in the political arena, as the majority of the proxies of political instability exhibited an insignificant relationship with economic growth except regulatory quality.

Keywords: *Economic growth; PARDL model; Political Instability; South Asia*

Introduction

Instabilities that exist in the political sector of countries have been considered as a serious and a destructive issue for the economic performances of the countries all around the world (New et al., 2018). This has been proved by different

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economists as well. Political instability has made it difficult to create effective economic policies in the countries. Instabilities and unrest in relation to the political sector has generated more frequent switches in the policies while creating high volatility and negatively affecting economic performances (Dutt & Mitra, 2007). Most commonly, political instability has been defined by number of cabinet changes (Ake, 1975). This emphasizes that political instability has been defined with a narrow facet, where it obviously composes with comprehensive ideas that goes beyond the number of cabinet changes (Abu et al., 2015). Therefore, it is not wrong to define political instability as a multi-dimensional concept. Simply, it emphasizes the number of times in a year in which a new premier is named. However, when compared to the other regions, the political instability, or the number of cabinet changes per year is high within developing countries including South Asian nations. It has been proved from immense number of previous studies that the negative impacts are generated through the political and policy instabilities across several countries (Jong-A-Pin R. , 2009). Also, this has become an interesting area to be researched and it was heavily debated by different economists. They have concluded the studies with important insights in relation to this matter (Jong-A-Pin R. , 2009).

GDP growth rate has found to be very lower in the countries where there is a high propensity for the governments to be collapsed (Alesina et al., 1996). When focusing on the recent studies, most of them have proved the fact that socio-political instabilities across countries have led to higher inflation rates increasing the risk associated with investments (Yu & Mamuneas, 2019). This has reduced investments in the countries where it has negatively affected the growth rates of nations as well (Jong-A-Pin R. , 2009).

Hence, the key problem that is identified through the study is that higher political instability among the South Asian region was less addressed. South Asian region composes with 22% of the population of the world and also it has been identified as a composition of the fastest growing regional economies. The growth of the South Asian region is based mostly on high quality manufactures and quality services in different sectors (Nabi et al., 2010). However, the South Asian region can be elaborated as a critical destination where the majority of the countries are subjected to vulnerable effects from political instability (Younis et al., 2008). When considered, the eight countries in the South Asian region, except Bhutan and Maldives, all other six countries have experienced and still experiencing negativity of political instability, political conflicts, and political

unrest. Many studies have confirmed that South Asia has already faced difficult social and economic challenges while also becoming more vulnerable to the lack of good governance which is the research problem identified in the study¹.

The paper is aimed at addressing the main question, “Does political instability affect the economic growth in short run and long run?” The central focus of the study which is to analyze the linkage that exist between the instability of the political sector and growth of the economy can be stressed as a significant effort, as South Asian countries are experiencing critical challenges due to continuous political instabilities. Also, the importance of the study can be highlighted as few attempts have been taken previously to examine the clear short run and long run relationship between political instability and economic growth of the overall South Asian region. There are multiple examples to highlight the high political violence, and political instability that exist in the South Asian region. For instance, when the focus is given to India, it can be noticed that since 1980’s the country faced a sharp rise in the frequency with which governments have been ousted out of power. These frequent governmental changes between the elections have generated many reversals and modifications to policy decisions in the country thereby affecting the political stability, growth, and the fiscal health of India (Lalvani, 2003). Going beyond India, when it comes to the Sri Lankan economy, high political instabilities² have proven negative impacts towards the economy of Sri Lanka as it has caused many dynamic economic issues all around the country. Given the dramatic and frequent fluctuations in the policies and the challenging arena for Sri Lanka to repay the debt obligations including the dollar dominated domestic debt, downgraded the country’s credit rating during this political crisis (Nisthar & Samithamby, 2020).

During this period of political crisis, it could be identified that there were salary increments which were very strong and significant in the public sector but this was not affordable to the state balance sheet. The revising of Value Added Tax (VAT) showed the political inconsistency in the country clearly. Even under Vision 2025, equal priority has not been given to all sections of the government.

² One of the most unexpected events in the political history is the fifty days of unstable situation that occurred with the removal of the Prime Minister Wickremasinghe and the appointment of former President Rajapaksha to this replacement. This event was taken place with the absence of the parliamentary majority in favor as well². The event took place from 26th of October 2018 to 3rd of December 2018. With the constitutional crisis arose with this appointment and the refusal of his dismissal by former Prime Minister Ranil Wickremasinghe, Mahinda Rajapaksha’s powers as the Prime Minister were suspended (Lakshman, 2018).

Also, the Cabinet Committee on Economic Council (CCEM) was replaced with the National Economic Council (NEC) and later dismantled again by the President at that timeⁱⁱ. This caused important economic policy decisions to be taken without sufficient deliberations and it caused policy inconsistencies again within the government (Fernando, 2020).

When turning to Nepal, it is one of the poorest nations in Asia and composes with the highest level of poverty when compared to the other nations in South Asia. Agriculture stands as the major income source for the majority of Nepalis and traditional agricultural policies and feudalistic land distributions act as the reasons for the high poverty levels recorded in the country (Gordon, 2008). Since the restoration of democracy in 1990, all parties did not succeed in effectively implementing the land reforms programs highlighting the weaknesses in the political sector of Nepal. The federalization and inclusive democracy are some of the reasons that have given wings to the political instability in the country. The democratic transition which was taken place in the country was unable to bring in significant economic reforms as the parliamentary regime lacked autonomy from the dominant economic class (Prasad, 2012).

Majority of the South Asian countries have been graded with a lower score from the political stability index except Bhutan and Maldives. All other countries have scored negative points at the political stability index, emphasizing that they are continuously faced and facing heavy political instabilities in their nations. For instance, as per the political stability ranking, Bangladesh has acquired the 172nd position with the average score of -1.15 (Kumar, 2014). This clearly elaborated the way Bangladesh is severely affected from political instability. The existing political conflict in Bangladesh, has brought different negative impacts including increased corruptions, poverty and have created problems in the educational system of the country. In Bangladesh, this political instability and unrest have come to exist as a result of the political attitudes of the political parties. Most of the time one political party considers other political parties as their enemies and they lack with a stable political vision for all the parties (Rashiduzzaman, 1997). Despite all the continuous political instabilities faced by Bangladesh, the year 2020 was a stable year for the country with the completion of the major infrastructure projects including the prestigious Padma bridge project, yet the country was not an exception from the Covid-19 outbreak. (Bhattacharjee, 2021). Going beyond that, surprisingly it was

identified that political instability has a noteworthy effect and a trivial effect on the growth in relation to Bangladesh. They have identified political stability as an important stimulus for the well management of the public spending and making the economic predictions effectively. As per the findings, the impact from political instability is significant and indirect, and it also has positive effects on investment rates. Political instability and the difficulty in handling events like “Hartals” have been identified as the key barriers in Bangladesh to uplift the economic growth. (Chawdhury, 2016)

The status of South Asia in relation to the political stability index can be emphasized through the index score they acquired in the last few years. The above details emphasized that the majority of the countries have continuously faced political instability and political unrest. This can be identified as the main research problem of the study. It also reveals the importance of examining the impact from political instabilities that exist within the South Asian nations towards the economic growth of the particular countries. The following chart emphasizes the political stability index and the score received by the South Asian countries from the year 2015 to 2019.

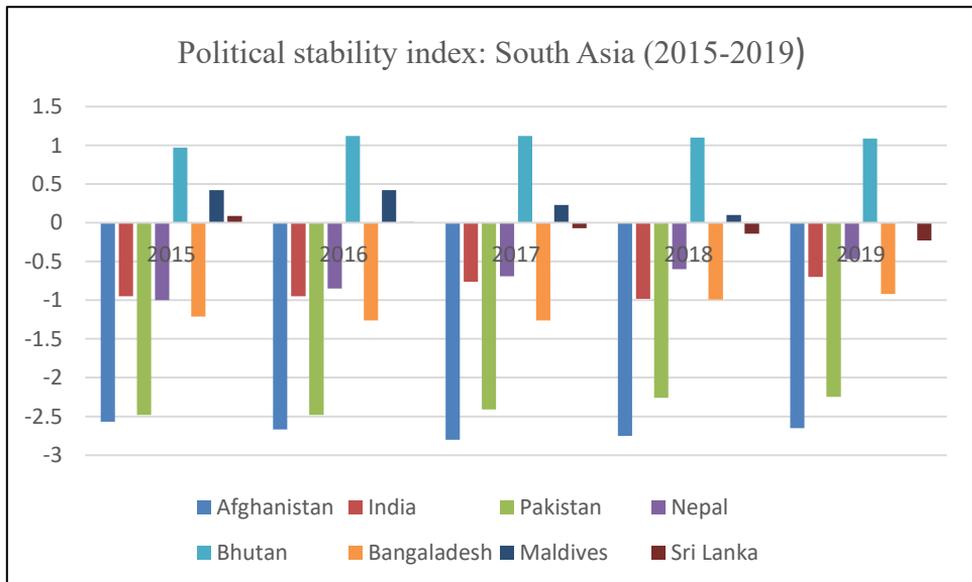


Figure 2: Political stability index for South Asian countries

Source: (World Bank, 2021)

Literature Review

Political instability has been defined by different scholars in different ways. As per Alesina et al. (1996), political instability is the propensity of the changes in the executive arm of the government. This change can either happen through constitutional or unconstitutional means. Going beyond that “changes in the government” concept is also defined through the “challenges to the government” (Mbaku, 1992). Changes in the government refer to the reshufflings of the cabinets, removal and replacements of the executive or head of the state. Also, it includes the changes in the representatives of the political parties that can impact the regime of the government. On the other hand, challenges to the government includes, all factors that act as threats to the current regime of the countries to operate smoothly. Some other scholars have understood political instability as one of the conditions in the political arrangements and they also have equalized political instability to political violence as well (Morrison & Stevenson, 1971). Political instability can also be categorized into two/three parts including “elite, communal and mass political instabilities” (Khisra, 2015). Elite political instability can be identified as a circumstance where the individual who is holding the leadership position in the country is forcefully removed from the office via coups. Elite political instability is witnessed in African post-independence where they done/carried out mainly through military elites. On the other hand, the communal political instability can be regarded as an effort which was taken by a union or a coalition with another country with the view of capturing the present government apparatus (Khisra, 2015).

The relationship between political instability and the economic growth can be identified as a well debated field of study and it is one of the most famous debates among the socio-political and economic researchers all over the world. Political instability has become a crucial and a growing issue for most of the developing countries and it is very critical in the South Asian region when compared to the other regions (Mustafa et al., 2017).

There are immense number of studies that have been conducted in order to analyze the direct and indirect relationship that exist in between political instability and the growth. Some studies concluded that political stability or instability have significant impacts on the growth rates of countries. Murad and

Alshyab (2019), using the context as Jordan, found that political instability has imposed significant impacts on the economic growth of the country. They have concluded that there is a negative impact from the internal political stability on the economic growth of the country while there is a positive impact from the external political instabilities of border countries. Political instability was proxied by the number of crimes and number of cabinet changes in the country. The analysis has been conducted by using fully modified ordinary least squares approach and taking the number of cabinet changes and GDP growth rate as the indicators of political instability and economic growth by collecting data from 1980 to 2015 in relation to Jordan. The significance of this study is highlighted due to two reasons. The first is the comprehensive debate it has generated to discuss both the effects of internal and external political stability and secondly the suggestions of the study have laid a good framework to overcome the constant threat of political instability of the country. However, using the number of cabinet changes for the internal political instability can be viewed as a narrower facet of political instability.

As per Jong-A-Pin (2009), in his study, he has identified the multidimensionality of political instability using 25 political instability signals through the Exploratory Factor Analysis. This is a progress of the literature where it has eliminated the narrow view of political instability as the number of cabinet changes. The study has concluded that political instability has three dimensions including the inability associated with the political regime, mass civil protests, and motivated violence. The next attempt of the study was to test the causality between political instability and the growth rate by using the dynamic panel system which can be recognized as the Generalized Method of Moments model. The three dimensions were tested separately where it shows only political regime instability exhibited a robust and significant negative effect on the economic growth. The study is significant as it has gone beyond the number of cabinet changes and has applied the multi dimensionality of political instability. However, still the testing of dimensions individually is less effective, and this could be overcome through developing an index using all proxies.

The study which was done to examine the nexus between political instability and the economic growth in Guyana has emphasized that some of the proxies that were used to indicate political instability showed a significant impact on the real GDP growth rates. For instance, the changes in the Head of States have

emphasized a positive and a significant impact on the real GDP growth rates while the other proxies including political assassinations, riots, insurrection, and terrorism are not significantly related to the growth of the real GDP of the country (Pasha, 2020). Following the method suggested by Tabassam et al. (2016), the researcher has utilized the GARCH (1,1) model to analyze the nexus between political instability and the economic growth. The Gross Domestic Product (GDP) has been taken as the dependent variable for the study. The number of cabinet changes has been used to capture political instability.

Also, when considering the studies that have been done in relation to Asia, Aisen and Veiga (2011) specified that higher degrees of political instabilities are associated with lower level of growth rates (growth of GDP per capita). The study was carried out by taking a sample of Asian countries. The study concluded that political instability adversely affects the growth by lowering the productivity levels, and human and physical capital accumulation. Also, they have identified that economic freedom and ethnic homogeneity are very beneficial to achieve high growth rates. The political stability index has been used as a proxy for political instability.

When it comes to the studies that have been done to test the relationship between the economic growth and political instability in South Asia (Pakistan) has employed ARCH and GARCH models to examine the consequences of the political instability on economic performances. The results of the study emphasized that there is a significant negative effect from political instability on the economic growth rate of the country. The study has utilized time series data of 22 years to capture the political volatility of Pakistan through elections, strikes and terrorism as dummy variables which are political instability proxies (Tabassam et al., 2016).

In the study of Younis et al. (2008), it has been identified that there is a close relationship between political stability and economic growth. The ordinary least square method has been utilized to examine the nexus between these two. Political stability here is taken as the independent variable while the economic growth rate is the dependent variable. Most importantly, here, an index has been constructed to indicate political stability using the proxy variables for political stability during the period of 1990-2005. The indicators of the political stability composed with election density ratio, index of democratization, strength level of the ruling parties, and expenditure for military activities as a percentage of

GDP, regime longevity, ICRG risk rating, people internally displaced and the increment of political parties in national assembly.

The literature emphasized that the linkage between political instability and economic growth have tested at three levels. The first level is the way that political instability influences the economic growth (Aisen & Veiga, 2013; Campos & Nugent, 2022). Secondly, the fact that economic growth is a result of the constant political stability and finally the third is the bidirectional linkage between the instability in the political sector and the growth of the economy (Hasan, 2010). By considering all, the paper attempts to revisit the relationship that exists between political instability and economic growth. The base for the study is laid by the often and ever-growing political instabilities in the South Asian region. Also, less effort has been done to examine the major channels that transmit consequences from political instability to economic growth and how quantitatively significant this relationship is in relation to the South Asian region.

All the above literature showed that even though political instability is a multidimensional concept, the majority of the studies have only focused on one or two proxies to indicate political instability. Also, majority of these studies have conducted quantitative analysis to generate the conclusions about the causal relationship between political instability and the economic growth. This study is significant due to its utilization of the political stability index, as an indicator for political instability among the eight South Asian countries. The political stability index includes indicators like voice and accountability, absence of violence and terrorism, government effectiveness, regulatory quality, rule of law, control of corruption. The index can be determined through the scale reached by each country where negative scales include political instabilities (Radu, 2015). Through the utilization of the political stability index, the study was able to generate a fragile data analysis and generalizable conclusions.

Methodology

The current study has collected the data from 2000-2019 taking eight states including India, Bangladesh, Maldives, Pakistan, Sri Lanka, Bhutan, Nepal, and Afghanistan covering the overall South Asian region. The World Bank Data has been utilized in collecting the relevant data needed for the study. The time series data were collected from different contexts and hence an overall panel data analysis has been conducted through the study in order to investigate the

political instability-growth nexus. The analysis has been conducted in two phases in the current study where firstly, the Panel Autoregressive Distributed Lag Model has been utilized in order to identify the impact of political instability on the economic growth rate of the South Asian countries. The analysis using the Panel Autoregressive Distributed Lag Model has enhanced the practical significance of the study as it has assisted in figuring out the short and long-run linkage between economic growth and political instability clearly. In order to corroborate the results obtained using the Panel Autoregressive Distributed Lag Model, a robustness check has been performed with the use of Fully Modified Ordinary Least Squares (FMOLS) and Dynamic Ordinary Least Squares (DOLS) estimators on which compatible results were premised. FMOLS is a non-parametric way of dealing with serial correlation corrections, whereas DOLS is a parametric approach in which lagged first-differenced terms are unambiguously estimated. In this first phase, the “real GDP growth rate” has been taken as the measure of the economic growth which is the dependent variable. The same proxy was used in many previous scholarly works (Tabassam et al., 2016). On the other hand, “Political stability index score” extracted from the “Index of Political Stability and Absence of Violence/Terrorism” for the period of 2000-2019 is utilized as the main proxy for the political instability that acts as the major independent variable in the current study. This Political Instability index measures the probability of the governments to become more destabilized from the unconstitutional or violent ways including dynamic politically motivated violence and terrorism. The index can be identified as an aggregate or a composite measure which is calculated based on several other multiple sources including the Economist Intelligent Unit, the World Economic Forum, and the Political Risk Services. Variables like international tensions, social unrest, violent demonstrations, terrorism, armed conflicts, and number of cabinet changes, ethnic and religious conflicts are considered when preparing the index (World Bank, 2021).

Apart from that, the investment growth rate (Barro, 1991), education which was measured through the secondary school enrollment (Barro, 1991), population growth rate (Barro, 1991), trade as a percentage of GDP (Jong-A-Pin R. , 2006), inflation rate (Jong-A-Pin R. , 2006) and also the economic freedom estimated through the Index of Economic Freedom (Jong-A-Pin R. , 2006) have been used which are estimated to have impacts on economic growth and these act as controlled variables in order to clearly figure out the relationship between political instability and economic growth. All these variables are utilized to

measure their separate impact over the economic growth and the same variables are used in the study of Jong-A-Pin R. , (2006) and they were identified as significant determinants of economic growth of 98 countries.

As the first empirical analysis, the stationary properties of the data set are examined by applying the Pesaran CADF test. The Pesaran CADF test has been declared to be utilized in studies as it is highly useful in solving the existence of the cross-sectional dependence through augmenting the standard Dickey-Fuller regression with the cross sectional averages of lagged levels and first differences of the individual series. The Pesaran CADF equation can be formulated as follows.

$$\Delta y_{i,t} = a_i + \beta_i y_{i,t-1} + y_i \bar{y}_{t-1} + \varphi \Delta \bar{y}_t + \varepsilon_{i,t} \quad (1)$$

Based on the results gained for the above equation, the hypotheses set for the unit root can be evaluated. Simply, the unit root test can be conducted by using the Ordinary Least Square results which are gained from the equation 1 with t-ratio by $t_i(N, T)$. The CADF test formula is;

$$CADF = t_i(N, T) = \frac{\Delta y_i' \bar{M}_w y_{i-t}}{\hat{\sigma}_i (y_{i-1}' \bar{M}_w y_{i-1})^{.5}} \quad (2)$$

Where,

$$\Delta y_i' = (\Delta y_{i,1}, \Delta y_{i,2}, \dots, \Delta y_{i,r})'$$

$$\Delta y_{i-1}' = (\Delta y_0, \Delta y_{2-1}, \dots, \Delta y_{r-1})'$$

$$\bar{M}_w = I_t - \bar{W} (\bar{W}' \bar{W})^{-1} \bar{W}'$$

$$\text{where } \bar{W} = (r, \Delta \bar{y}, \bar{y}_{-1})$$

$$\text{where } \Delta \bar{y} = (\Delta \bar{y}_1, \Delta \bar{y}_2, \dots, \Delta \bar{y}_r) \text{ and } \bar{y}_{-1} = (\bar{y}_0, \bar{y}_1, \dots, \bar{y}_{r-1})$$

$$\hat{\sigma}_i^2 = \frac{\Delta y_i' M_{i,w} \Delta y_i}{T - 4}$$

$$M_{i,w} = I_T - (G_i (G_i' G_i)^{-1} G_i' \text{ and } G_i = (\bar{W}, y_{i-1})$$

After conducting the unit root test based on the cross-sectional augmented DF (CADF), the final step of the empirical analysis has been allocated to estimate the long and short run relationship between the variables prioritizing the relationship between political instability and economic growth. In order to reach this, the study has applied the Panel Autoregressive Distributed Lag Model. For estimating the long-run and short run relationship among the variables, we have applied Panel Autoregressive Distributed Lag Model based on three alternative estimators such as Mean Group estimator (MG), Pooled Mean Group (PMG) and Dynamic Fixed Effects (DFE).

The literature has identified the fact that instability in the political sector is a multidimensional concept that has many dimensions and cannot be proxied from one dimension¹. Hence, the usage of one of the individual political instability indicators creates measurement errors (Jong-A-Pin R. , 2006). This problem has been solved in the current study by using a composite measure for political instability which is the political stability index in the analysis for the key explanatory variable. As same, in order to measure the impact of political instability on economic growth, four dimensions have been utilized as proxies for political instability including the rule of law, control of corruptions, civil liberties and regulatory quality (Jong-A-Pin R. , 2006). The reason for using four dimensions as proxies of political instability is that these dimensions are not included in the political stability index. In order to examine the impact of the political instability over the economic growth of South Asian countries, the augmented version of the Autoregressive Distributed Lag was used by different studies. Mankiw et al. (1992) and Islam (1995) while some studies followed the Solow-Swan model which was introduced by the study of Solow (1956). The analysis of the current study followed Barro (1991) and Jong-A-Pin R. (2006) in determining the controlled variables for the model. These variables include Investment, secondary school enrollment, population growth rate, trade as a percentage of GDP, inflation rate and economic freedom.

$$\ln growth_{it} = a + \beta \ln Z_{it} + \gamma \ln X_{it} + \varepsilon_{it} \quad (3)$$

Here, $growth_{it}$ is represented using the average economic growth per capita for the country i in the period t (2000-2019). Z_{it} is the vector with the explanatory variables (Barro, 1991) including investment, political instability, secondary school enrollment, population growth rate, trade as a percentage of GDP, inflation rate and economic freedom. The vector X_{it} reflects the four dimensions

of political instability.

Here, a linear ARDL model is utilized in estimating the relationship between political instability and economic growth. The reason for using the ARDL model is that it seemed to be the idlest/ideal method that assists in overcoming the endogeneity problem that is associated with the political instability-growth nexus which is analyzed.

$$\begin{aligned}
 RGDP = & \sum_{j=1}^p \alpha_{ij} RGDP_{i,t-j} + \sum_{j=0}^q \beta'_{ij} PI_{i,t-j} + \sum_{j=0}^q \gamma'_{ij} IG_{i,t-j} + \\
 & \sum_{j=0}^q \delta'_{ij} EDU_{i,t-j} + \sum_{j=0}^q \varepsilon'_{ij} PG_{i,t-j} + \sum_{j=0}^q \epsilon'_{ij} TR_{i,t-j} + \sum_{j=0}^q \theta'_{ij} INF_{i,t-j} + \\
 & \sum_{j=0}^q \vartheta'_{ij} EF_{i,t-j} + \sum_{j=0}^q \mu'_{ij} RL_{i,t-j} + \sum_{j=0}^q \pi'_{ij} CC_{i,t-j} + \sum_{j=0}^q \rho'_{ij} CL_{i,t-j} + \\
 & \sum_{j=0}^q \sigma'_{ij} RQ_{i,t-j} u_i + \varepsilon_{it}
 \end{aligned} \tag{4}$$

Where;

$i=1,2,3,\dots,N$, N number of cross sectionals (Here $N=8$)

$t=1,2,3,\dots,T$, T total number of time periods (Here $T=20$)

$\alpha_{ij}, \beta'_{ij}, \gamma'_{ij}, \delta'_{ij}, \varepsilon'_{ij}, \epsilon'_{ij}, \theta'_{ij}, \vartheta'_{ij} =$ scalars

$u_i =$ cross sectional effects

RGDP= Real GDP growth rate

PI=Political instability

IG=Investment growth

EDU= Education

PG=Population growth

TR=Trade as a percentage of GDP

INF=Inflation rates

EF=Economic freedom

RL=Rule of law

CC=Control of corruptions

CL=Civil liberties

RQ=Regulatory quality

In order to examine the long term and short term impact of political instability on the economic growth of the South Asian region, the following hypotheses were stated to be tested.

Hypothesis 1: There is no impact from political instability on economic growth

Hypothesis 2: There is an impact from political instability on economic growth

Analysis and Discussion

As stated previously, the main purpose of the study is to examine the short and long run relationship between economic growth and other macro-economic variables. However, through the study, the key objective of analyzing the political instability-growth nexus has been prioritized. A holistic approach has been utilized to conduct the analysis to figure out this nexus where political instability is considered as a multi-dimensional concept and different proxies have been used to indicate political instability including the political instability index.

The Table 1 represents the summary of the co-integration estimates of the Equation 3 in the long run while Table 2 elaborates the short run co-integration estimates of the Equation 3.

Table 2: Long run ARDL Cointegration Model

Model	ARDL (1,1)
Selection method of the model	Hannan-Quinn criterion (HQ)
Observation	152
Bound Test F Statistic for small samples	14.57
Dependent variable	
LN_RGDP	0.0000*
Independent variables	
LN_PI	0.0000*
LN_IG	0.0002*
LN_EDU	0.0000*
LN_PG	0.0019*
LN_TR	0.0006*
LN_INF	0.0118*
LN_EF	0.9786*
LN_RL	0.7325*
LN_CC	0.6216*

LN_CL	0.0251*
LN_RQ	0.0032*
@Trend	0. .394*
Notes:	
a. The model is estimated with constant and trend with one lag of Real GDP and seven lags for Political Instability Index (1,1) based on the Hannan-Quinn criterion (HQ)	
b.* represent the significant level of 5%	

A significant negative relationship can be identified between the political instability index and economic growth in the long run. The above table depicts that the p-value coefficient of the political instability index is less than 0.05 or 5%, where the null hypothesis falls in the rejection region. Hence, it can be concluded that the null hypothesis can be rejected stating that there is a significant relationship between the political instability index and economic growth rates of the South Asian region. The same findings could be observed in previous research papers which were conducted in different contexts. Therefore, the findings of the study are well aligned with the studies (Aisen & Veiga, 2013; Siddique et al., 2019; and Fenetahun et al., 2021) where they have examined that political instability exerts a strong and a negative influence on the Real Gross Domestic Product (RGDP) of the countries. Following the methodology of studies (Pasha, 2020 and Jong-A-Pin R., 2006) the proxies have been individually analyzed to identify a holistic or a comprehensive result for the effects of political instability in South Asian growth levels in their economies. In that case, civil liberties and regulatory quality shows a significant positive relationship with the economic growth of the South Asian region, while the other two proxies, including control of corruption and rule of law are not significant variables that affect economic growth rate of the countries in the South Asian region. When regulatory quality increases and the civil liberties increases signing a reduction of the political instability, a rise in the economic growth rates can be predicted.

Table 3: Relationship between the variables and the economic growth in long run

Variable	Nature of the relationship with economic growth	Strength of the relationship
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<i>LN_PI</i>	Negative	Significant
<i>LN_IG</i>	Positive	Significant
<i>LN_EDU</i>	Positive	Significant
<i>LN_PG</i>	Negative	Significant
<i>LN_TR</i>	Positive	Significant
<i>LN_INF</i>	Negative	Significant
<i>LN_EF</i>	Negative	Insignificant
<i>LN_RL</i>	Positive	Insignificant
<i>LN_CC</i>	Negative	Insignificant
<i>LN_CL</i>	Positive	Significant
<i>LN_RQ</i>	Positive	Significant

Similarly, when analyzed, the short run relationship between political instability and economic growth, it could be identified that the political instability index does not show a significant impact over economic growth. However, when it comes to the individual dimensions of political instability, the regulatory quality is the only variable that exhibited a significant relationship with the economic growth of the South Asian region.

Table 4: Short run ARDL Cointegration Model

Model	ARDL (1,1)
Selection method of the model	Hannan-Quinn criterion (HQ)
Observation	152
Bound Test F Statistic for small samples	14.57
Exogeneous Regressors	
D(PI)	0.1901*
D(IG)	0.3081*
D(EDU)	0.2185*
D(PG)	0.8141*
D(TR)	0.5783*

D(INF)	0.6571*
D(EF)	0.3008*
D(RL)	0.3351*
D(CC)	0.1262*
D(CL)	0.2263*
D(RQ)	0.0284*
CointEq(-1)	0.005*

Notes:
 b. The model is estimated with constant and trend with one lag of Real GDP and seven lags for Political Instability Index (1,1) based on the Hannan-Quinn criterion (HQ)
 b.* represent the significant level of 5%

Short run ARDL Cointegration Model

Table 5: Relationship between the variables and the economic growth in short run

Variable	Nature of the relationship with economic growth	Strength of the relationship
<i>D(PI)</i>	Negative	Insignificant
<i>D(IG)</i>	Positive	Insignificant
<i>D(EDU)</i>	Positive	Insignificant
<i>D(PG)</i>	Negative	Insignificant
<i>D(TR)</i>	Positive	Insignificant
<i>D(INF)</i>	Negative	Insignificant
<i>D(EF)</i>	Negative	Insignificant
<i>D(RL)</i>	Positive	Insignificant
<i>D(CC)</i>	Negative	Insignificant
<i>D(CL)</i>	Positive	Insignificant
<i>D(RQ)</i>	Positive	Significant

The results (Table 4) emphasized that it could observe a long-run influence from South Asian political instability. However, in the short run, no such linkage between instability in the political sector and the growth could be expected.

However, when it comes to the proxies utilized for political instability, only regulatory quality exhibited a significant influence over the economic growth in both long and short run. When the countries can attain a good regulatory quality, the growth rates will rise and when they fail to maintain the quality of the regulations, the growth will be reduced due to the occurrences of political instabilities. Apart from that, civil liberties also significantly influenced over the economic growth of the countries in the long run. As per Aisen and Veiga, (2013), a negative coefficient is expected as similar as the current study in between instability in the political sector and the growth due to the greater political instability that has led to high uncertainties associated with future economic policies, ultimately lowering the economic growth of the countries. As per Alesina et al., (1996), political instability is measured through governmental changes (cabinet changes). They have also investigated that when political instability exists within the economy, or when there is a period with higher governmental changes, there is a high propensity for the economy to experience a lower growth.

Apart from the negative significant relationship that is examined by the current paper between political instability and economic growth, Barro, (1991) also has investigated that political instability is indicated through the number of assassinations and occurrences of violent revolutions and military coups have notable effects over the average growth level on cross section regressions on a large sample of countries. According to Aisen & Veiga, (2010), political instability is associated with a greater level of uncertainty in the future economic policy which leads to an adverse effect on investment which in turn leads to poor physical capital accumulation. In addition to that, human capital accumulation may also be adversely affected as people are induced to invest less in education due to the uncertainty involved in the future economic condition of the country as a consequence of political instability. Furthermore, political instability leads to a reduction in research and development efforts made by the firms and governments, creating a slower technological progress. The overall productivity is adversely affected as a result of violence, civil unrest and strikes as normal operations of firms and markets are utterly obstructed by reducing the number of hours worked (Aisen & Veiga, 2010). Alesin & Perotti, (1996), have investigated that in developing countries like South Asian countries, political instability gives birth to uncertainty and risk where the countries will become less attractive as a safe destination to do investments. Hence, lower private investments will lead to lower the growth levels of the countries. As a part of checking the robustness of the results of panel ADRL model, DOLS and

FMOLS outcomes were in line with the ARDL outcome, corroborating the results of the panel ADRL model.

Conclusion

The current study has highlighted the nature of the effects from political instabilities for the economic growth concerning on the South Asian region. The study provides a holistic view on the relationship between political instability and economic growth, where political instability is highlighted as a multi-dimensional concept. Political instability index, regulatory quality, civil liberties, control of corruption and rule of law are used as indications for political instability. The study has utilized an Autoregressive Distributed Lag Model (ARDLM) 1 for the analysis in order to generate t insights about the political instability-growth nexus for both short and long run.

The results emphasized that political instability has a significant negative impact on real GDP growth rate in South Asia, where through political instability, the quality of governance and uncertainties generated lead to lower investments and lower growth levels in the long run. This further can be elaborated through the significant negative impact forwarded from the two proxies of political instability including regulatory quality and civil liberties. On the other hand, political instability has not exhibited any influence over the growth rate in the short run.

The study has contributed vastly to the academic rigor through the comprehensive analysis conducted by employing the ARDL model about the short and long run impact of political instability over the economic growth rates in the South Asian region. This has eased the policy makers' responsibilities in taking necessary actions and priorities to exercise aiming a stable political regime in their respective countries. As the study suggests, since political instability and economic growth are deeply interconnected in the long run, it is important to restructure the political structure of majority of the countries in South Asia where political instabilities and uncertainties are high. Also, the quality of the regulatory activities is vital to monitor continuously as it has strong impact towards the growth rates of the countries both in the long and short run.

Declaration of Conflicting Interests

The author declared no potential conflicts of interest with respect to the research, authorship, and publication of this article.

ⁱ See for example, Younis et al. (2008) and Nabi et al. (2010)

ⁱⁱ Visit for more details: <https://www.newsfirst.lk/2019/10/20/president-seeks-to-dismantle-the-national-economic-council/>

^{iv} Examples for the studies who considered the political instability as a one dimensional concept are Londregan and Poole (1990), Levine and Renelt (1992), Alesina et al. (1996), Peretti (1996), Ades and Chua (1997), Easterly and Levine (1997) and, Sala-I-Martin (1997).

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An Intersectional Approach to Understanding the Inequality and Subordination of Sri Lankan Women Apparel Workers

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Abstract

Contrary to the feminist research based on exclusively gendered processes of inequality in organisations, intersectionality theorists propose an intersectional approach to understanding the inequalities and subordination experienced by Global South women factory workers representing different social hierarchies and experiencing diverse social realities. This paper contributes to the literature by bringing empirical evidence from the Sri Lankan apparel industry to inform the inequality and subordination of women in Global South factory floors from an intersectional perspective. A qualitative methodology using data generated through interviews with women shop floor-level apparel workers who work in export processing zones (EPZs) and village areas was adopted to explore the interplay between multiple social categories (gender, poverty, and rurality) influenced by broader power structures (patriarchy and capitalism) as well as political inequalities in determining the inequalities and subordination of women workers in globalised apparel factories. Further, we consider how gendered and class-based factory processes produce and reproduce the inequalities and subordination of these women at work. The analysis identifies that workers' rural origins, poverty, and traditionally defined gendered roles have worked interactively in favour of capitalist industrialists by pushing these

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women workers to lower-paid manual jobs in the apparel industry. The factories utilise cheap, material-based incentives and recruitment systems for rewarding and recruiting shop floor workers, capitalising on their poverty, rurality and gender-based requirements as a source of exploitation. In addition, factory managers' behaviours create certain beliefs in these women workers, favouring the factories, resulting in the further subordination of these women through perceived cohesiveness or compliance. Finally, this paper concludes that capitalism, together with patriarchy, creates unequal and subordinated positions for poor, rural women through their collective agendas of wealth maximisation.

Keywords: *Inequality, Intersectionality, Sri Lankan apparel industry, Subordination, Women workers*

Introduction

The emergence of global capitalism and the international division of sex labour provided the opportunity for Northern capitalists to enter the Global South looking for cheap labour (Elson & Pearson, 1981; Gunawardana, 2010; Mezzadri, 2017; Mohanty et al., 1991; Ruwanpura, 2016). This migration of factory work to the Global South has significantly impacted women who have been absorbed as wage labour in export-oriented manufacturing industries (Elson & Pearson, 1981; Parpart & Stichter, 2016). The women who have entered factory work under this global restructuring process face numerous hardships, particularly in the textile and garment industry (Shaw & Hale, 2002), such as diminished rights as workers and exposure to harsh and exploitative conditions (Prentice et al., 2018; Ruwanpura, 2016, 2022). Therefore, the 'exploitation of women labour' has become a vital aspect of the discourse on labour exploitation on Global South factory floors (Elson & Pearson, 1981; Mezzadri, 2017; Mohanty et al., 1991).

The global apparel industry employs nearly sixty million people worldwide, of which 80% are women concentrated in the Global South (LeBaron et al., 2022). As past literature points out, poor women, especially whose socio-economic existence has been influenced by patriarchal subjugation, have become exploited commodities under the capitalist-patriarchy in the global production sites (Elson & Pearson, 1981; Mezzadri, 2016). The situation of Sri Lankan women apparel workers is not different (see Hewamanne, 2020; Seneviratne, 2019). The literature explicitly characterises the shop floor workforce of the Sri

Lankan apparel industry as female-dominant, poor, rural, and rural migrant (Gunawardana, 2016; Hewamanne, 2003; Jayaweera, 2003; Lynch, 2007; Shaw, 2007). The women who hail from poor rural backgrounds are pushed in to the industry by their peasant family backgrounds and the resulting limited employment opportunities (Shaw, 2007), and are subject to exploitative and oppressive work practices (Hewamanne, 2020). Inspired by this backdrop, we seek to answer the research question: How are women shop floor workers unequally treated and subordinated in the Sri Lankan export-oriented apparel factory floor through the intersectional influence of multiple social categories (rurality, poverty and gender)? In doing so, we bring a broader perspective to understand the subjugation of women in the Global South production floors.

The extant literature on Global South labour has used intersectional perspectives in understanding the exploitation and inequalities of Global South workers placed within global value chains (Carswell & De Neve, 2013; Marslev et al., 2022; Mezzadri, 2017; Mezzadri & Fan, 2018; Seneviratne, 2018, 2019). These studies show the interrelations of gender, class, place, ethnicity and other social categories in determining the subjugation of Global South female labour. For instance, Seneviratne (2019) illustrates how female workers from an export processing zone in Sri Lanka are subject to oppression, given the multiple social categories they represent: class and gender. However, there is sufficient space to explore the subjugation of women apparel workers driven by multiply oppressive structures generating data from across the industry: inside and outside of EPZs. Therefore, as an extension to the extant literature, this paper first explores how multiple social categories (rurality, poverty, and gender) that are influenced by broader power structures (patriarchy and capitalism), as well as political inequalities, have interactively driven Sri Lankan poor, rural women to become shop floor workers in the Southern apparel industry. In addition, we investigate how factory processes and practices, which feed on the same intersectional influences, produce and reproduce inequalities and subordination of women workers on the factory floor. The latter part of the analysis is inspired by Acker's notion of 'gendered substructures'. Acker (2006, 2012) uses gendered substructures to illustrate gendered organisational processes that create and recreate gender inequalities. By extending Acker's characterisation, in this paper, we show how gendered processes simultaneously become class processes³ that produce and reproduce the inequality and subordination of

³ In this paper, both poverty and rurality driven processes can be considered class processes.

women shop floor workers.

Literature Review

Researching inequality and subordination through intersectionality

The gap in organisational studies concerning gender in organisations was effectively filled by feminist researchers who studied how gender processes produce and reproduce inequalities in organisations (Acker, 2004, 2006, 2012). Acker (2012) points out that wage gaps between genders, sex-segregated jobs, and hierarchical positions, which are identified as the most common forms of inequalities at work, have significant variations across time and place (Acker, 2012). Acker (2012, p. 215) introduced the idea of ‘gendered substructures’ which “points to often-invisible processes in the ordinary lives of organizations in which gendered assumptions about women and men, femininity and masculinity, are embedded and reproduced, and gender inequalities perpetuated.” She identifies organising processes, organisational culture, interactions on the job, and gendered identities as components of gendered substructures. However, feminist theories that focus on merely one social category—gender—have been criticised for not acknowledging the other contextual factors at work in the suppression of women, these factors being class, location, race, sexuality, and ethnicity (Crenshaw, 1990; Holvino, 2010; Romero, 2018).

Acker (2012) points out that inclusions and exclusions of women in organising processes (e.g., job design, wage discrimination, distribution of decision-making, and supervisory power) are created and recreated through the complex interweaving of several identity categories such as gender, race, and class. Therefore, in feminist studies, examining one organisational context, namely, the experiences of disadvantaged women workers, cannot be comprehended through gender or gendered processes alone, as such experiences are intersected and shaped by several other processes such as race, class, and/or some other social category (Acker, 2012). Crenshaw (1990), a founder of the intersectional perspective, claims that the case of ‘women of colour’ comprehensively demonstrates the necessity for understanding the life experiences of Black women through the intersectionality of gender and race, rather than studying them separately (Crenshaw, 1990). Inspired by this line of thought, in this

paper, we use an intersectional approach to analyse the experiences of shop floor workers, who have multiple identities, particularly in their positions on multiple social hierarchies.

Intersectionality literature emphasises the inadequacy of a one-dimensional approach in conceptualising the lived experiences of women who represent different social hierarchies and experience various social realities (Romero, 2018). Intersectionality scholars affirm that the multiple identities that people experience work as interlocking systems of oppression (Beal, 2008; Romero, 2018). Acker (2004) illustrates how Bangladeshi women apparel workers are vulnerable under the regime of global capitalism, given their gender-related poverty. This emphasises the importance of foregrounding intersectional analysis in understanding structural and political inequalities, as it helps to explicate how power works in creating overlapping marginalised identities (Cho et al., 2013). Crenshaw (1990) explicates structural inequalities by underlining the frustration and burnout experienced by Black women in minority communities in Los Angeles due to the intersectionality of class, patriarchy, and racism. Mezzadri (2016) elucidates the interplay between patriarchy and class formation in determining the subordination of women workers in the feminised Indian export-oriented apparel industry. Given their specific gender, class, and ethnicity, Seneviratne (2011) suggests that Sri Lankan women apparel shop floor workers and female plantation workers are subjected to a triple exploitation. However, there does remain an opportunity to study how gender, class, and rural origin interactively determine the subjugation of women apparel workers on factory floors through organisational processes such as incentive and recruitment systems, and factory cultures. Therefore, the next section is on the research site relevant to this study, illustrating its suitability for the purpose of the study.

The Sri Lankan apparel industry

The history of the Sri Lankan export-oriented apparel industry dates back to the late 1970s. In 1977, the prevailing United National Party government opened the country's economy to the rest of the world by introducing a radical shift in the economy: from a state-led import-substitution industrialisation strategy to a market-oriented policy (Athukorala & Rajapatirana, 2000; Jayaweera, 2003; Seneviratne, 2019). This radical shift in macroeconomic policies was accompanied by the "stabilization and structural adjustment package" promoted by the IMF and the World Bank (Jayaweera, 2003, p. 196). Under the new structural changes to the economy, the private sector became the engine of

growth, wherein the promotion of foreign investment in export-oriented industries has been a key element (Athukorala & Rajapatirana, 2000; Jayaweera, 2003). Following these market-oriented policy reforms, the government established the Export Development Board and EPZs to facilitate the country's export sector (Jayaweera, 2003). This marked the commencement of the Sri Lankan apparel industry, which now plays a leading role in the global apparel-sourcing supply chain. The Sri Lankan garment industry now has more than two hundred and fifty apparel factories established throughout the country in both EPZs and village areas⁴ under the private ownership of local and foreign investors.

The economic and social significance of the Sri Lankan apparel industry is very high (Mirza & Ensign, 2021; Perry, 2012; Ruwanpura & Wrigley, 2011), with the industry achieving a 5 billion (US\$) export milestone in 2018 (Masakorala, 2019). In 2020, the industry contributed 39% of the total export income of the country (Central Bank of Sri Lanka, 2021). In addition, the apparel industry generates more than 990,000 job opportunities in Sri Lanka (Mirza & Ensign, 2021), representing 33% of the country's total manufacturing jobs (Asia Garment Hub, 2021). Of the industry's total workforce, the majority comprises female workers who are concentrated in lower-level jobs on production floors (Gunatilaka, 2019; Jayawardena, 2014; Lynch, 1999; Madurawala, 2017; Seneviratne, 2011). Of the operational grades of the industry (such as machinists), more than 78% are women (Asia Development Bank, 2020), but the majority of management and technical positions are occupied by men (Gunawardana, 2014). This data confirms that gender-based inequalities are present in relation to the sex segregation of jobs, hierarchical positions, and working conditions in the Sri Lankan apparel industry (see also Gunawardana, 2007, 2016; Hancock et al., 2015; Hewamanne, 2008b). Following this, the next section will briefly explain how Sri Lankan traditional socio-cultural values help in creating a female apparel worker preferred by capitalists.

Feminised Apparel workforce in Sri Lanka

Women dominate the labour force in Global South assembly lines as they are seen “not only to have naturally nimble fingers, but also to be naturally more docile and willing to accept tough work, discipline, and naturally less inclined to join trade unions, than men; and to be naturally more suited to tedious,

⁴ In this study, the garment factories which operate outside of the EPZs are called as village areas factories.

repetitious, monotonous work” (Elson & Pearson, 1981, p. 93; Hewamanne, 2020). Indeed, Fernández-Kelly (1983) suggests that one of the main reasons for relocating global manufacturing functions in the Global South has been the availability of young women with qualities such as docility, dexterity, and willingness to work for low wages, qualities which are highly valued in export-oriented workers. The Sri Lankan literature confirms that traditional patriarchal expectations of women are that they be “*ahinsaka* (innocent), disciplined, and filial,” and these have become the main qualifications for recruiting rural females to the apparel industry (Gunawardana, 2007, p. 80). Furthermore, employers prefer rural women over men, as their “village upbringing and less demanding nature made them ideal employees” (Gunawardana, 2016, p. 866). This representation of women apparel workers also suggests that locally defined subjectivities of femininity serve managers' expectations in global production networks. Further, the production of these subjectivities of productive femininity is not limited to broader society but is reproduced within factory floors as well (Salzinger, 2003). Bair (2010, p. 205) notes “that this spatial fragmentation is frequently accompanied by the feminization of manufacturing..., [where] the globalization of production is fundamentally about reorganizing the social geography of industry.”

Although they have achieved some financial independence, Sri Lankan rural women who stepped into wage jobs in globalised factory sites have been stigmatised for challenging traditional patriarchal values (Lynch, 2007). The innate female value of *lajja-baya* (shame-fear of wrongdoing) in Sri Lankan society has supported male managers in their quest for disciplined and docile workers who comply with the decisions made by the factory. Female workers in EPZs who challenge these traditional boundaries are labelled as the ‘bad girls’ of society (Lynch, 2007) or even “no-good whores” (Hewamanne (2008a, p. 35). The reason for such labelling could well be due to societal beliefs that rural women should live a constrained life under the control of their fathers or brothers, and that society is unwilling to accept their freedom from this form of patriarchy in the EPZs (Lynch, 2007). Given this background, it is necessary to investigate how rural, poor women workers, who have been assigned a derogatory identity in society, are marginalised in the factory context through organisational processes and practices.

The literature on female shop floor workers in the Sri Lankan apparel industry explicitly characterises the shop floor workforce of the Sri Lankan apparel industry as dominated by poor, rural, and rural migrant women (Hewamanne,

2003; Jayaweera, 2003; Lynch, 2007; Seneviratne, 2019). These women apparel workers experience an unpleasant work environment comprising poor work conditions, exploitation, and violence, though the manner in which this experience can differ across the industry (Hancock et al., 2015; Ruwanpura, 2022). To date, little attention has been paid to analysing how organisational processes such as incentive and recruitment systems and organisational culture create and recreate the inequalities and subordination of women apparel workers through the simultaneously occurring gendered and class processes on the factory floor. The same organisational processes and/or practices can be used to create and recreate multiple inclusions and exclusions driven by the multiple identities of workers (Acker, 2012). Acker (2012, p. 219) states that, “[i]nteractions at work may be shaped by racial stereotyping as well as gender and class stereotyping.” In this paper, we analyse how poor, rural women are pushed into lower hierarchical positions in the apparel industry through the interactions of broader power structures and political inequalities that prevail in society. The fieldwork used in generating the data and the analytical methods are explained in the next section.

Fieldwork and Methods

A qualitative methodology, inspired by the ontology of historical realism followed by the epistemology of subjectivism, was adopted in this study (Guba & Lincoln, 1994; Howell, 2016; Scotland, 2012). The analysis sought to reveal how participants’ constructions of meaning are influenced by the already established social and organisational power structures (Guba & Lincoln, 1994). Forty-one interviews were conducted with women apparel workers from the Katunayake export processing zone (KEPZ) and village area factories in the Kurunegala and Kegalle districts. All participants were women operational level workers with little hierarchical differences: machine operators, cutters, packers, jumpers⁵, quality checkers, team leaders and a technician. Also, the participants had a minimum of two years of experience in the industry. Choosing participants from two different locational contexts enabled us to generate a rich data set representing a cross-section of participants from broad socio-economic backgrounds. For example, women workers from the KEPZ resided in boarding places around Awariyawatta⁶, mostly alone and away from their families and

⁵ A jumper can perform several sewing operations.

⁶ Awariyawatta’ area, which is the town nearest to the KEPZ

home villages, whereas village participants mostly stayed with their husbands, children, and/or parents at their village homes. Also, compared to the village participants, many KEPZ participants had previously engaged more in farming and worked in village-based garment factories. On the other hand, village participants, compared to the KEPZ ones, had worked more as housemaids and apparel workers overseas. Interviewing women workers from multiple locations and factories also helped us to obtain a broad knowledge of the organisational processes that produce and reproduce inequalities, oppression, and subordination. For instance, village participants had more experience with the male managers' acts of oppression over women workers than the KEPZ participants.

In relation to research ethics, we followed all the policies and guidelines of the Queensland University of Technology, Australia, for conducting ethical research with human participants and obtained formal ethical clearance. Two key elements were, obtaining the informed consent of the participants and keeping the names of all participants and business organisations anonymous to avoid any job-related, personal, or commercial discomfort they would have to experience due to the data used in this study.

The study's principal researcher spent three months visiting the boarding places and houses of women workers to recruit interview participants for the study. She chose participants for the interviews with the support of the organisation '*Da Bindu*' (Beads of Sweat)⁷ as well as her personal contacts. These field visits were beneficial for providing access to and information about the socio-economic background of the women participants. For instance, once, while she was interviewing a KEPZ participant, the husband of another woman apparel worker appeared with his wife, asking the researcher to interview his wife without her permission. The researcher refused his request, as she realised that the unwarranted influence of this person on his wife would violate the ethical conduct of research, in terms of informed consent and uncoerced participation. Later, she came to know that this man had attempted to insinuate his wife into the research to obtain the Rs.1500 gift voucher offered to interview participants in recognition of their valuable time spent on the interviews. This incident demonstrates the patriarchal domination experienced by women, particularly poor women (Herath, 2015).

⁷ *Da Bindu* is a non-profit organisation established to protect and promote the rights of women workers in the free trade zones of Katunayake and other industrial areas

On another day of the field visit, when the principal researcher was entering a female boarding place, an old man materialised in front of her and asked questions about herself and the purpose of her visit. After her explanation, he started berating her, “Please, lady, please do not disturb these girls on Sundays. They have only this day to do all their cooking, bathing and shopping. So, I cannot allow you to go inside.” With this interference, her attempt to meet an apparel worker was unsuccessful. This incident portrays that these women are still under men's protection, even after moving to the KEPZ, away from their families and households. His refusal prevented the researcher from meeting women workers and offering them the opportunity even to refuse to participate. These incidents exemplify the gendered power imbalance, in which women's decisions are subordinated to the males (Herath, 2015).

In addition to the rich data obtained through fieldwork, company magazines⁸ provided by interview participants were used as a data source for this study. These magazines are designed to show off the company's achievements, including those in relation to workers and corporate social responsibility (CSR). Most also include a couple of pages of poems and verses written by company workers. These poems and verses are creatively knitted around many themes related to life experiences, relationships, people, and life aspirations, such as poverty, weariness, sacrifices made for family well-being, and love. These poems provided an additional lens through which it was possible to understand the poverty experienced by these rural workers and the important role they play in their households as mothers, sisters, and daughters (Gunawardana, 2016). The use of relevant and multiple data sources: participants from two work contexts with little hierarchical gaps, and multiple data generation techniques: interviews and magazines, was to ensure the credibility and confirmability of the findings (Bryman & Bell, 2007).

The analysis process began with the transcription of interviews, which followed a familiarisation with the audio-recorded interviews (Braun & Clarke, 2013; Mason, 2004). All the data was transcribed using the Google voice typing tool. Subsequently, we coded the transcriptions using NVivo 12 software. The interviews were retained in the Sinhalese language⁹during the coding process,

⁸ Some apparel factories publish quarterly magazines comprising factory information related to their CSR initiatives, factories' and workers' achievements, the artwork of shop floor workers, articles related to workers' careers and personal development, and messages from factory owners and managers to workers.

⁹ All the interviews were held in the Sinhalese language.

and only the quotes included in the paper were translated into English. The codes were primarily data-driven, and were derived in relation to the research question (Braun & Clarke, 2013). A few examples are ‘reasons for choosing the industry’, ‘material incentives’, ‘control through coercion or conformance’, and ‘commodification of workers’. The coded data were analysed “literally, interpretively and reflexively” (Mason, 2004, p. 78) to expose “hidden ideology by revealing participants’ places in systems which empower or disempower them” (Scotland, 2012, p. 14). Reading literally refers to reading the data, for instance, an interview transcript, in “its form and sequence, or the literal substance” (Mason, 2004, p. 78). Bringing an inside and outside meaning to the data generated is referred to as interpretive reading. The interpretations were developed based on the ideas expressed by the research participants during the interviews. Throughout the analysis, critical interpretations were made to uncover the domination of (mostly male) managers over poor, rural women apparel workers in light of the theory of intersectionality. The three subsequent sections will present the analysis and discussion, following the study's main objectives.

Analysis and Discussion

The migration of poor, rural women into the apparel industry

The data analysis shows that rurality, poverty, and traditionally defined gendered characteristics and roles, have worked interactively in favour of capitalists by thrusting these women workers to lower-paid manual jobs in the apparel industry. Moreover, it shows how patriarchy interplays with the political inequalities of the country in pushing these rural women into poorly-paid wage work.

Most participants hailed from semi-urban or rural areas in Sri Lanka, such as Trincomalee, Madirigiriya, Anuradhapura, Tangalle, Matara, and Kurunegala, and shared the characterisation of women apparel workers across the industry as poor and rural. People in regional areas generally enjoy fewer facilities and resources in relation to education, employment opportunities, and infrastructure compared to people in urban areas (Amarasuriya, 2010). Among rural people, agriculture is the primary source of livelihood (Jayaweera et al., 2007). Yet, with the new structural changes to the economy after 1977, the private sector

became the engine of growth, in which the promotion of foreign investment in export-oriented industries has been a key element (Athukorala & Rajapatirana, 2000; Jayaweera, 2003). The lack of attention received by the agricultural sector over the years resulted in slow growth in terms of productivity and income (Jayaweera et al., 2007). Consequently, rural men and women were compelled to move to the non-agricultural sector (Jayaweera et al., 2007).

Of our participants, quite a few were engaged in small-scale farming before joining the apparel industry. However, due to the irregular and insufficient income they earned from cultivation, many decided to seek employment in the apparel industry. Because of drought, flooding, and pest infestations throughout the year, their harvests were often ruined, or even after spending a great deal of money on fertilizer and pesticides, they had a lower yield than expected. Further, small-scale farmers most often sell their hard-earned harvest to trade intermediaries at lower prices. Under these circumstances, many who had relied on farming suffered from not having a minimum income to spend, even on their primary needs. The small-scale on which they farmed made our research participants even more vulnerable than they would have been if they had been large-scale farmers. *Suranji*, a 50-years-old KEPZ participant hailing from Dambulla, explained how her bitter experience of farming drove her to the apparel industry:

I farmed. I grew things like pumpkins and chillies. Afterwards, there was nothing left after spending so much money on pesticides and fertilizers. When we sell, there is no one to buy at a fair price. We can't even afford the bare essentials. No rain, no water. That's why I came here. (*Suranji*, packer, KEPZ).

The poem entitled '*Goviya*' (The Farmer),¹⁰ written by a male apparel worker, was found in one of the company magazines. It illustrates the link between rural poverty and cultivation, highlighting how rural farmers can become suicidal due to ruined harvests and mounting debt.

Goviya (The Farmer)

I slept by the lake – as usual

Compressing my dry lips together – for her who struggles to smile as before

¹⁰ This poem was composed in the Sinhala language by a male apparel worker named Akila Dewshan. The poem was written originally in Sinhala and the version given above is the English translation of the first author.

– to see the mockery of a mirage
that sleeps with the sun...
The paddy field today – is an ancient crone sans teeth
The borrowed paddy seeds holding thousands of dreams,
– are swallowed by the bare ground (leaving our debts intact)
and sleep without producing anything.....
When the kitchen is empty – the jewellery disappears without a trace;
when the loan instalment cannot be paid
our lands are forfeit - and when this grief becomes unbearable

we reach desperately for the pesticides

(Akila Dewshan, 2020, p. 7)

The above poem reflects the sorrow-filled lives of small-scale farmers in Sri Lanka. As a result of this tragic reality, poor village farmers seek alternative job opportunities to escape their financial burdens. Unfortunately, most of these poor, rural women are restricted to a few gendered and less-paid jobs that receive little societal returns, despite their significant contribution to the country's economy (Jayaweera et al., 2007).

Many study participants revealed they had worked as foreign apparel workers and foreign housemaids before coming into the Sri Lankan apparel industry. Some indicated an intention to go abroad again to work as housemaids due to the insufficient salary they receive from apparel factories. Thus, the participants' responses revealed that poor village women are most often restricted to limited and less prestigious gendered professions such as apparel workers (domestic or overseas), and housemaids (overseas). One of the reasons for this is the lack of educational opportunities due to rurality and poverty.

The responses of several participants who had come from rural villages illustrated how poverty, together with family problems, influenced them to sacrifice their education and find jobs in the apparel industry to support their families. Of the forty-one participants of the study, only seven had attempted the General Certificate of Education, Advanced Level examination, while the rest had schooled only up to the General Certificate of Education, Ordinary Level. Among them, some had stopped schooling at Year 7, Year 8, or Year 10. In addition, several participants stated that they could not attempt the General Certificate of Education, Ordinary Level though they had schooled up to year

11¹¹, due to various reasons such as financial difficulties and family problems. For instance, 43-years-old *Nayana* recounts:

I stopped my education in Year 8. [I] Had multiple problems, like economic problems. Both [my] mother and father died. Honestly speaking, there was no one left [to help us] in those years. So, [my] education was disrupted. At that time [at the time I joined the KEPZ], there was nothing else to do. We farmed. So, we were not in a position to do anything [due to the insufficient income]. That is when I came here. (*Nayana*, packer, KEPZ).

Nilu (28-years-old packer), also from the KEPZ, who is a General Certificate of Education, Ordinary Level examination dropout, agreed, “We do not have other job opportunities.” Another KEPZ participant, *Tharaka* (22-years-old machine operator), also commented, “[I] don’t have enough educational qualifications for any other job. They don’t ask for those things at garment factories.”

Finding a white-collar job without the General Certificate of Education, Advanced Level examination, English literacy and computer literacy is challenging in Sri Lanka. English is considered the “language of business and commerce as well as being widely spoken and understood in urban areas” (Perry, 2012, p. 145). Further, *Priyanwada*, a 36-years-old village participant, had this to say: “I wanted to get another job. But I haven’t learnt computer skills. It’s hard to find another job without that kind of knowledge. Therefore, I joined the current factory.” Fernando and Cohen (2017) discuss how class-based exclusion occurs in some private-sector organisations in Sri Lanka through the recruitment processes that favour applicants with skills such as the ability to communicate in English. Our findings demonstrate how rurality and poverty curtail rural children's opportunities for acquiring skills such as communicating in English and working with computers.

The disparities in resources and facilities between urban and rural schools in Sri Lanka restrict rural children's opportunities to develop the skills expected by the current labour market (Alawattegama, 2020; Amarasuriya, 2010). Therefore, educational success is determined primarily by parents’ ability to spend on their children’s education, despite the fact that Sri Lanka has a free education system

¹¹ In Sri Lanka, the G.C.E (General Certificate of Education) Ordinary Level is taken by Year 11 students (at the average age of 16). This examination functions as the selection test for the G.C.E Advanced Level examination, from which students are selected for state universities in Sri Lanka, where they receive a free education.

that is supposed to provide equal access to all students (Alawattegama, 2020; Herath, 2015). Students from low-income family backgrounds tend to drop out of the formal education system in the middle of their primary or secondary education. Consequently, these students are driven to find jobs to escape their financial problems and support their families. In particular, rural women who drop out of mainstream education enter gender-stereotyped professions such as apparel workers or housemaids. Another important revelation of the data analysis is that many of these participants, because they need to shoulder the family responsibilities, have been compelled to forego their education at a relatively early stage:

I have passed the Advanced Level (A/L). I received 1C [credit pass] and 2 S [simple passes]. I did not continue my studies. The main reason was that [my] dad was a little sick. After that, we found it difficult to make ends meet. My family has an elder sister and a younger sister. My younger sister also wants to study. So, [my] dad was a supervisor at a garment factory, and I thought I should explore possibilities in that industry (*Jinadaree*, 23-years-old packer, village).

The sexual division of labour and lack of exposure to the broader society are additional factors that constrain the job opportunities available to poor, rural women. Sri Lankan research finds that there is a set of gendered jobs: “teaching, weaving, nursing, picking, labelling, assembling, sewing work in the apparel industry, agricultural activities, tea packing, rubber-tapping and coir production work in the plantation sector (that) are the most popular jobs among women” (Herath, 2015, p. 10) and their paid work is effectively a continuation of their domestic roles within the household (De Alwis, 1995). Rural women are trained from childhood in household activities like childcare, cooking, washing, and sewing, assuming that such training is a prerequisite for a successful married life. Therefore, rural women are perceived as being skilled at manually dexterous tasks, and, by extension, these skills have become a qualification for apparel industry employment (Elson & Pearson, 1981).

The limited exposure of rural people, particularly women, to communication technology has disconnected them from the wider society and limited their understanding of the dynamics of that society (Jayaweera et al., 2007). For instance, *Sada* a 37-years-old machine operator from the KEPZ described how she was placed in the apparel industry without her knowledge by a third-party institution that supplies labour to different industries:

We were brought saying that there is an electric goods manufacturing factory. But I was put in a garment factory. At that time, we didn't have enough knowledge to go and find another job. In those days, we didn't even know that we could go for an interview and get a job. So, we just stayed on, in spite of the difficulties. (*Sada*, KEPZ).

Sada's experience empirically confirms that in Sri Lanka, "rural girls, in particular, may be cruelly exploited when they travel to urban centres looking for jobs and other, better opportunities" due to their limited exposure to society (Herath, 2015, p. 6).

The above findings demonstrate that the interplay between rurality and poverty (which often go hand in hand) and their gender has resulted in these women ending up as low-paid operational-level workers in apparel factories. However, it is not simply a matter of gender. Had it been simply their gender, this would have been common to all women in Sri Lanka. On the contrary, Sri Lankan literature shows that many women are in highly paid professions, such as doctors, and university lecturers; however, it has also been identified that this trend cannot be seen across Sri Lankan society, as women represent a wide spectrum of socio-economic experiences in the country (Herath, 2015). Thus, obtaining a complete understanding of the subordination of marginalised people in society is impossible when studying the social categories that lead to their marginalisation, separately (Crenshaw, 1990). This study explores how multiple social categories—rurality, class, and gender—are influenced by the broader patriarchal and capitalist power structures that interactively push these women into lower positions in the apparel industry by demonstrating that intersectionality transcends the additive impacts of multiple social categories as separate factors of inequality (Choo & Ferree, 2010; MacKinnon, 2013). In the next section, we show how, having been pushed into these low-paying jobs, inequality and subordination are perpetuated through organisational processes that feed on the same intersectional subjectivities.

Incentive and recruitment systems of inequality and subordination

This analysis shows how, hidden in plain sight, gender and class-based incentive and recruitment systems tailored to the female-dominant shop floor workforce are strategically adopted by managers, in which gender and class look neutral (Acker, 2012). As per the interview respondents, many apparel factories from both KEPZ and village areas have instituted incentive systems for

shop floor workers, which are different from standard, target-driven financial incentive systems and those of the executive and managerial level workers. For instance, some factories offer incentives, such as a *haal malla* (a bag of rice) or a *badu malla* (a bag of groceries), to encourage employee efficiency and regular attendance. *Nishadi* a 21-years-old machine operator from the KEPZ, stated, “In our factory, if [we] achieve 100% [of the target given], we are given a grocery bag worth Rs. 7500.” The participants appreciated the factory's practice of providing groceries to reward performance, as, due to their abject poverty, receiving groceries like rice¹² helped them to meet their responsibilities for food and health requirements of their families, as mothers, sisters, or daughters. The practice of using these meagre handouts as incentives appears to be capitalising on the significant contribution these women are expected to make to the daily requirements of the household, despite their secondary position within the patriarchal family structure (Elson & Pearson, 1981; Hancock et al., 2015; Jayaweera et al., 2007). In many Asian countries, for various socio-economic reasons, women have become the breadwinners of their families (Mies, 2014). In Sri Lanka, rural women, in particular, have become the breadwinners of their families due to limited contributions from their ‘drunkard husbands’ (Herath, 2008, p. 8). Indeed, many respondents from this study indicated that they shouldered the economic burdens of their families due to their husbands’ alcoholism.

Some apparel factories offer material incentives such as pizza and top-ups for pre-paid mobile plans (Rs.50/Rs.100) to shop floor workers to celebrate production target achievements and improve attendance. Pizza is a western food that is very popular among the recently formed upper-middle and bourgeoisie classes who live in a few urbanised main cities in Sri Lanka. As such, pizza is a somewhat novel and rarely affordable type of food for these women apparel workers who hail from rural areas in the country, and is therefore considered a treat by these workers. *Ganga*, a 43-years-old packer from KEPZ, described her experience in such a situation:

On some days, when a target was achieved so well, they [the factory management] would bring food such as pizza and distribute it to us. If they [the factory] have more [production] than their target for the year, they will give such things to workers. Then the *lamayi* (shop floor workers) are very happy.

¹² Rice is the staple food of Sri Lankans.

The information that emerges from this data points out that these trivial material handouts pacify these women, which is a way of capitalising on their extreme poverty and rural background.

Due to the industry's high turnover rate of shop floor workers (Hewamanne, 2008b; Madurawala, 2017; Seneviratne, 2019), apparel factories utilise special recruitment methods tailored to shop floor workers. One such recruitment method is the use of third-party labour suppliers. Some third-party labour suppliers visit rural areas of the country in order to recruit workers for factories. As *Sada*, from the KEPZ, mentioned, she was manipulatively brought to the factory by a third-party labour supplier under the guise of employment at an electrical equipment manufacturing company. Despite these questionable tactics, apparel factories tend not to correct such manipulative practices of third-party labour suppliers so long as they receive a steady supply of semi-skilled or unskilled labour to meet production targets.

Another recruitment strategy that these factories deploy, which is unlikely to be seen in the upper layers of the hierarchy, is incentivising existing shop floor workers to entice new workers to the factory. For instance, *Shamalee*, a 19-years-old machine operator, said they were awarded a gold pendant for recruiting a new shop floor worker to the factory. Hewamanne (2003) identifies apparel workers' penchant for jewellery, make-up and overall grooming as rebellious behaviours that challenge middle-class values. Gathering gold jewellery is also a common practice of young working-class women, because gold jewellery is an important item of the dowry for an arranged marriage (Jayaweera, 2003; Seneviratne, 2011). Gold jewellery and Sri Lankan womanhood have a strong historical relationship, as gold is an integral element in all precious and important moments in women's lives, such as puberty and marriage. Therefore, offering a gold pendant to women workers, on the one hand, inspires poor women workers to find new workers for the factory; on the other hand, offering a gold pendant for new recruitment can be understood as an act of commodifying poor women's labour.

By analysing these material-based incentives and recruitment systems that focus mainly on the gendered shop-floor workforce, it can be observed that inexpensive, material-based incentives and recruitment systems are designed around the intersection of gender, poverty, and rurality. The intersectionality of multiple divisions has created an opportunity for managers to exploit these women workers, in which they are not only treated unequally but are also

established as a subordinated workforce. Even though these incentives appear normal, they cover up class and gender-based inequality and subordination, which are carefully “hidden in ‘management’ and ‘bureaucracy’ discourses” (Acker, 2012, p. 219).

Perpetuation of subordination through factory cultures

Culture is “a more or less cohesive system of meanings and symbols, in terms of which social interaction takes place”, and it continues to change over time and space (Alvesson, 2002, p. 5). This study illustrates how certain (predominantly male) manager-inspired organisational beliefs support the perpetuation of the capitalist patriarchy that produces oppression and subordination and discourage female workers’ resistance attempts (Acker, 2012). Furthermore, the data reveals how broader patriarchal relations are reproduced differently inside individual factories, yet have commonalities across the industry.

Our data revealed that in some factories, male managers uphold an oppressive work environment through patriarchal domination, which women workers endure submissively, given their vulnerability to poverty and lack of alternative employment opportunities. Moreover, as per the experience of some participants, male managers have created an oppressive work environment, sometimes even going against factory rules and regulations. These women work in an environment where they are conditioned to accept managerial practices built on ideas of ‘*taking revenge*’ (*paligannawa*) and ‘*fear*’ (*bayayi*) which favour the power of male managers. *Sada’s* (from KEPZ) experience explains how this impacts workers:

The workers are less likely to come forward as a group on a worker’s issue. Because workers *fear* coming forward for someone else’s problem. Because, if the problem gets bigger, [managers and/or supervisors] ask the worker, “Why are you interfering in this problem?” Then, it creates a problem for that worker. Problems are created for the worker by transferring her from one production line to another. The worker is not allowed to work in one place. There are things like that. Then that worker is persecuted [by managers and/or supervisors]. Some supervisors *take revenge* against them [workers].

The feeling of ‘*fear*’ was repeated in the responses in relation to the voice suppression of female workers. For example, *Nadee* (quality checker from a village) explained that some managers possess powers that supersede those

prescribed by the Department of Labour, and that they berate women workers in a disgraceful manner. Given this overt oppression of managers, workers are afraid to raise their concerns. Similarly, *Padma* (37-years-old machine operator village area) noted that some managers and/or executives use force to suppress workers. Furthermore, as she pointed out, managers and/or production department executives ‘*follow*’ (persecute) and ‘*hate*’ workers who raise concerns in relation to work-related matters in the factory. In this oppressive work environment, many women workers choose to be silent. Through these implicit cultural processes of ‘*taking revenge*’, ‘*fear*’, ‘*following*’, and ‘*hating*’ that reproduce male managers’ power, factories socialise and reproduce workers to accept managers’ orders (Acker, 2006). These findings sit in contrast to the extant literature on Global South (see Carswell & De Neve, 2013; Hewamanne, 2008b; Perera, 2008) that portrays the formal and informal ways that women workers enact their resistance at work and outside. This could probably be because even though workers’ acts of agency enable women workers to gain “some control over their working space and time”, such acts can rarely become progressive and transformative without challenging the existing broader capital-labour relations (Carswell & De Neve, 2013, p. 69).

In some other factories, managers become the heroes of rural women workers through certain symbolic actions via which these women workers willingly accept their subordination. *For example, Priyanwada*, a team leader from a village factory, shared her memory of her friendly male Human Resources manager, whom she perceived as both a role model and a superior. In her retelling, the Human Resources manager often visited their production lines, and if the line was untidy, for example, with threads fallen on the floor, he would attempt to clean it up:

Some days, if there is dirt in the lines, sir will come, and pick up the broom. Then, we can't allow him to do that, can we? He sweeps, and then, the *lamayi* cannot allow that. After that, we take the broom [and sweep the line]. Otherwise, sir doesn't blame us. He just sweeps. One day this happened to me. Sir came to our line and swept the line floor. I asked him to give me the broom, but he didn't. He said, “Won't the floor get swept, if I sweep?” So, now I make sure that the line is clean before sir comes to the line. (*Priyanwada*, village).

Shamalee from the KEPZ explained that the Human Resources executives and some managers choose to maintain very close and friendly relationships with women apparel workers at events like parties and trips:

We got to know only after attending the party [organised by the factory] that *Kumara* sir does not denigrate *lamayi* because he treats everyone the same. [On another occasion: a factory outing] he took a selfie [with female workers] and brought food when we went on the trip. (*Shamalee*, KEPZ).

Shamalee shared that these experiences outside the factory had been very pleasant, because both managers and workers were free of their daily production targets on those days. Some of *Shamalee's* interview responses imply that she may have had some experiences of discrimination due to her position in the factory. She attributes the friendly and kind behaviours of managers, which she understood as equal treatment meted to female shop floor workers, to the unusual circumstances they were in, and considers these novel experiences in her work life. On occasions when male managers snapped a *selfie* or sang a song with women apparel workers, the former became *celebrity figures* to these poor rural women workers, illustrating the power hierarchy between managers and women workers.

A deeper reading of these experiences points to how the ‘capitalist patriarchy’—“the mutual dependence of the capitalist class structure and male supremacy” (Eisenstein, 1999, p. 3)—is produced and reproduced on the factory floor through the construction of new subjectivities within women workers through processes in which sometimes, male managers become the heroes of poor, rural women workers. This leads to the women workers voluntarily accepting their subordination. A close look at these processes suggests that gender is not the only basis on which the interactions between male managers and these women workers are based. Instead, the relationship is a consequence of the interaction of the multiple social identities of these poor, rural women workers (Acker, 2012). The experiences of *Sada*, *Nadee*, *Padma*, *Priyanwada*, and *Shamalee* point to how these male managers (un)consciously create “images of multiple masculinities” which construct definitions of gendered behaviours that the women workers willingly or reluctantly adopt (Acker, 2012, p. 216).

Conclusion

Can the marginalisation of women on Global South production floors be understood only through examining gendered processes? In this paper, we attempted to show that understanding the inequality and subordination of women apparel workers in Sri Lanka needs a broader analysis of the interaction of multiple social categories influenced by the power structures of patriarchy, capitalism and political inequalities. Most Sri Lankan apparel workers are identified as poor, rural women. Through this study, we illustrated how they are placed in a lower hierarchical position in the industry, given the intersectionality of their rural origins, poverty, and gender. We explain how these social categories are influenced by the patriarchal societal system and the socio-economic inequalities resulting from the neoliberal arrangements adopted by the country in 1977. Subsequently, we illustrated how organisational processes and practices, namely, incentive and recruitment systems, and culture, which are also based on the very same intersectional influences, produce and reproduce the inequalities and subordination of women workers within the apparel factories. Thus, we claim that the Sri Lankan apparel industry, as a local supplier of the global apparel supply chain, capitalises on the vulnerabilities of the poor, rural women workers by creating inequality and subordination of women workers through numerous gendered substructures to meet cost, quality, and time requirements of the global retail brands without compromising their profit goals.

The study contributes several ways to the literature on the Sri Lankan apparel industry. First, this study adds to the extant literature on intersectional perspectives on the subjugation of Sri Lankan women apparel workers (see Seneviratne, 2018, 2019) by illustrating how their subordination as female shop floor workers is determined through the intersectionality of rurality, poverty, and gender. This study especially enriches the existing knowledge on intersectional perspectives on female worker subjugation in the industry by bringing in additional empirical evidence from the village-based factories and factory-published magazine materials, which had been sparsely utilised in previous research. Additionally, by using two theoretical perspectives, intersectionality and gendered substructures, in combination, this study introduces a broader theoretical perspective to understanding the inequality, oppression, and subordination of apparel workers.

Elson and Pearson (1981) claim that any recommendations made to formulate

solutions to problems of third-world women factory workers should be aimed at increasing their capacity for self-determination. One such means to increase this capacity is organising them for collective action, in either formal or spontaneous and sporadic ways, since a collective voice exerts more influence over management than an individual voice (see also Carswell & De Neve, 2013). Accordingly, we suggest conducting research in the future on what actions trade unions, activist groups, and NGOs can take to initiate a social discourse and mobilise women apparel workers to form a collective voice and how they could do so effectively against their subjugation at factory floors. Such investigation could even take the form of action research (Burns, 2009), which could intervene to enhance the collective voice of women workers.

Declaration of Conflicting Interests

The authors declared no potential conflicts of interest with respect to the research, authorship, and publication of this article.

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