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VC Research Digest provides updates on current and ongoing research projects of Villa College staff and students, and provides fresh research ideas and snippets to help expand the horizon of research and inquiry

EDITORIAL

Building Your Researcher Profile and Increasing Visibility

Dr Ahmed Shahid, Dean of Research, IRI, Villa College

All academics have an irrefutable responsibility to promote their research to a wider audience, and to create visibility so that the society can derive maximum benefit out of the knowledge generated through research activities. Creating a culture of research also necessitates investing in opportunities for showcasing research activities and outputs at all stages of development – including concept notes, working papers, short articles, reviews, and final papers.

The idea of the Villa College Research Digest (VCRD) was conceived and implemented two years ago with the publication of the first issue in October 2020, aimed at creating a convenient and suitable platform for Villa College staff, students, and the wider Maldivian community to exhibit their research ideas and outputs. As the Research Digest enters its 3rd year cycle with the current issue, the editorial team takes this opportunity to express our gratitude to all contributors, reviewers, and readers for your excellent research articles, timely and constructive reviews, and the enthusiasm with which the Research Digest has been received over the past two years.

Making the best use of this opportunity to 'shout out' about your ongoing and completed research as well as various form of reviews and research ideas could be a vital foundation on which you can build your research and academic careers. By making your research visible and accessible to a wider audience, you also significantly increase the chances of your research being noticed by other researchers and having them read and utilised in the process of knowledge creation in your field of interest. Moreover, dissemination and visibility also help to create impact and build your own reputation as a scholarly researcher.

There are a number of approaches that can be used to increase the visibility and impact of your research. Using various online platforms used by researchers, such as ResearchGate, Academia, Google Scholar, Scopus profile, ScienceOpen, Orvium, and Kudos can be a good way to broadcast your presence as a researcher. In addition, making yourself visible through creating an ORCID ID, sharing your work on professional and researcher networking platforms such as LinkedIn, Zenodo, FigShare, and ImpactStory can also be really helpful. Moreover, if you collaborate with other reputed researchers to conduct and publish research, you can in fact multiply your chance of receiving a wider readership and visibility.

Always remember that articles will not be cited unless they are read, and they will not be read unless they are visible to the right kind of audience. Therefore, investing your time and effort to build effective channels for communicating about your research output will go a long way in attracting attention to your work. No matter what your professional goals and ambitions are, it is vital that your research activities get noticed among the right groups of people in order to be recognised and to remain relevant in the world of research.

As we publish this first issue of the 3rd year/volume, we are determined to improve and expand the opportunity for research dissemination and help all our academics and students by providing additional tips and advice on how to improve their research capacity. One cannot overemphasise the importance of a sustained effort to create a culture of research and the need for enthusiastic contribution of articles and reviews, so that the Research Digest can create the impact that it is designed to deliver. We are hopeful that future issues of Villa College Research Digest will continue to attract high-quality contributions and will continue to enthuse our readers.

IN THIS ISSUE

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Cultural Historical Activity Theory (CHAT) in Research: Three Generations (Part 3)

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This article is the final part of the three-part discussion on generational development of Cultural Historical Activity Theory (CHAT). The third generation of CHAT is the last distinctive development stage identified in a significant number of literature (for example, Engeström & Glăveanu, 2012). This stage is based on the application of CHAT to examine neighbouring activity systems that produce the constituents of an activity system. According to Engeström, the third generation of CHAT refers to:

> theorizing and empirical studies which expand the unit of analysis from a single activity system to multiple, minimally two, interacting activity systems. In such a framework, for example, schooling is analysed as dynamics within and interplay between the activity systems of the student and the teacher, possibly also including other relevant activity systems. This expansion is accompanied with increased attention to the dynamics of the subject, with new important openings into the analysis of agency, experiencing, and emotion (Engeström & Glăveanu, 2012, p. 516).

In addition to analysing neighbouring activity systems, the third generation of CHAT has international applications, which have become more diverse. There are also contradictions while applying the potential of CHAT in those systems as they are multi-vocal, and there are multiple perspectives and contexts within networks of activity systems. This challenge is explored by Engeström (1987, 1990, 1999) to extend the potential of CHAT and apply it. This approach to CHAT identifies an activity system as "object-oriented, collective, and culturally mediated human activity, or activity system. Minimum elements of this system include the object, subject, mediating artefacts (signs and tools), rules, community, and division of labour" (Engeström & Miettinen, 1999, p. 9). The third -generation activity system models are expanded to include a minimum of two activity systems are expanded to include a minimum of two activity systems directed towards connected activity systems that support diversity. The second-generation model is therefore expanded to include at least two neighbouring activity systems. The following figure represents Third generation activity system.

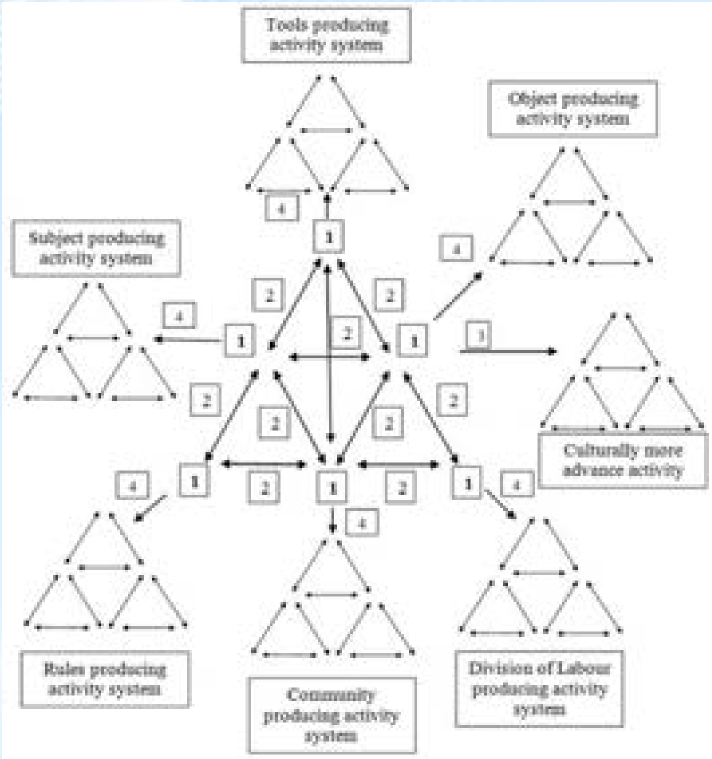

Figure 1 - Third generation activity system

Figure 1 represents a third-generation activity system view that endorses a network of activity systems, and includes at least two second generation activity systems, to constitute a society. This means this framework represents a method for finding answers to contradictions embedded in the multi-voicedness and diversity of communities when seen from a 'collectivist' or 'societal' perspective (Edwards, 2005).

Current contributors to CHAT are international and interdisciplinary, including representatives from psychology, anthropology, human-computer interaction (HCI), cultural research, and other social sciences. Some significant contributors include Jonassen and Rohrer-Murphy (1999) and Mwanza (2001), which have specific importance to CHAT as they provide a step-by-step framework to apply CHAT in research adaptable to educational setting. Jonassen and Rohrer-Murphy (1999) proposed a framework for designing constructivist learning environments using elements of CHAT. Their paper also described implications for methodology in examining a learning environment. Jonassen and Rohrer-Murphy (1999) argue there are six steps that allow a researcher to investigate learning.

1. clarifying purpose of activity system.
2. analyse the activity system.
3. analyse the activity structure.
4. analyse tools and mediators.
5. analysing the context, and
6. analysing activity system dynamics.

Similarly, Mwanza (2001) proposes an eight-step-model that identifies: 1) activity; 2) objective of activity; 3) subject in this activity; 4) tools mediating the activity; 5) rules and regulations mediating the activity; and 6) division of labour mediating the activity; 7), community in which activity is constructed; and 8) what is the desired outcome from carrying out this activity. Comparing Jonassen and Rohrer-Murphy (1999) and Mwanza (2001) frameworks, they are both fundamentally the same structure of the second generation activity system as conceptualised by Leont've (1978) and expanded by Engestrom (1987). However, Mwanza (20021) has two extra step exploring the activity system further by more indepth understanding of the activity itself in step one and the desired outcome of the participants in step eight. However, one could argue that the same data is available through the specific questions offered by Rohrer-Murphy (1999). See Rohrer-Murphy (1999) for further details. Following the work of three generations of CHAT a very comprehensive framework based on Leont've (1978), Engestrom (1987), Jonassen and Rohrer-Murphy (1999) and Mwanza (2001) is proposed in Latheef and Romeo (2010). This framework was used to investigate the interactivity around interactive whiteboards in teaching and learning taking classroom as a activity. Thus, CHAT analysis was identified as an effective approach to understand effective learning episodes of when technology is used as a tool in school settings.

In conclusion, the third-generation and current contributors to CHAT are international and interdisciplinary, as stated above. These developments represent contradictions in a diverse society and are more applicable. Particular epistemological principles guide research using CHAT. These concepts vary somewhat across the literature; however, some of these principles will be discussed in future research digest issues based on the developments made by Vygotsky, Leont'ev and Engeström. Some of the principles include: Object Orientation, The hierarchical nature activity, and activity: minds in context.

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Using Word and Excel to Structure Qualitative Data

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The most complex and crucial aspect of qualitative research is data analysis. Coding is essential to organise and making sense of textual data during qualitative analysis. The traditional approach can be unwieldy, heavy, tedious and irritating (Basit, 2003; Mattimoe et al., 2021; Parameswaran et al., 2020). However, manual coding is easy to use, especially when data is not a lot, and is recommended in small-scale projects with just a few interviews.

Roughly, an in-depth interview, lasting half an hour to an hour will produce a 5-10 page transcript. As a result, ten interviews generate over 100 written pages, which is a significant quantity of information. In a small-scope social science project, doing 10 - 20 interviews is not unusual, so finding a productive approach to organise the data can mitigate the tedious process of manual coding. Several researchers have demonstrated how common office applications can be utilised to analyse qualitative data. For the coding and retrieving of interview data, Microsoft Word tables or Microsoft Word macros might be employed (Ose, 2016). Other researchers have demonstrated how to use conditional formatting and other tools in Excel for qualitative research (Amozurrutia & Servós, 2011; Meyer & Avery, 2009). Thus, using basic functions of Word and Excel can be a more straightforward method for systematic coding and structuring of interview data.

Utilising Functions in Word

Microsoft Word is the most popular and common software used by almost everyone making it a great and universal tool for qualitative data analysis. The easy use functions are available in Microsoft Word to conduct qualitative coding and thematic analysis.

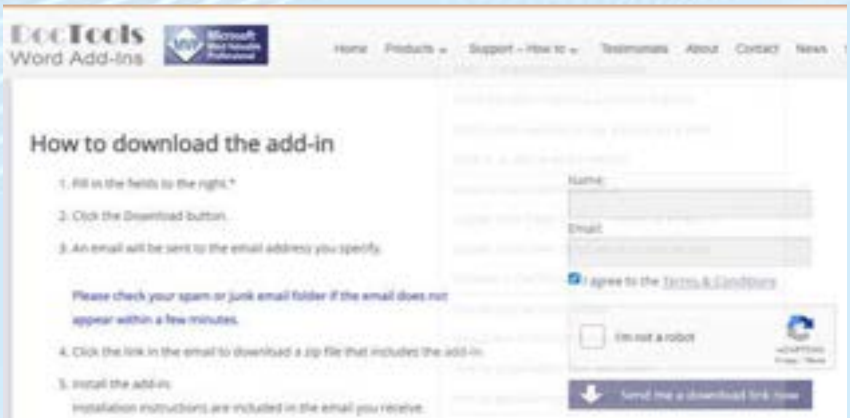


Figure 1. Instructions to download DocTools

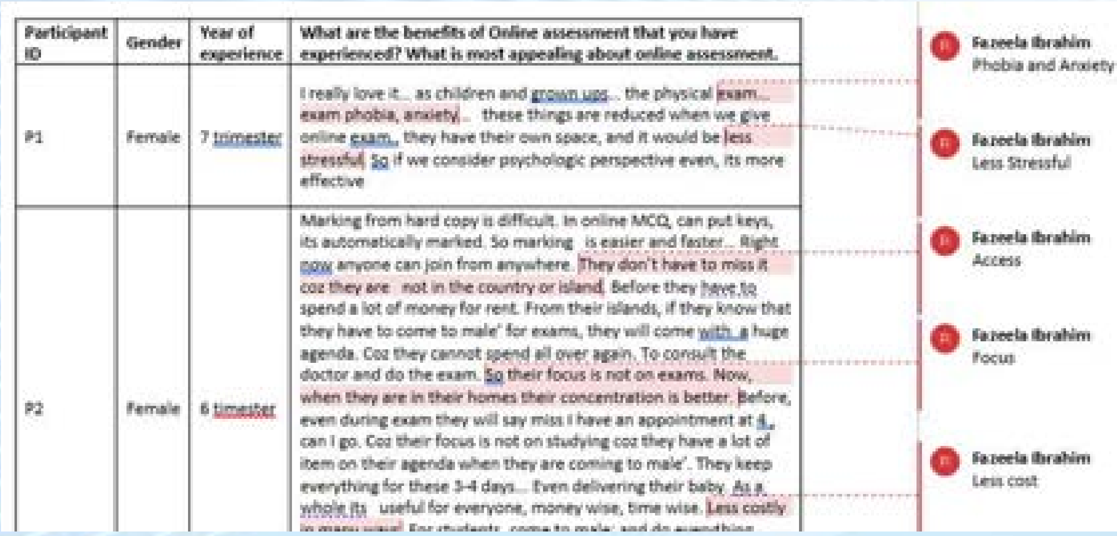
The first thing to do is download and install the DocTools Word Add-ins (Figure 1) on your computer. DocTools is a free tool that helps extract the comments from your word document.

The second step is to get your data into a word document. Once you download DocTools add-in, it will appear in the word document (Figure 2).

Figure 2. DocTool Add-ins

Following the second step, you need to review your data and start open coding by using the ‘add comments’ options in the review tab (Figure 3). Continue with the process of going through the document and coding snippets of texts.

codes or themes by creating a coding diagram (see Table 2). The filter and sort options in the data tap can be used to see your data in different groups and play with your data a little bit more, as well as display only data related to one theme. You can also use the conditional formatting function to colour code cells containing text related to one of



Participant ID	Gender	Year of experience	What are the benefits of Online assessment that you have experienced? What is most appealing about online assessment.
P1	Female	7 trimester	I really love it... as children and grown ups... the physical exam... exam phobia, anxiety... these things are reduced when we give online exam., they have their own space, and it would be less stressful. So if we consider psychologic perspective even, its more effective
P2	Female	6 timester	Marking from hard copy is difficult. In online MCQ, can put keys, its automatically marked. So marking is easier and faster... Right now anyone can join from anywhere. They don't have to miss it coz they are not in the country or island. Before they have to spend a lot of money for rent. From their islands, if they know that they have to come to male' for exams, they will come with a huge agenda. Coz they cannot spend all over again. To consult the doctor and do the exam. So their focus is not on exams. Now, when they are in their homes their concentration is better. Before, even during exam they will say miss I have an appointment at 4, can I go. Coz their focus is not on studying coz they have a lot of item on their agenda when they are coming to male'. They keep everything for these 3-4 days... Even delivering their baby. As a whole its useful for everyone, money wise, time wise. Less costly in many ways

Fazeela Ibrahim
Phobia and Anxiety

Fazeela Ibrahim
Less Stressful

Fazeela Ibrahim
Access

Fazeela Ibrahim
Focus

Fazeela Ibrahim
Less cost

Figure 3. Use of comments features to do open coding.

Table 1. Table extracted from DocTools

Page	Line	Comment scope (Quotes/Phrases)	Comment text (Codes)	Author	Date
1	3	exam… exam phobia, anxiety	Phobia and Anxiety	Fazeela Ibrahim	12-Oct-2022
1	5	less stressful	Less Stressful	Fazeela Ibrahim	12-Oct-2022
1	10	They don’t have to miss it coz they are not in the country or island	Access	Fazeela Ibrahim	12-Oct-2022
1	15	So their focus is not on exams. Now, when they are in their homes, their concentration is better.	Focus	Fazeela Ibrahim	12-Oct-2022
1	21	Less costly in many ways	Less cost	Fazeela Ibrahim	12-Oct-2022
1	23	. We never misplace their papers	Saving	Fazeela Ibrahim	12-Oct-2022

Once open coding is completed, you can extract the comments into a different document. To do this, go to DocTools tab, select extract data, and click ‘Extract Comments’. Table 1 shows what you will have in a new document. You will have the comments extracted from the file, the creation date, page number, text you have highlighted for each comment (Textual data or quotes), and comment text (the codes).

Utilising Functions in Excel

The table extracted from DocTools can be transferred onto an excel spreadsheet. This step would be instrumental in organising and sorting large amounts of data and summarising your codes and themes can

the identified themes. This function is handy if you need to identify keywords quickly.

The functions available in Excel help begin your data analysis in terms of grouping the responses by the interview questions asked, comparing them to recurring responses and then relating these responses to the primary research questions. Through this process, you can group the participants’ responses into themes, sub-themes, and overlapping themes based on the findings.

Finally, the matrix created in the excel spreadsheet will enable you to interpret your data more clearly by identifying similarities, differences, patterns, and contradiction in your findings. It will also allow you to have an equal representation of the respondents' voices in your findings.

Table 2. Organisation of findings via a coding diagram

Phrases (Highlighted Texts)	Codes (Comments)	Categories	Theme	Literature
exam phobia, anxiety… these things are reduced when we give online exam	Phobia and Anxiety	Psychological		
they know that they have to come to male' for exams, they will come with a huge agenda. Coz they cannot spend all over again. To consult the doctor and do the exam. So, their focus is not on exams. Now, when they are in their homes their concentration is better	Focused	Individual	Benefits of Online Assessment	Add relevant empirical evidence here from the literature review.
Timesaving... money- saving will be there for the institution. Resources will be saved in terms of printing paper and so on	Time and Resources saved	Financial		
Easy to use, compared to physical, but physical is more effective	Effective	Operational		

Conclusion and Limitations

Compared to more advanced technological tools, this method has some obvious drawbacks. Most importantly, it is a one-way process: you cannot easily rename a code and have the change reflected in your coded source documents. As a result, this method may not be suitable for larger or longer-term projects where codebooks are constantly evolving. Each time you make code changes or updates in your source documents, you would have to re-run the entire extraction and consolidation process.

On the other hand, using Word and Excel can be very useful for qualitative data analysis, particularly for small-scope projects of short duration. It allows you to track themes in your qualitative data creating new themes and sub-themes in additional columns and clearly see what themes and the relationship between each participant's responses. Furthermore, it allows you to structure your discussion chapter by adding a column to show how each theme contributes to achieving your research question/s and to synthesise your findings in comparison to existing literature.

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Knowing the Research Topic, Title and Problem

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'The mere formulation of a problem is far more often essential than its solution, which may be merely a matter of mathematical or experimental skill. To raise new questions, new possibilities, to regard old problems from a new angle requires creative imagination and marks real advances in science.' – Albert Einstein

Introduction

A research paper is the central medium for the dissemination of knowledge and ideas. The topic, title, and research problems are key components of a research paper. No matter which discipline you come from or reason for conducting the study, choosing an appropriate topic, giving an effective title, and clearly expressing the problem can be a daunting yet an unavoidable task for any student or a beginning researcher.

Research Topic

The first step in beginning a research project is clarifying the topic. Identifying the right research area, specifically the right research topic is a crucial yet challenging decision in doing research. However, identifying the research topic is necessary for defining the focus and scope of the study (Baldwin, 2018). The research topic is a brief description of the proposed area of study; and it needs to be relevant, ethical and of interest to the researcher (Baldwin, 2018). When considering a research topic, there are several factors that needs to be considered including the following (Reis, 1999):

- Can it be enthusiastically pursued?
- Can interest be sustained by it?
- Is the problem solvable?
- Is it worth doing?
- Will it lead to other research problems?
- Is it manageable in size?
- What is the potential for making an original contribution to the literature in the field?
- If the problem is solved, will the results be reviewed well by scholars in your field?
- Are you, or will you become, competent to solve it?
- By solving it, will you have demonstrated independent skills in your discipline?
- Will the necessary research prepare you in an area of demand or promise for the future?

Whether the problem is worth solving or not; if it will be an original contribution to literature, that will in turn gain the attention of scholars in your discipline, undoubtedly is central to what is meant by choosing a compelling topic for your research. Therefore, choosing a feasible and compatible research topic is important for the research to be successful.

Research Title

"Your title is the highway billboard of your article" (Belcher, 2021, p. 282). It is the gateway to the contents of a research project and is of utmost importance as people do tend to "judge a book by its cover". The first and most powerful weapon used by readers in selecting literature is the title. Readers' decision to whether take a detailed look or skip an article is easily influenced by the title of a research paper. The title and the choice of words play a dual role; informing about the contents of a paper while trying to catch the attention of the reader at the same time (Milojević, 2017). Thus, authors should ensure that their research title is informative, appropriate, and catchy (Bavdekar, 2016). The title of the research is a statement that summarizes the main idea(s) of the study. It conveys credible information for a given population. Authors use particular words to express their ideas, which reflect their individual behaviors and the behavior of scholarly collectives, consequently titles serve a very important third role, the denotation of academic identity (Milojević, 2017). Research title is an important part of a broad complex issue, playing a crucial role in knowledge creation and dissemination, accordingly it needs to be precise, specific, and defined with care.

Titles can be declarative, descriptive, or interrogative. Declarative titles state the main findings of the study in the title itself, reducing the curiosity of the reader (Tullu, 2019). Descriptive titles, which are generally preferred by readers, describe the article theme, without revealing its findings or conclusions (Bavdekar, 2016). Finally, interrogative titles usually have a query or restate the research question, and the ability to sensationalize the topic, however they can be distracting to the reader (Bavdekar, 2016). Titles can also be classified as nominal (capturing only the main theme of the study), compound (or hanging titles with subtitles to provide additional relevant information) or full-sentence titles (uncommon and tend to be longer); depending on the type of article, key message, or author's preference, any of these constructs may be utilized (Tullu, 2019).

Typically, the title is one of the last sections written, however, building a working title at the beginning is helpful in keeping the author focused on the main purpose of the study (Bavdekar, 2016). Since several factors need to be considered while finalizing a title, below are some useful tips for drafting a good research title (Tullu, 2019):

- The title needs to be simple and direct
- It should not be too long or too short, or ambiguous
- It should be interesting and informative
- It should be specific, accurate, and functional
- It should be concise, precise, and include the main theme of the paper
- It should not be misleading, or misrepresentative, however catchy phrases or non-specific language may be used if it is within the context of the study
- It should avoid whimsical or humorous words
- It should avoid nonstandard abbreviations and unnecessary acronyms (or technical jargon)
- Place of the study and sample size should be mentioned only if it adds to the scientific value of the title
- Important terms or keywords should be placed in the beginning of the title
- Descriptive titles are preferred to declarative or interrogative titles
- Should adhere to instructions specified by the target journal including the word count

Today, readers find papers through keyword generated online search results rather than by scanning the content tables of journals, hence major publishers have now prioritized quicker delivery and easier internet searching of individual papers and have assigned the volume/issue shell of journals to archiving (Hayland & Zou, 2022). Correspondingly, it is important that authors make their titles both informative and appealing so that readers will make use of their works and enhance their citation.

Research Problem

Research problem is the foundation of a research. Identifying a research problem is basically the first thing in undertaking a research study. Once a topic is determined, the author needs to focus on the problem that the research will investigate. A research problem introduces the issue to be addressed in a study (Pardede, 2018). The research problem is generally expressed in one or more concise paragraphs. It should be relevant to one's discipline, areas of expertise or interest, research topic and research title; and should be stated clearly without any ambiguousness (Remenyi et al., 2009).

As research adds to knowledge, it is important to find out whether the study will contribute to knowledge and practice. Creswell (2012) stated five ways of assessing whether a problem should be researched or not. In relation, a problem should be studied if the study fulfills the following:

- Fills a gap or void in the existing literature
- It replicates a past study but examines different participants and different research sites
- The study extends past research or examines the topic more thoroughly
- Gives voice to people silenced, not heard, or

rejected in society

- Study the problem if your study informs practice

Once the research problem is identified, it is essential to consider if the problem better suits a quantitative or qualitative approach. Creswell (2012) also stated that if the problem concerns an issue that needs to be explained, quantitative research would be more applicable while a problem concerning issues that need to be explored would be best addressed through qualitative approach.

What is the difference between the research topic, title, and research problem?

A research topic defines the focus and scope of the study. Expanding on the research topic we come up with a research title. The research topic discusses the research subject while the title draws the attention of the reader to the subject. Through the title, the research topic is made more specific. A research problem is the topic that is addressed in the study. The research topic is typically broader in scope than a specific research problem. Once the topic is developed, the researcher addresses the issue that needs to be investigated in the study. In short, a research topic is something to be read and understood; a research problem is something to be considered or solved.

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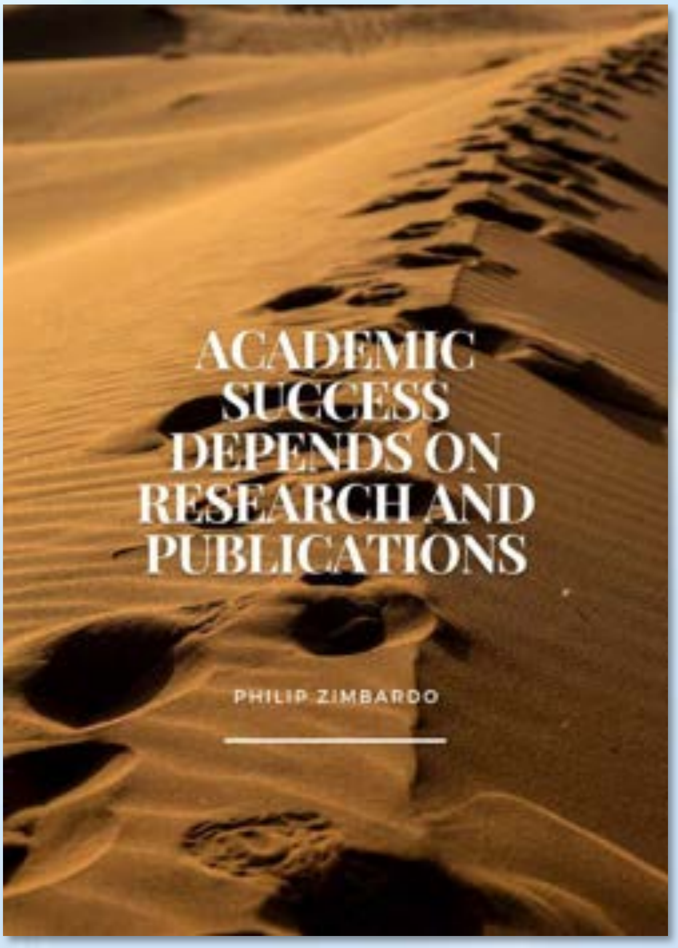

An Exploration into Teachers' Understanding of the Gifted and Talented Students in a Selected School in Male', Maldives

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Research Background and Problem Statement

Not all students in a classroom have the same abilities and potentials. Though lessons are planned basically to cater to three different levels of students, the reality is that each child is unique and different in almost every aspect (Ainscow, Booth & Dyson, 2006). Inclusive education has been the talk of the century when it comes to educational institutions and efforts are being made to cater to the diverse needs of the students. Teaching is thus targeted to cater to everyone in the classroom. Including everyone is given a strong emphasis in the National Curriculum Framework of the Maldives (National Institute of Education, 2015). As such, Individualised Curriculum Plans (ICP), previously introduced as Individualised Educational Plans (IEP) are prepared for students diagnosed with special needs.

Mainstream teachers together with the Special Educational Needs (SEN) teachers from the SEN units plan for teaching the students who are diagnosed and identified as SEN students. Their objective is to work toward the target – 'Education for All'. The question here is whether all students are included and catered to in a classroom as the classes also comprise a percentage of students who can be identified as Gifted and Talented. According to the National Curriculum Framework of the Maldives (National Institute of Education, 2015), it is mandatory to include and cater to these students the same way remedial assistance is provided to the struggling students. It is with this regard that studies have been conducted across the world to determine the opportunities for gifted and talented students (Ayoub, Abbasi & Morsey, 2022; Rena, Olszewski-Kubilius & Kronborg, 2021; Ismail, Alghawi & AlSuwaidi, 2022). There is evidence that often teachers do not get the training to work with Gifted and Talented students or schools lack experts who can advise the teachers on this aspect (Camela, 2014 as cited in Reis-Jorge et al., 2021) and very often teachers are unable to answer and feel threatened by the types of questions raised by such students due to their lack of awareness (Rodrigues & Antunes, 2012 as cited in Reis-Jorge et al., 2021).

This study was aimed at exploring the understanding of 'gifted and talented' students as perceived by teachers. Hence, the study specifically intended to explore how teachers identify such students or whether if they do at all. Furthermore, the paper also examines how teachers assist these students, particularly in providing different and challenging tasks. Lastly, the challenges teachers faced when teaching gifted students in a mainstream classroom were explored in this study.

According to literature, there has been no exact definition of giftedness and the definition depends on when, where and how the assessment to determine this occurs (Bailey, Knight & Riley, 1995). Furthermore, giftedness is often identified through creativity (Siegler & Kotovsky, 1986). The Actiotope Model of Giftedness as proposed by Ziegler and Heller (2000), has been chosen as the basis for the literature. The conceptual framework drawn from aspects of the literature reviewed suggests that the following factors are required in order to foster Giftedness and Talents in such students. The endogenous factors, personal factors and exogenous factors together drive the students towards success, along with systemic thinking and synergy, which is facilitated and empowered through mentoring. The framework is complete with the integration of STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics) or STEAM (Science, Technology, Engineering, the Arts, and Mathematics) into the education to cultivate giftedness and talents.

Methodology

The methodology for the study was qualitative, and data was gathered through semi-structured interviews. A question guide was developed based on the research questions aligned with the aims of the study. Purposive sampling was used in the study, since 8 teachers teaching key stage 3 of a school in Male' had been identified as participants in the study. Key stage 3 (12-13 years) had been chosen as this comprises a very delicate age where students go through a lot of changes. Thematic analysis had been used to analyse the data.

Findings

The findings revealed that teachers used the following five criteria to identify students who are gifted or talented. First and foremost, undoubtedly, exceptionally high academic scores obtained, defined them to be gifted and talented (Davidson, 2009), followed by the rapid speed in which the students complete assigned tasks. They were also identified by their competitiveness, inquisitiveness, and the types of questions they ask in class whereas in other countries where IQ is tested, they identify students with high IQ as gifted (Nisbett, 2009; Pfeiffer, 2002).

The main strategy in which such students are catered to within the classroom was by giving extra worksheets or enrichment activities. In addition to this, they were given more opportunities to take part in quizzes and competitions at the school level, participate in sports or get more opportunities to portray their leadership skills. This is also in line with the findings from Lee (2006).

Findings also shows the challenges faced by teachers in addressing gifted and talented students included the student numbers in classes, duration of classes, the and tight curriculum to be covered in the syllabus, as well as the resources needed to become more aware of how to cater to them.

Conclusion

Considering the data gathered, it can be concluded that the gifted and talented students are catered to some extent, though not as much as suggested in the literature in building and nurturing the giftedness and talents of such students. This raises concerns for catering to the students the way they ought to have been. More policies as well as programs need to be in place, in order to foster the current giftedness and talents, since early identification can aid in assisting them better (Ismail et al., 2022). In addition to the opportunities, they already get within their schools, these students also need space and respective equipment to practice and develop their potential. This may include the space to practice sports and the equipment and instruments to nurture music and other talents. It is also equally important to secure more scholarships and incentives, as practised in some other countries like UAE (Ismail, Alghawi & AlSuwaidi, 2022). Based on the geographical barriers to provide equal opportunities in terms of access, virtual platforms can aid in motivating their giftedness and talents. Unlike some countries which have STEM/ STEAM schools, in the Maldives, schools could go for an approach towards STEM/STEAM integration in our existing schools (Comer, Sneider & Vasquez, 2013). For a country like Maldives where equal accessibility is a barrier in terms of its geographical barriers, this will be a more feasible option.

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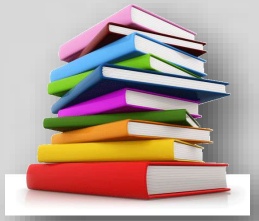

FROM THE WORLD OF RESEARCH

Renewable energy and economic growth: New insight from country risks

Qiang Wang, Zequn Dong, Rongrong Li, and Lili Wang

ABSTRACT

This study explored the relationship between renewable energy consumption and economic growth from new risk-based perspectives, including political risks, financial risks, economic risks and composite risks. The study uses a panel threshold model to empirically analyze panel data for the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) countries from 1997 to 2015. The results show when composite risks and political risks are used as threshold variables, there is a single threshold between renewable energy consumption and economic growth. When that threshold is exceeded, the positive effect of renewable energy on economic development increases. When economic risks and financial risks are used as threshold variables, there is a double threshold between renewable energy consumption and economic growth. When the first threshold value is exceeded, but not the second, renewable energy positively impacts economic development. However, when economic risk and financial risk do not lie between the two threshold values, there is an insignificant negative correlation between renewable energy consumption and economic growth.

Read on...https://doi.org/10.1016/j.energy.2021.122018

SCAN ME

Tips on avoiding plagiarism

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Plagiarism is a serious offence in academia. Often students copy someone else's words without paraphrasing or citing. This is a common mistake that the students make as they are under pressure to produce good scholarly work. One reason for students to underperform or score poorly on an assignment is due to plagiarism. Often, many students are unaware of how they plagiarize others work. Plagiarism is using someone else's words, texts, ideas, or sentences without acknowledging the source. Therefore, it is important to avoid plagiarism by giving recognition and acknowledgment of others intellectual property. By understanding and being aware of the common offence of plagiarism, students can become more confident and can therefore present good scholarly work. Research indicates that students who plagiarize lack academic writing and researching skills, (Rozar et al., 2020), poor reading and comprehension skills, fear of failure, and poor time management (Sadruddin, 2021). This points out the need to develop students research skills, academic writing skills, and time management prior to working on writing assignments.

According to Selemani et al., (2018) the most common forms of plagiarism include lack of acknowledgement when paraphrasing, summarizing and using quotation marks.

Five common mistakes leading to plagiarism

1. *Paraphrasing:* paraphrasing is stating something in one's own words. It is about expressing someone else's thoughts or ideas in a way that makes sense to the person who is expressing. Paraphrasing is done to add greater clarity to someone else's ideas. Thus, when trying to paraphrase a sentence, we should be using our own words to explain the idea that is presented and provide citation to acknowledge that the idea was expressed by someone else.
2. *Cut and paste mosaic:* Cut and paste mosaic is about cutting chunks from different sources and pasting them to form sentences without paraphrasing or citing.
3. *Find-and-Replace:* This involves copying text from the source and using a thesaurus to change few words. In most cases, the sentences and the idea are used without paraphrasing or citing.
4. *Duplicating in text citations:* Students often use the same in-text citations from the sources that are stated in the article they have read without actually reading them. When students are rushing for time, or handing in last minute assignments, they tend to read a single article and cite all the sources mentioned in the article.
5. *Referencing:* when paraphrasing or citing a source, students often fail to provide references to the authors or incorrectly reference to the text.
6. *Self-plagiarizing:* using the same assignment or part of the assignment which had already been developed for a previous assignment.

Students maybe in a better position to avoid the academic offence by understanding what constitutes as plagiarism. Hence, students are encouraged to seek guidance and training in academic writing skills such as summarizing, synthesizing, and referencing to avoid plagiarism.

Referencing is one of the key aspects in avoiding plagiarism. Referencing is a complex and advanced set of skillset that needs to be mastered. The four main widely used referencing systems are Modern Language Association (MLA), American Psychological Association (APA), Harvard and Modern Humanities Research Association (MHRA).

Each of these systems refers to citations styles and rules for references which ensure academic integrity. APA is the most commonly used referencing system for social science research papers. Below, are 5 steps that students can be mindful in producing ethical academic work.

1. Read and re-read to understand the gist of the text that one wants to paraphrase. Learn the art of paraphrasing. Take a small chunk of sentences and then try on your own. There are few examples in the APA website as well. Click here to view.

2. Use quotation marks when lifting or using direct quotes and cite the source.

3. Use in-text citation whenever making claims or giving reference to other people's work.

4. Always follow appropriate referencing guidelines suitable for the assignment.

5. All in-text citations need to be included as a list of reference on the last page of the assignment.

All in all, it is important that students become mindful of the concepts related to academic integrity and in avoiding plagiarism. The deeper benefits of referencing and citing is that students are able to identify their own voices and distinguish others voices and ideas to produce quality scholarly work.

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Challenges Faced by Lecturers and Students of Centre for Foundation Studies, Villa College and their Perceptions on the Implementation of Hybrid Teaching and Learning

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Introduction and background

The global Covid-19 pandemic resulted in unpredictable challenges that forced educational institutions to alter the existing teaching modalities in order to enable efficient remote learning. Educational institutions were quick to adopt a hybrid teaching and learning modality to cater to the multiple restrictions and social distancing procedures owing to the lockdown during the pandemic. Hybrid modality is a combination of face-to-face and online teaching into one cohesive experience (College of DuPage, 2022). Villa College (VC) like other institutions brought forth a multitude of operational changes during the pandemic and Centre for Foundation Studies (CFS) which coordinates and operates VC's foundation and certificate-level programmes, is one of the departments that opted for the hybrid modality. Since hybrid modality is a newly implemented teaching and learning modality at CFS, the lecturers along with students were faced with various challenges in adapting to the new model. According to Davis et al., (1989), the successful implementation of hybrid teaching and learning largely depends on the users' perception towards technology and their intention to adopt it in teaching and learning.

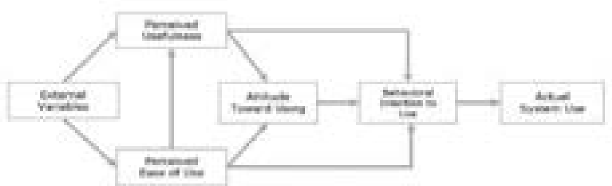

Figure 1: Technology Acceptance Model (TAM) (Davis, Bagozzi, & Warshaw, 1989, p. 985)

Note: Adapted from "Factors Influencing Preservice Teachers' Intention to Use Technology: TPACK, Teacher Self-efficacy, and Technology Acceptance Model" by Joo, Y. J., Park, S., and Lim, E. (2018). *Journal of Educational Technology & Society, 21*. 48–59.

Research Objective

This research was aimed at identifying the challenges faced by lecturers and students at CFS, and their perceptions about the implementation of hybrid teaching and learning.

Methodology

This study adopted a mixed method research strategy. Mixed method research (MMR) requires gathering and incorporating quantitative and qualitative data in a single project and therefore may result in a more in-depth insight into the phenomenon under investigation (Creswell & Creswell, 2017; Timans et al., 2019). Hence, this approach was utilised to investigate the challenges encountered by the lecturers and students as well as their perceptions in the implementation of hybrid teaching and learning at CFS.

Population and Sampling

Fourteen lecturers who taught in the hybrid modality in the September 2021 semester at CFS were chosen from a population of 26 lecturers through a purposive sampling method. In addition to that, 30 students were chosen at random from a population of 560 students enrolled in foundation programs in the September 2021 semester at CFS.

Research Instrument

Data was collected using an online survey questionnaire (Google form) which included closed-ended as well as open-ended questions.

Data Analysis

The qualitative responses from the open-ended questions were manually coded to develop themes and sub-themes. The quantitative data mainly involved demographic data and responses regarding the students' and lecturers' perceptions and challenges faced in implementing the hybrid modality. Descriptive analysis was done to determine lecturers' and students' perception and experience about the hybrid teaching and learning employed at CFS.

Findings and Discussion

Quantitative Findings

Demographics

Table 1: Gender

	Gender	
	Male	Female
Lecturers	21.4%	78.6%
Students	30%	70%

Table 2: Students' Age

Age Group	Percentage
17-20	70%
21-27	18%
28 and above	12%

Table 3: Lecturers' Age

Age Group	Percentage
30-35	21.4%
35-40	28.6%
50 and above	50%

Lecturers' perceptions and experience towards hybrid teaching and learning

Lecturers highlighted that they require, regular periodic training and opportunities to share experiences of hybrid teaching strategies, to learn from each other. Moreover, it was found that most lecturers were confident in the use and implementation of hybrid teaching methods. The findings also indicated that the lecturers faced issues such as lack of student participation and difficulty to engage with students. Such challenges can be addressed by providing adequate training to the lecturers. Bonderud (2021) highlights three important aspects to focus on for effective training on hybrid modality. These include effectively using platforms, delivering effective lessons, and engaging and assisting students in their learning. Furthermore, 43% of the lecturers said they faced internet issues and 7% said that they had poor classroom setup. Szoke (2021a) suggests that the quality and speed of the internet connection is an essential factor in determining the effectiveness of hybrid modality.

Students' familiarity with technology and their concerns regarding hybrid learning

The results indicated that over 60% of the students were familiar with the use of technology, however, 52% responded that they faced internet access issues. Furthermore, 17% of the students indicated their concern regarding the internet connection (service) being expensive. Ooredoo and Dhiraagu are the main internet service providers in the Maldives and according to Maldives Finest (2021) internet prices in the Maldives are among the highest in the South Asian region.

Qualitative Findings

Challenges faced by the lecturers

Lecturers identified that during hybrid classes, one of the main challenges was student engagement. Technical issues were a raised concern as well. A study by Rasheed et al., (2020), highlighted that a significant challenge for students is the issue of broadband quality.

Suggestions from the lecturers

Hybrid teaching models are effective when teachers are highly competent in digital teaching and are provided the opportunity to apply their skills (Martín -Núñez et al., 2022). Thus, it is highly important to provide training and development opportunities for the lecturers to enhance their skills and ensure smooth delivery of lessons. The suggestions mainly indicated a need for training and development for both lecturers and students to effectively implement the hybrid modality of teaching and learning.

Best practices highlighted by lecturers

In terms of infrastructure, classroom setups at VC, East Wing (EW) first and second floors were emphasised as the best suited for hybrid classes. Lecturers highlighted that despite there being rare technical issues and glitches during classes, these were promptly resolved by CFS and VC. Furthermore, the ease of using the learning management system (LMS) as a platform was highlighted by the lecturers. The appreciation extended to the lecturers by CFS along with the Student Evaluation of Teaching and Learning (SETL) feedback was said to provide them with a source of motivation.

Challenges faced by students

A major challenge faced by the students was the unaffordability of internet packages. Moreover, some of the students highlighted that lack of confidence to communicate during the lecture sessions was a major challenge for them. In a similar study by Almaiah et al., (2020) it has been shown that self-efficacy is one of the major challenges faced by students in the hybrid learning environment. Hence, it is noteworthy to highlight that academic institutions should focus on establishing initiatives to strengthen students' self-efficacy and communication skills (Koob et. al, 2021).

Suggestions by the students

A significant suggestion from the students was for their lecturers to be approachable and in addition to that the improvement of teaching techniques and tools was also suggested. Hussain and Shahzad (2019) emphasised the importance of using modern technologies in lessons to maintain students' motivation, enhance student involvement, and academic performance. Furthermore, students suggested having more interactive presentations and providing more detailed explanations with relevant examples.

Best Practices highlighted by the students

Having more flexibility such as remote learning and being able to join classes in the comfort of their homes, after work, and from remote islands was emphasised by students as an advantage. The flexibility of an online programme provides students with easier opportunities to balance work and studies (Northeastern University, 2022). Moreover, being able to access the lecture recordings was highlighted as a convenience. Students also stressed that through the hybrid experience, they were made familiar with computer skills as well as EdTech tools including Google Meet, Moodle, Mentimeter, Quizzes, Kahoot, and Wizer Worksheet. Szoke (2021b) highlights the significance of using online quiz tools and games in hybrid classrooms in order to make lessons interesting and interactive. Students also emphasised the user-friendliness of the LMS used at VC.

Conclusion

It is evident that the lecturers faced various issues such as poor student engagement and technical issues in hybrid classes. Similarly, the students faced challenges such as the unaffordability of the internet and lack of confidence in engaging in the lecture. It is suggested by both lecturers and students that prior training and support are imperative to improve the current hybrid modality. The professional development training provided by VC could focus on essential areas to develop hybrid teaching and learning such as familiarising lecturers on the use of EdTech tools, the LMS, and other processes involved in hybrid teaching and learning. VC could also collaborate with internet service providers to introduce affordable internet packages for both students and lecturers in order to further facilitate and improve the hybrid teaching experience.

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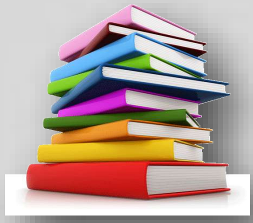

FROM THE WORLD OF RESEARCH

Work Life Balance, Employee Engagement, Emotional Consonance/Dissonance & Turnover Intention

Tara Shankar and Jyotsna Bhatnagar

ABSTRACT

This paper reviews the literature in the domain of Work-Life Balance. It accentuates the importance of broadening the current narrow focus which looks at balance, primarily between "work" and "family". The paper proposes a conceptual model to be tested empirically. The construction of a robust scale for measurement of Work-Life Balance is emphasized. The proposed model focuses on the correlates of Work-Life Balance construct and its relationship with other variables such as employee engagement, emotional consonance/dissonance and turnover intention. Theoretical and practical implications of research in this domain are discussed with a focus on areas for future research.

Read on...https://www.jstor.org/stable/25741098

SCAN ME

Transcription of Interview Recordings (Part 1)

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For qualitative researchers, data may take various forms but spoken word is dominant. For subsequent analysis, the process of turning spoken word's sound (or video) recording is called transcribing. The written form of speech is called verbatim, and this could be the whole speech or part of it. Pitch, volume, and pace are some of the characteristics of the spoken word but not of the written one.

Transcription choices in qualitative psychology are basically

1. The secretarial / playscript / orthographic transcription reproduces only the word said but not how they are said by not indicating how words are said, leading to interpreting words as in formal language.
2. Jefferson transcription is over and above secretarial transcription which uses the keyboard symbols to provide additional information which includes more than what has been said, how was it said, such as pauses in speaking, where speakers overlap, and so on (Howitt, 2019). This system meets the needs of conversation analysis at its best, where conversations are more than just talk and social construct discourse analysis. So, if the researcher's emphasis is on what language does rather than the construct of the language and its nuances, then secretarial transcription fails badly (Howitt, 2019).

What do we miss from interactions to secretarial transcriptions?

Additional non-verbal communication features that are found in the interviews are:

1. Paraverbal communication: Kinesic and Proxemic communication includes the gestural body language and use of space among the interviewers. Proxemic communication can be generally seen when people move away to show their dissent. Similarly, in kinesic communication you can see, folding hands could be perceived as a lack of openness and disagreement (Castañer et al., 2013).
2. Paralinguistic communication: the changes in voice characteristics such as volume, pitch, and others (See Vachek J, 1989).
3. Chronemic communication: variations in the speed of speech, too fast or too slow than usual pace, and the long pauses and silences during the conversation (this can be seen in digital media responses as well, for example, Viber or Whatsapp seen status and response status) (Kalman et al., 2021).

Extremes of transcription – Naturalism vs Denaturalism

The transcription lies between the extremes of naturalism where, the transcript describes every nuance of the conversation, here details are of prime significance. On the other end, denaturalization is a process where the correction of grammar and elimination of 'noise' takes place (Bucholtz, 2000). Here idiosyncratic elements are not included. The prime factor that plays a role here is the researcher, and the social construct of the researcher plays a significant role in understanding the conversation as it is meant to be. Language and its nuances are culturally constructed, for example 'You wish' or 'Good for you' etc. can be said sarcastically and in both extremes, however the interpretation may be different.

Looking ahead, conversational analysis and discourse analysis (Steinbruch, 2019) require naturalized transcription whereas thematic analysis, grounded theory, and critical discourse analysis can be done using denaturized transcripts (Oliver, 2005). This decision of the transcription will influence the perception of participants by the reader/researcher. If the speech contains vernacular speech then this says a lot about the participant, which in turn effects the research and leads towards a naturalised transcript. Some researchers suggest there should be both versions.

Studies by Ochs (1979) and Hammersly (2010) strongly argue that 'transcription is done by the transcriber', and the transcription process is a meticulous step and with utmost caution is prescribed to the (Lapadat, 2000) and notoriously time-consuming (McMullin, 2021).

Issues in transcription

1. Who does the interview and transcribing of the interviews? Both tasks are equally important, and if both are handled by the researcher it might be effective, and if these are handled by different people, it is advised to train them before the task.
2. The social construct: the transcriber needs to be on the same page with the researcher and the respondent, in other words, what has been said should be understood as it is meant to be, by understanding the paraverbal, paralinguistic, and chronemic communication and transcribing with appropriate ques is needed.
3. Technology and transcription: with the help of advanced technologies, Artificial Intelligence (AI) has been able to convert audio into written text, this paves the path to a begging question, do we still need humans to transcribe? Atlas.ti, NVivo, and MAXQDA are some computer-assisted qualitative data analysis software (CAQDAS) that gives researchers to engage in live coding instead of manual transcription. However, AI transcription needs to be checked thoroughly to the ensure accuracy of the researcher (McMullin, 2021).

Conclusion

Transcribing the audio or video interview is as important as the interview itself. The social construct of the interviewer, interviewee, and transcriber needs to be the same to extract and then analyse the content effectively. Using AI in this tedious process is a blessing but still, human intervention is necessary for the extraction of the information to validate the process.

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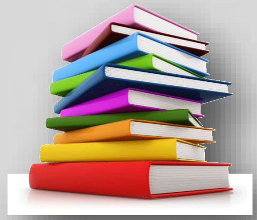

FROM THE WORLD OF RESEARCH

Death takes no bribes: Impact of perceived corruption on the effectiveness of non-pharmaceutical interventions at combating COVID-19

Vincenzo Alfano, Salvatore Capasso, Salvatore Ercolano, and Rajeev K. Goel

ABSTRACT

Corruption is considered in the literature as an activity with several externalities and spillover effects. Adding to the recent research on the corruption-COVID-19 nexus, we study the impact of corruption on coronavirus cases. High perceived levels of corruption have been proven to lead to lower institutional trust, and hence possibly to lower levels of citizen compliance with non-pharmaceutical interventions (NPIs), such as lockdowns, imposed by the authorities during the first wave of the pandemic to reduce the spread of coronavirus. Applying quantitative analysis with the use of hybrid models, we find that in countries with higher levels of perceived corruption, across alternative corruption measures, more COVID-19 cases are observed, ceteris paribus. This suggests that corruption has a detrimental effect on the spread of COVID-19, and that countries experiencing higher levels of corruption should pay extra attention when implementing NPIs.

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