

Villa College

Research Digest

ISSUE 6 (AUGUST 2021)



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

NOT BITING OFF MORE THAN YOU CAN CHEW: AN ARGUMENT FOR REFINING THE SCOPE OF YOUR RESEARCH

Being ambitious may be a virtue (I promise, there is nothing Machiavellian here). However, when it comes to defining the scope of your research, over-ambition is more likely to take you on a winding road to failure than to produce a valuable contribution to human knowledge. If a researcher embarks on a study with too broad a scope and an over-ambitious research objective (sometimes numerous objectives), no matter how appealing it may seem, the focus of the researcher is likely to be blurred, hence end up lost and unable to produce the expected quality output through the research.

When thinking about a research project – including the process of identifying the research problem, objectives and research questions – novice researchers (and sometimes even seasoned researchers) tend to see a big-picture problem and decide on tackling it as a whole. Perhaps, it is human nature to think that every problem has one single answer or solution. As a result of this flawed thinking, researchers often fail to break the problem down into smaller and more manageable chunks and pick one of those smaller slices for the research project. Often, there is also a tendency to think that a good research must always cover as much ground as possible. Trying to solve the whole world's problem in one stroke is a result of this fallacy.

It is worthwhile to keep in mind that in research, depth is far more valuable than breadth. If you investigate and develop a deep understanding of a phenomenon, your contribution to knowledge would be far more valuable as compared to a sloppy and all-over-the-place research which is spread too thin to be meaningful. A robust appreciation of the phenomenon is what researchers aim for, hence, refining the scope of the research in a manner that keeps the research focussed (and zoomed-in) is invariably much desired. Oftentimes, researchers find everything related to a research problem too important to be left out. As a result of this covetousness, different issues, variables, viewpoints, and timeframes become tangled in one whole problem, and the dread of missing out on something important is exaggerated.

How do we focus and refine our research scope? Three points to ponder can be discussed here.

- Firstly, break the research problem and units of analysis down to as many smaller elements/ units as possible. Then select a specific area within this refined problem to be addressed, leaving out the rest of it for others (or a later you) to pick up. This type of micro-level analysis will help you see the relationships and choose a specific component of the problem or measure based on precise units of analysis.
- Secondly, make it a habit of sticking to fewer research objectives and research questions. It is advisable to devise one or very few research objectives. This will force you to narrow the focus of your research and prevent you from taking in too much on yourself.
- Finally, identify and apply a particular philosophical paradigm, lens or methodological perspective to the research problem you have selected. This will further narrow the scope of your research and add more scaffolding to your research methodology.

While following the above advice, it is also indispensable to maintain intellectual humility. Appreciate our own limitations and instead of biting off more than you can chew, determine to add just a small brick to the enormous citadel of human knowledge. At the end of the day, as a researcher, the quality and depth of your research output is what counts.



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Developing Research Writing Habits: Tips to Academicians to Overcome Writer's Block

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It is common among researchers and those who would want to research, about needing and wanting time to write. Many of us wish to invest more time in writing than spending time in preparing for lectures, attending meetings, and other administrative tasks. In this process, many wait till the end of the semester, holidays, and when all administrative activities are settled to focus on writing. Unfortunately, it doesn't happen as planned. Even if we find time, we are at a loss – what to write and how to begin writing. We start to experience writer's block.

Writer's experience writer's block when they fail to produce new writing or sometimes slows them in producing any written work. Many of us experience writer's block manifested in different forms such as procrastinating, imposter syndrome, distaste for writing, and lack of time for writing. Understanding writer's block will allow us to strategically work on the challenges that we face in our daily struggles to write. Developing effective writing habits will generate excitement and we will find pleasure (at least less anxious) in writing. Articulating our thoughts into words is the most fascinating contribution we can ever make to the body of knowledge.

Here are some of my writing habits and tips on how I overcome writer's block.

Tip #1 Thinking about research - finding ideas to conduct research

Simply thinking about what you would like to research. Be more observant about your

surrounding and critically evaluate our environment. A good research always starts with identification of a problem. Read and gather information about what you would like to write about. Think about research.

Tip # 2 Beware of work schedule and set achievable tasks

If you have a full schedule of classes and meetings, try to set reasonable goals to spend time on each task. Especially on the things within your circle of influence such as planning for lectures, marking and regular scheduled meetings. Don't be over ambitious. Be kind to yourself. "*A journey to 1000 miles begins with a single step*". Don't plan on writing 3 to 5 pages or finish an article in one go. Instead focus on a steady pace that you can keep up with.

Tip # 3 Deliberate Practice

If you cannot find time to write every day, set a day of the week to spend on writing. Allocate a time and place to write. Make a note of the day to work on research and make an effort to write. Even if you have to delete it the next day, JUST WRITE your ideas and thoughts.

Tip # 4 Setting own deadlines

Deliberate practice will allow us to stick to a writing plan and ensure that we are accountable for our targets. In other words, no matter how the day was and how you are feeling, make sure that you "clock in" the work that was planned.



FROM THE WORLD OF RESEARCH

Digital Citizenship with Social Media: Participatory Practices of Teaching and Learning in Secondary Education

Benjamin Gleason and Sam von Gillern

ABSTRACT

This article explores how social media use in formal and informal learning spaces can support the development of digital citizenship for secondary school students. As students increasingly spend large amounts of time online (e.g., an average of six hours of screen time per day, excluding school and homework), it is critical that they are developing skills enabling them to find, evaluate, and share information responsibly, engage in constructive conversation with others from diverse backgrounds, and to ensure their online participation is safe, ethical, and legal. And, yet, in spite of the importance of students learning these skills, opportunities for digital citizenship in formal and informal learning spaces have lagged behind our ideals. The article provides a conceptual analysis of civic engagement as digital citizenship and considers how digital media applications can support citizenship education in middle- and high-school grades. Then, empirical research is provided that demonstrates how high school students develop digital citizenship practices through out-of-school practices. Finally, this article suggests that both dimensions of digital citizenship (i.e., in-school, traditional citizenship education and out-of-school activities aimed at civic engagement) can be integrated through a social media-facilitated curriculum. Finally, recommendations for teaching and learning through social media are offered to educators, community members, practitioners, parents, and others.

Gleason, B. and Von Gillern, S., 2018. Digital citizenship with social media: Participatory practices of teaching and learning in secondary education. *Journal of Educational Technology & Society*, 21(1), pp.200-212.

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Tip # 5 Get over imposter syndrome

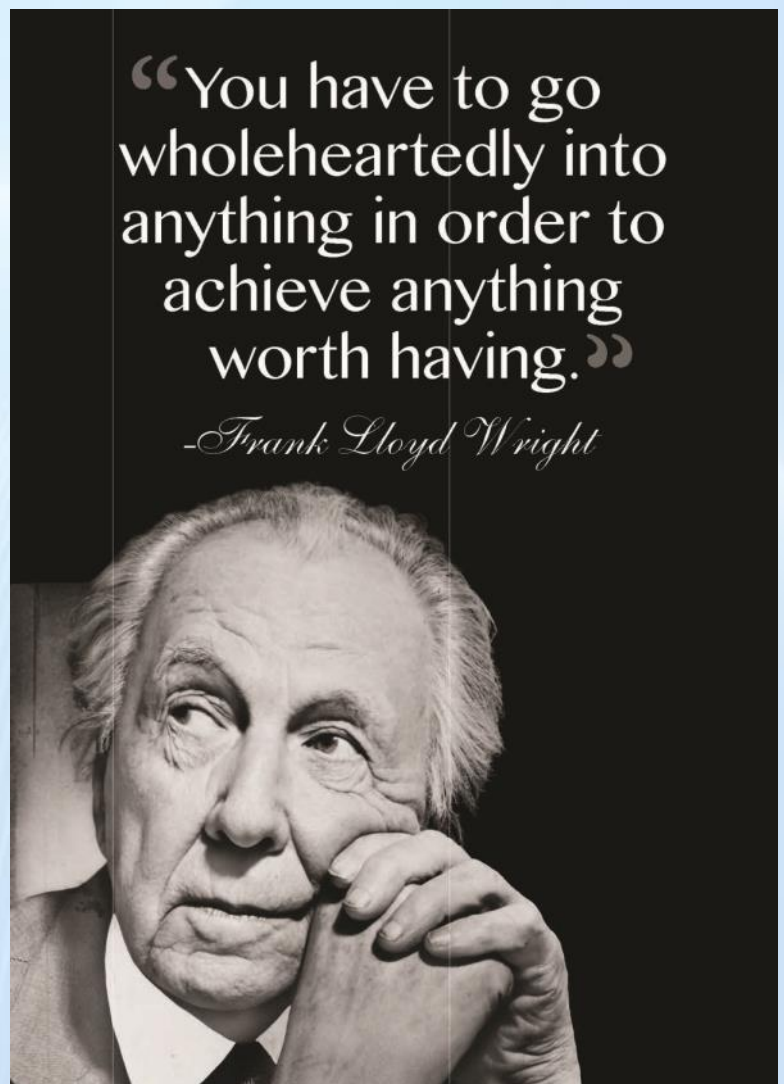
Believe in your ideas. Believe in the value of your knowledge contribution. Albert Bandura (1995) famously states that believing in oneself is about having self-efficacy that we can be successful in a given situation. As self-efficacy determines what we want, how to accomplish our goals by putting our plans into actions through motivation and determination.

Finally, Write, Write, and Write!

My advice is if you intend to start writing, don't just wait for a good idea, topic, day, time or year. The only way to know this is to start writing and let others read your work. Don't think your first piece should be the best, instead give your best, and keep on editing to make it better.

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Self-concepts in Motivation to Learn: An area often neglected

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Students do very well and get commendable grades throughout their primary grades. Yet, some of them seem to outlive this only until they reach the secondary grades. One surprising fact regarding this is the amount of time spent on studies in extra classes or the relentless efforts of parents in providing them tuition. Hence, is the realisation that there is more than just the number of hours of studies or the money invested. Moreover, the interactive ways in which some subjects were taught during the observations, did not seem to be of much help to each and every student. For these reasons, the study focused on the students' perspective only.

Thus, a study was done in a co-ed school in Male' city to determine these elements pertaining to their personal factors. The research questions were: (1) what are the personal factors that affect the academic achievement of students in the secondary grades?, (2) is the pattern for the decline in students the same throughout all the subjects, or does it vary from subject to subject?

At the initial stage of the study, some baseline data was gathered, to further proceed with the selection of the sample. The results were compared among the same group of students when they were in grade 7, and when in grade 9. In grade 7, students who scored grades A, B, and C amounted to a total of 76.10 percent, and that of students who scored the same grades in grade 9 were 44.50 percent. Students who scored D grades accounted to 24.26 percent while in grade 9, the same students' results showed that those who got D and below were 55.49 percent which is an alarming number compared to their results when in grade 7.

The Achievement Goal Theory (Nicholls, 1984, 1989) was chosen as the theory for the study. In the Achievement Goal Theory, the environment is either described by mastery or performance goals (Ames, 1992; Dweck, 1996 & Pintrich, 2000) as cited in Deemer (2004). According to Kaplan, Middleton, Urda, and Midgley (2002), as cited in Deemer (2004), mastery goals are different from performance goals as they are focused to engage the student in achievement

behavior in order to develop their own competence. Unlike mastery goals, they claim that performance goals differ in the sense that they engage the students in behavior to demonstrate their competence. It is the extent to which these goals are applied that would drive the students towards challenging activities. Thus, since it includes this drive to learn, the term used to represent the theory would be 'personal factors' as there would be other motivational factors that could result from the school and home related factors that can affect their learning.

An exploratory case study approach was used for the study. The sample was chosen through purposive sampling which consisted of 9 students. Interviews and document analysis were the means of data collection employed in the study. Open coding and axial coding were used to analyze the data.

The findings revealed that more than half the participants lacked motivation in their studies, while a lesser proportion of participants seemed to have stronger self-concepts. Muijs, (1997), as cited in Kaur, Rana and Kaur (2009) and Hamachek (1999) has observed self-concept and academic achievement to be strong predictors of each other, both controlling each other or in maintaining stability.

The remaining students had denied any hope of improvement in their academic achievement. This denial seems dangerous when Pintrich and Schunk (2002) has claimed that the students are tempted to compare their performance with that of others and hinder themselves from taking on challenging achievement experiences. Apart from all the other strategies, more emphasis has to be done to motivate the students in their studies (Nunez, Gonzalez-Pineda, Garcia, Gonzalez-Pumariega, Roces, Alvarez & Gonzalez, 1998 as cited in Diaz, n.d.). Furthermore, Slavin (2006), as cited in Muola (2010) suggests that since motivation is what gets one going, it is crucial to a student's success at any age.

Regarding the decline of grades in particular subjects, it was

seen that there were marked declines in subjects like Mathematics, Physics, Islam, and Economics. Motivation seemed to be lacking in the other subjects. Although the observations of Physics, and Economics classes showed positive relationships between interesting lessons and academic performance, the subjects Mathematics, and Islam proved otherwise. This relates to the fact that when students are provided with environments where mastery goals are emphasized, it encourages the students to set standards for their own performance and become motivated in accepting challenging learning situations. On the other hand, in environments where performance goals are given more importance, the students only work hard as they believe that they are unable to perform due to their lack of ability (Deemer, 2004).

This study implies that the students had no proper goals, and the targets set for them were beyond reach. As evident from the findings, it is almost impossible for a student who scored a D or C grade in one term to reach an A grade target in the next. As a result, according to other studies Kumar, Gheen and Kaplan (2002), as cited in Deemer (2004), these types of goals have the danger of putting the students in academic struggles where they might finally result in becoming school drop outs in their secondary grades. Thus, the study calls for the importance of the role of the teacher in facilitating the students to come up with more realistic and achievable goals.

The study revealed the important roles played by self-concept and motivation in being eager to learn, apart from the way content is delivered. Bearing in mind that learning to learn is equally important, it is also rather crucial for study skills to be conducted for the students at earlier stages of their educational lives. Which is why it is necessary for teachers to be aware of its importance to guide the students toward improved academic achievement.

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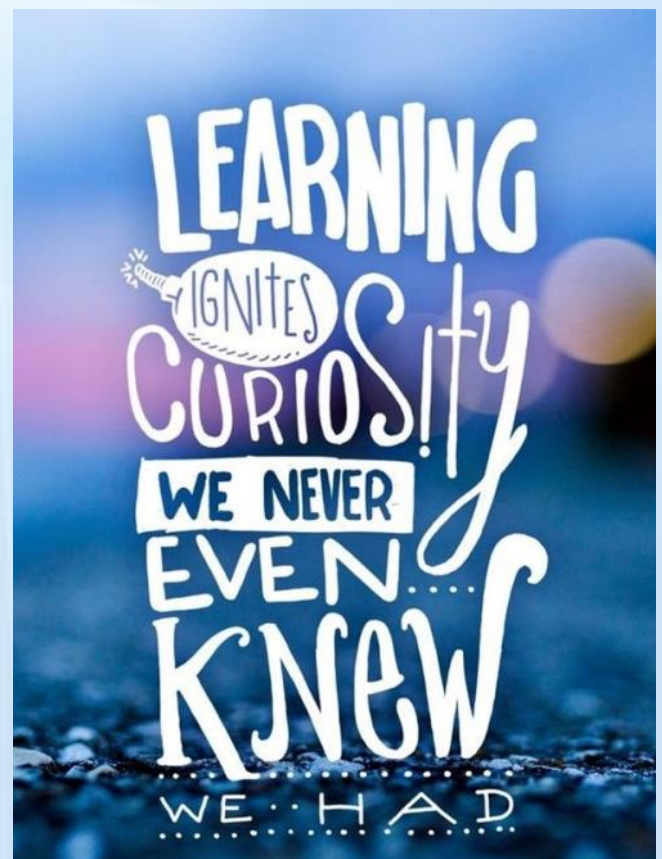
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Challenges of research supervision: viewpoints of postgraduate research supervisors

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Introduction

With the widening of opportunities for students to do Masters programmes at Villa College, the number of research supervision, an essential component of masters programmes has increased. Villa College now offers more than 10 post-graduate programmes where students are required to complete a research component.

The aim of this study was to identify the issues and challenges faced by supervisors in the process of supervising postgraduate students from 5 different Faculties at Villa College. This will thus, help the college to focus on and minimize the issues.

As such, the research question of this study is ‘What are the challenges faced by supervisors in research supervision of postgraduate students?’

Literature

Research supervision is analogous to the duties of a mid-wife in the labour process. In this analogue, the supervisor is the mid-wife, who assists a pregnant woman (the student), to give birth (conduct research), to a child (dissertation/thesis). Moira (2011) defines research supervision as: “a form of teaching that arises out of specialist research identities” where it includes a commitment to maintaining standards as a reviewer, and as an examiner by being a supervisor.

Different studies conducted in research supervision includes undergraduate and postgraduate supervision. This includes different models of research supervision, such as apprenticeship model, and negotiated order model (Gosling, 2010). A vast amount of studies explores the challenges. Some of the challenges identified from the literature are that of the partnerships and role of the supervisor (Drane, 2014). How much and to what extent should the feedback be given, is a question asked by many supervisors. Supervisors also complain about the commitment given by the students, as Chikte and Chabilall (2016) adds to the challenges of supervisors with information, support, resources, and the formal preparation of students.

Methodology

The study was conducted with a qualitative method as an in-depth into personal experiences are required for a study of this nature. The sample for the study is 10 supervisors who supervises students of Villa College, 2 supervisors from each Faculty. The selected samples were involved in supervising students in the period of January 2018, to May 2019. Semi-structured interviews were conducted using a question guide adapted from several similar studies. These interviews were analyzed using a content analysis approach, where codes were formulated from the interviews.

Results and discussion

A study by Turner (2015) identified three common areas:

unrealised supervisory expectations, student-supervisor relationships, and commitment. Challenges identified by the Villa College supervisor were no different. Seven key areas were identified, but the first 3 that got most responses would be highlighted in this article.

Lack of time

First, the supervisors highlight that lack of time as the biggest challenge, this was identified by 5 participants. They explained that they had a lot of other daily tasks to complete, and to give good amount of time to read and give feedback was difficult. This may result in weak structure of thesis as supervision emerges from the workload of supervisor (Yousefi, Bazrafkan and Yamani, 2015).

Deadlines

Another challenge identified by 4 participants is having to give feedback in the last minute. Students send the documents last minute and request for feedback, as they forget that we also have other work and commitments. This results in having to give feedback in the last minute, for ethics approval and for the final submission. Due to time constraints proper feedback cannot be provided.

Students’ academic level

According to participants another challenge identified is the poor academic writing from students. Abdulla et al. (2010) also identified that some students had no writing skills to handle the elaboration of the final report. This denotes that students are at different levels of proficiency in research (Mafa and Mapolisa, 2010). Thus, the supervisor is not able to assist the student in both research and academic writing. It is also found that student’s research background is also different from one another.

Recommendation and conclusion

In conclusion it can be said that even with the challenge of time, lack of commitment by students, and unrealistic expectations, all supervisors enjoy the positives of learning new content and skills through research supervision.

To ease the challenges so that the supervisors enjoy and can provide a better experience of the research process a few recommendations are as follows. Firstly, a reasonable workload should be negotiated. Secondly, a better definition of roles maybe in the form of a guideline for supervisors should be prepared. Thirdly, regular research supervision workshops should be conducted to facilitate better communication.

Additional input towards the students also is required. Firstly, organizing more academic writing sessions for students may also help the supervisors. Secondly, a follow up from an administrative staff should be mandatory, to make sure supervisors are getting the required materials on time as this would lessen the stress levels of the supervisors.

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FROM THE WORLD OF RESEARCH

Addressing the Problem of Severe Underinvestment in Mental Health and Well-Being from a Human Rights Perspective

Faraaz Mahomed

ABSTRACT

Throughout the world, mental health remains a neglected priority, low on the agenda of policy makers and funders at the national and international levels. While this is shifting somewhat, there remains a considerable need to address the underprioritization of mental health and well-being, perhaps even more so in the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic. However, given the history of mental health interventions—which have overemphasized the biomedical model and have thus resulted in coercion, denial of life in the community, and unnecessary pathologization of human experience—there is also a need to ensure that increased funding does not simply replicate these mistakes. This is particularly true in the current landscape, where efforts to “scale up” mental health and to reduce “treatment gaps” are gaining momentum and where post-pandemic responses are still being formulated. As the potential for global mechanisms for funding mental health increases, national and international funders should look to practices that are rights affirming and contextually relevant. In this paper, I explore the current landscape of mental health financing, in terms of both national resource allocation and development assistance. I then outline the momentum in global mental health that is likely to materialize through increased funding, before considering ways in which that funding might be utilized in a manner that promotes human rights.

Mahomed, F., 2020. Addressing the Problem of Severe Underinvestment in Mental Health and Well-Being from a Human Rights Perspective. *Health and Human Rights*, 22(1), p.35.

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The First Utility-Scale PV Plant in the Maldives: An Assessment of the Sustainability Impact and Social Value Creation of Villa College's Renewable Energy Initiative

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The Context

There is an unprecedented interest in growing renewable energy supply, particularly solar and wind (Kök, Shang, & Yücel, 2018). The generation of electricity from sunlight directly (photovoltaic) and indirectly (concentrating solar power) over the last decade has been growing exponentially worldwide (IPCC, 2011). Solar energy has several positive aspects – reduction of greenhouse gases, stabilization of degraded land, increased energy independence, job opportunities, acceleration of rural electrification, and improved quality of life in developing countries, making it attractive in diverse regions worldwide (Tsoutsos, et.al., 2005; de Paulo, & Porto, 2017).

Looking at the Maldives, the country is highly dependent on imported energy sources mainly from fossil fuels, due to a lack of energy sources. To align with the SDG goals and the Maldives National Energy Policy 2016, Villa College developed its strategic targets to "emphasize financially and environmentally sustainable practices in campus operation and development." Thus, in 2014, in its endeavour to reach this strategic target, Villa College embarked on developing alternative energy sources to support energy efficiency initiatives, leading to the On-Grid solar PV power plant installed at Villa College in 2017 (Villa College, 2019).

Small-scale projects can play a crucial role in supporting the transition towards more sustainable energy systems (Gröne, et.al, 2017). However, although most small-scale renewable energy projects are completed successfully, they do not automatically become sustainable in the long term (Bhattacharyya, 2012). Therefore, it is important to evaluate and accurately assess the impact and sustainability of such projects following the initial project activity is completed. Thus, this impact study aims to assess and analyse the direct and indirect long-term outcomes (economic, environmental, and social) of the solar PV project at Villa College to provide a holistic view of the project's outcome.

Villa College Solar Energy Project

Green technologies are crucial for sustainable development. One of the green technologies with the highest potential is solar energy, a renewable and non-polluting resource. Solar energy techniques consist of concentrated solar power and photovoltaic (PV) systems. Concentrated solar power usually collects solar radiation and uses water or other means to generate power, whereas PV technology converts sunlight directly to electricity, depending on the photoelectric effect (Dong et al., 2012).

The 186.72kW solar PV plant installed at Villa College is the first utility-scale On-Grid solar PV power plant in the Maldives that utilizes electricity through net-metering and is one of the first of this size in the Maldives. Today, the plant capacity corresponds to about 40% of Villa College's peak load and feeds about 240,000kWh per year into the national power grid, STELCO.

There have previously been several solar energy projects implemented in the Maldives. However, this project differs from past solar energy projects, whereby this is the first-time net-metering utilized in installing the electricity generation (Villa College, 2019). There have not been any grid-connected solar plants installed at a large scale by project inception. Only a few smaller grid-connected demonstration systems had been installed before by few schools. Thus, it makes this project the perfect example for the second step in a typical, well-sequenced PV scale-up path at a national level.

How the on-grid PV system functions

PV systems use photovoltaic cell technology to harness radiant energy from the sun and create electricity. These cells are often packaged into panels that can be placed on rooftops or mounted on the ground. Since most PV cells produce direct current, or DC, electricity, an inverter is often added to the system to convert the output to alternating current, or AC, electricity, the form of electricity that most appliances and the electricity grid are designed to use. In addition, Net-metering is a process by which extra or unused power is sent to the grid in exchange for banked energy credit, which can be useful whenever needed. The current system has a capacity of 186.72 kW, which exceeds the daily energy requirements of the college. The surplus energy produced in this way and during off days is being fed into the STELCO network (Villa College, 2019).

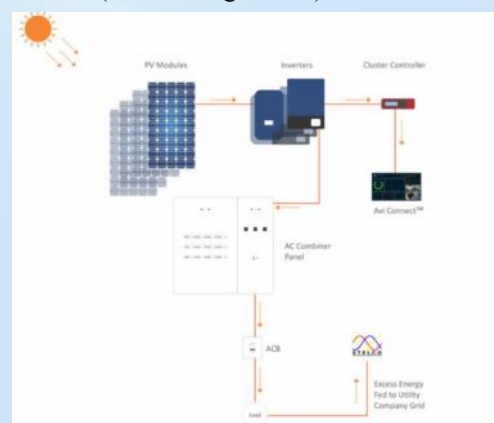


Figure 1. How the PV system operates (Villa College, 2019)

Energy Savings

Figure 2 shows the energy supply before and after installing solar PV systems (first quarter of 2018 to the first quarter of 2017). Villa College saved 16,670.88 units for December-January 2018 compared to December-January 2017. Furthermore, an increase in energy-saving is seen for January-February and February-March with a saving of 24,908.00 units and 21,730.00 units. Thus, the use of Solar PV resulted in a total of 38% to 49% energy savings from January to March 2018 compared with the energy use in the first quarter of the previous year.

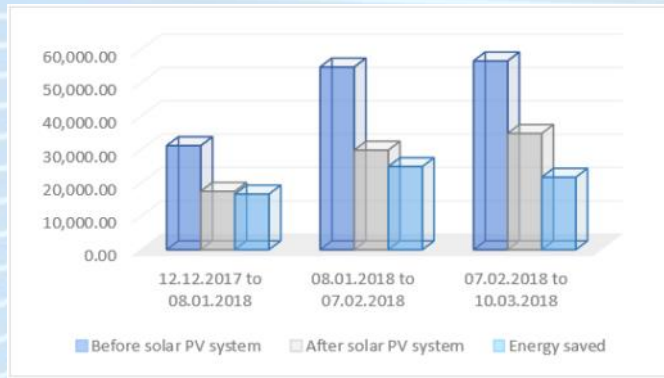


Figure 2. Energy saves from solar PV installation (Villa College, 2019)

Research Plan

The main scope of the paper is to present a holistic evaluation of the energy, environmental, and economic profile of the On-Grid solar PV power plant installed in Villa College. For the evaluation of this system, the methodological approach will comprise of two steps.

First, Life Cycle Assessment (LCA) will be employed to evaluate the present status of the PV system by quantifying the contribution of solar electricity to the environmental impacts of the On-Grid solar PV power plant in Villa College. LCA is an analytical tool for the systematic and quantitative evaluation of the environmental impacts of a product or service system through all stages of its life (Muralikrishna & Manickam, 2017). LCA is usually used to compare and analyse the energy using and environmental impacts associated with the products over their life-cycle (Baharwani et al., 2014).

Next, financial appraisal and economic assessment to assess the private and society-wide costs and benefits On-Grid solar PV power plant in Villa College.

To measure the success of the implemented power plant, it is imperative to do a cost analysis of the project. The current cost incurred compared to pre-installation of the power plant, would give a key insight into the determinants of the project. In addition, Return on Investment (ROI) of the project will be calculated to measure the efficiency and profitability of the investment.

Potential Outcomes

Maldives has a population of around 515,696 people dispersed across 185 islands. Approximately 1/3 of the population resides in the capital. The country is physically vulnerable to rising sea

levels, with 80 of the total land area is lower than 1 meter above the mean sea level. Therefore, to effectively address climate change, it is necessary to achieve low-carbon growth by mobilizing renewable sources of energy.

The Solar PV Plant installed in Villa College is the first utility-scale PV plant in the Maldives that utilizes electricity through net metering. Firstly, the outcome of this study can inform and educate the government and private stakeholders of the sustainable impacts of renewable and sustainable energy and has the potential to create interest and enthusiasm by encouraging them to move towards more sustainable energy solutions. Secondly, this study aims to create awareness of sustainable solutions and motivate other organisations to adopt sustainable practices. Finally, the outcome of this study can provide a strong foundation for political decision-makers to lead the development of relevant legislation, policies, and regulatory frameworks, that could potentially a) Change political will and motivation, b) Reduce interest rates on green loans, and c) Government support in creating awareness and producing trained manpower.

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Normalizing the New Normal: Is that the Way Forward?

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Introduction

Time has never stood still as it has brought us with the rise and fall of culture, information, and society. It has surely poured in a plethora of color and texture into anthropology. Through historical writings and paintings, we saw the rise and fall of Rome, the ascension of the Greek Empire and its inevitable downfall, the natural calamities such as the eruption of Mount Vesuvius, and the polarization of countless civilizations. The genocides of the World Wars stand still as proof of how destructive human beings can be. The history of Bubonic Plague experienced over a 100 years ago has taught us how adaptive humans have become, as well as how vulnerable the human beings are as a society.

In the end, this multiplicity of reality has enabled us to soak it in as something normal that we can talk and debate about. During this grief-stricken global pandemic, we humans are fascinated to talk about what is normal, and what is the new normal! History has shown that humans have survived even the harshest conditions and thrived on what it has presented to us. Nonetheless, it comes at a huge cost; the cost of rationalizing the 'new normal' life we become accustomed to while accepting what had always taught us as the normalcy that we should adhere to.

Breaking conventions

Pneumonia kills more children than any other infectious disease. A child dies of pneumonia every 39 seconds, claiming the lives of over 800,000 children under 5 years, every year (UNICEF, 2021). The progress of reducing the death due to pneumonia among children has become slower, when compared

to the progress in other infectious diseases. Over the past 30 years, this number has not significantly reduced making it something 'normal' we humans experience.

The multiple wars fought over the last 100 years or so, has shown us that destruction of cultural heritage sites is normal for the sake of a cause. The World War II, led to the destruction of many cultural sites in Europe and Asia – such as the *Luftwaffe* destroying the Royal Opera House in Valletta, Malta, or the destruction of the Prefectural Industrial Promotion Hall when America annihilated Hiroshima, Japan (Little, 2020). All wars have shown that the destruction of culture and heritage, whether intentional or not, has become the next 'normal' for a human civilization to survive.

The Covid-19 pandemic has shown us how the events and situations are not 'normal' for us to exist. The panic we experienced, being locked in our bubbles and deprived of socializing showed how vulnerable we are to be a part of a society. With over 4.5 million deaths in a span of almost 2 years (WorldoMeters, 2021), this is something we can say, that is not normal. The emerging variants of the virus have led us humans to survive in a 'new normal'.

Through headlines we saw the storming of Capitol at DC – unmasked and wreaking havoc (Gaouette, 2021). We even saw the deadliest encounter till date of the occupation of Palestine escalating in the Middle East (Salman, et al., 2021), and the digital uprising of the voice of people condemning and supporting it. All throughout the time of the current global pandemic. What was normal pre-pandemic, was considered normal even today.

This truth, however bitter it may be, shows us the reality of humans. In situations of ‘not normal’ we have accustomed ourselves to follow what has been ‘normal’ dictated to us throughout history. Normalization of the phrase ‘history repeats itself’ has become something that we may never be able to say in the close future. Normalizing the destruction of culture, society, and the disinformation of information such as ‘fake news’ may have created a point in time we may never be able to come back from.

What’s the purpose?

Time will never stop for us. Breaking these conventions established throughout time, is solely up to us as ‘it is now or never’. We can come up with laws, protocols, guidelines to enact this but it will never be enough unless we change our mentality. It is time for us to decide whether we are to see how things unfolded as history has shown us, or we become the revolution, making a change for a better future.

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FROM THE WORLD OF RESEARCH

Political Manipulation and Internet Advertising Infrastructure

Matthew Crain and Anthony Nadler

ABSTRACT

Disinformation and other forms of manipulative, antidemocratic communication have emerged as a problem for Internet policy. While such operations are not limited to electoral politics, efforts to influence and disrupt elections have created significant concerns. Data-driven digital advertising has played a key role in facilitating political manipulation campaigns. Rather than stand alone incidents, manipulation operations reflect systemic issues within digital advertising markets and infrastructures. Policy responses must include approaches that consider digital advertising platforms and the strategic communications capacities they enable. At their root, these systems are designed to facilitate asymmetrical relationships of influence.

Crain, M. and Nadler, A., 2019. Political manipulation and internet advertising infrastructure. *Journal of Information Policy*, 9, pp.370-410.

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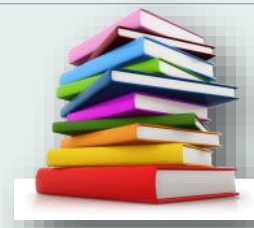
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FROM THE WORLD OF RESEARCH

Toward Precision Education: Educational Data Mining and Learning Analytics for Identifying Students' Learning Patterns with Ebook Systems

Christopher C. Y. Yang, Irene Y. L. Chen and Hiroaki Ogata

ABSTRACT

Precision education is now recognized as a new challenge of applying artificial intelligence, machine learning, and learning analytics to improve both learning performance and teaching quality. To promote precision education, digital learning platforms have been widely used to collect educational records of students' behavior, performance, and other types of interaction. On the other hand, the increasing volume of students' learning behavioral data in virtual learning environments provides opportunities for mining data on these students' learning patterns. Accordingly, identifying students' online learning patterns on various digital learning platforms has drawn the interest of the learning analytics and educational data mining research communities. In this study, the authors applied data analytics methods to examine the learning patterns of students using an ebook system for one semester in an undergraduate course. The authors used a clustering approach to identify subgroups of students with different learning patterns. Several subgroups were identified, and the students' learning patterns in each subgroup were determined accordingly. In addition, the association between these students' learning patterns and their learning outcomes from the course was investigated. The findings of this study provide educators opportunities to predict students' learning outcomes by analyzing their online learning behaviors and providing timely intervention for improving their learning experience, which achieves one of the goals of learning analytics as part of precision education.

Yang, C.C., Chen, I.Y. and Ogata, H., 2021. Toward Precision Education. *Educational Technology & Society*, 24(1), pp.152-163.

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