

Intentions to Use E-resources in University Libraries by Postgraduate Students in Sri Lanka: An Application of the Theory of Planned Behaviour

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ABSTRACT

In today's digital era university libraries are compelled to offer e-resources to fulfil the evolving information needs of their user community and to sustain their relevance. Postgraduate students are an important user category of university libraries and they are provided with support for academic growth and success. Despite significant investments in e-resources by Sri Lankan universities, the effective use of these valuable resources by postgraduate students is still under question. Therefore, this research attempts to examine the significant factors that affect postgraduate students' intention to utilize e-resources for academic purposes by the application of the prominent Theory of Planned Behaviour. A quantitative approach was followed employing a questionnaire-based survey among a convenient sample (n=102) of postgraduate students enrolled in state universities of Sri Lanka. Results exhibited that Attitude ($\beta = 0.521$; $p < 0.05$) and Perceived Behavioural Control ($\beta = 0.335$; $p < 0.05$) were strong predictors of the intention of postgraduate students to use e-resources. However, Subjective Norm was revealed to be a non-significant predictor of the intention.

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Further the results verified that the Theory of Planned Behaviour (TPB) explains a considerable proportion of the variance in intention ($R^2=0.534$) within the examined sample. The study renders significant insights into the applicability of TPB within a specific subset of postgraduate students in Sri Lanka and suggests that further studies employing a more representative sample could explore the generalizability of these findings. Understanding the drivers identified through this research could help design interventions that encourage the use of e-resources among postgraduate students in Sri Lanka. This will ultimately enhance their overall educational experience and academic success.

Key Words: *Theory of Planned Behaviour, Intention, Sri Lanka, E-resources, Postgraduates*

Introduction

In the current digital era university libraries are compelled to offer e-resources to fulfill the evolving information demands of their user community. With the growth of online learning and remote research the university community expects instant access to a wide array of scholarly information from anywhere and anytime. In this context, e-resources play a salient role in meeting the needs of tech-savvy users and adapting to the digital world. E-resources include databases, e-journals, e-books, e-theses and dissertations, online catalogues etc. In a networked surrounding, e-resources stand out as the primary choice of resource for teaching and research within the university library (Bellary & Surve, 2019). Shuling (2007) also emphasizes that electronic resources have increasingly become an important resource in university libraries. Further, it is important to note that “because of the easy accessibility, low cost and effective presentation

with multimedia tools e-resources have become the most popular source of information” (Veer & Panda, 2021, p. 01). E-resources enrich the learning process through the provision of relevant information and they open up an interactive medium of communication (Millawithanachchi, 2012). In order to meet the evolving requirements of their users and to sustain their value in the academic environment, university libraries are expanding their collections to ensure user accessibility to a diverse range of e-resources.

The increasing reliance on e-resources is crucial for all user groups served by university libraries including undergraduate students, postgraduate students, teaching staff and researchers. Among these user categories, postgraduate students are significant and university libraries are dedicated to fulfill their research needs. The academic pursuits of postgraduate students normally involve specialized and intricate information needs and these students heavily rely on library resources to access scholarly material, conduct literature surveys and develop research competencies (Farooqui & Hadagali, 2022). Thus, university libraries play a vital role in facilitating the academic development and success of postgraduate students through the provision of various e-resources.

Nevertheless, Sri Lankan university libraries are investing large amounts of finances, time and efforts to provide access to various e-resources. However, there remains a concern regarding their actual use, especially among postgraduate students. One major initiative in this regard was to formulate a consortium by the University Grants Commission of Sri Lanka utilizing a centrally funded model to offer enhanced access to e-resources in a cost-effective way (Wijetunge, 2017). Also, universities offer various types of e-resources such as CD-ROM, e-books, e-journals, online catalogues, online past papers etc. (Dilrukshi, 2015; Hindagolla & Weerasinghe, 2021;

Lavanya & Santharooban, 2018). Some universities independently subscribe to certain databases like JSTOR, HINARI, AGORA, OARE, EBSCOHost (Lavanya & Santharooban, 2018; Gunasekera et al., 2021), while also actively promoting open access resources and links through library websites (Premaratne, 2017). Furthermore, several university libraries have established institutional repositories allowing scholars to self-archive their publications (Arachchige & Karunaratne, 2012).

But, the mere availability of these e-resources does not ensure their effective use. It is questionable whether these e-resources are optimally utilized by postgraduate students in Sri Lanka. Prior studies in Sri Lanka have indicated that postgraduate students are not making optimal use of e-resources (Gunasekera & Balasubramani, 2019; Peiris & Peiris, 2013). Lack of comprehensive understanding of factors influencing postgraduate students to use e-resources may contribute for the underutilization of these valuable resources, which in turn, can be a hindrance to the overall educational experience of postgraduate students in Sri Lanka.

This highlights a gap in understanding the factors driving e-resource adoption, particularly from a behavioural and motivational perspective. In the Sri Lankan context there are limited studies that explore the psychological and motivational aspects influencing user decisions in engaging with e-resources, especially among postgraduate students who are expected to involve heavily with academic research. User perceptions have a strong impact on the technology adoption behavior (Jeong, 2011). Thus, it is important to determine the key motivational factors that drive users to utilize e-resources through a sound theoretical base. In the Sri Lankan context, there is a scarcity of such research which examines the intentions of postgraduate students towards using e-resources for academic purposes.

Hence, this study attempts to address this research gap by exploring the intentions of postgraduate students in Sri Lanka to use e-resources with the application of Theory of Planned Behaviour (TPB). In this regard, the TPB offers a well-established model for the prediction and explanation of individual intentions and has been successfully applied in various information and educational technology studies (Owusu et al., 2020; Sok et al., 2021). However, TPB has received less attention in e-resource usage studies in Sri Lanka, in particularly at the postgraduate level. The application of this model will render deeper insights of how personal attitudes, social influence and perceived control affect the postgraduate students' intention to use e-resources. This theoretical base allows for a systematic investigation of user intention, enabling explanatory power as well as practical applicability. Addressing this research gap is crucial for optimizing university investments, enhancing library services, contributing to the literature on e-resource adoption in developing nations and informing policies and strategies to promote the effective use of valuable scholarly resources.

Research Objectives

The overall objective is to examine the intention of postgraduate students to use e-resources in university libraries in Sri Lanka. The following specific objectives guide this study:

- To find the factors affecting the intention of postgraduate students to use e-resources in university libraries.
- To examine the extent to which the TPB predicts the intention of postgraduate students to use e-resources in the context of university libraries in Sri Lanka.

Literature Review

E-resource Usage of Postgraduate Students in the International Context

Several researchers around the world have studied the e-resource usage of postgraduate students in various institutions (Garg & Tamrakar, 2014; Ozoemelem, 2009; Soyizwapi, 2005; Thanuskodi, 2012) and they emphasized that e-resources are not utilized at an optimum level by these students. In his study focused on postgraduates and research scholars of an Indian university. Thanuskodi (2012) observed that certain types of e-resources including e-theses, e-abstracts, catalogues and databases were poorly used by postgraduates due to their unawareness regarding these resources. In a similar study, Garg and Tamrakar (2014) mentioned that the library played a vital role in creating awareness and training postgraduate students to use e-resources in a better way. Various challenges in accessing electronic databases were identified from the study performed by Soyizwapi (2005) targeting postgraduates of Faculty of Science and Agriculture in a South African university. In a related attempt, Ozoemelem (2009) surveyed postgraduate students in the LIS discipline at a Nigerian university and found that these students did not possess adequate skills in ICT use, which may in turn hinder the effective use of e-resources by them. Similarly, in a recent study, Farooqui and Hadagali (2022) carried out a survey (n=540) among postgraduates of management colleges attached to an Indian university to examine how they utilized library services. Findings revealed that a significant proportion of students visited the library twice every week and the main reason for these visits included borrowing books and reading. Further, results highlighted the varying levels of students' awareness with regard to different library services. Overall, most of the postgraduates expressed satisfaction with their respective library services and collections.

E-resource Usage of Postgraduate Students in the Sri Lankan Context

In the Sri Lankan context, only few researchers have engaged in examining the use of e-resources by postgraduate students. In the recent past, Gunasekera and Balasubramani (2019) examined the electronic information seeking behaviours of postgraduates in the field of Education. A survey was conducted among postgraduate students of the Faculty of Arts, University of Peradeniya, Sri Lanka. Findings exhibited that majority of the respondents used e-resources of the library whereas catalogues and websites were the most popular e-resources among others. The authors underscored the importance of sufficient training and well-structured programs for users to maximize e-resource utilization. Similarly, Peiris and Peiris (2013) conducted a survey to find out the use of Electronic Information Resources (EIR) by postgraduates of University of Peradeniya, Sri Lanka. It was observed that most respondents (77%) had used EIR and these resources were mainly used for writing reports. Yet, it was found that library databases were the least accessed resource by postgraduates. Also, majority of students learned to use EIR through trial and error and self-learning. However, it was revealed that they were not satisfied with the current e-services of the library and they strongly perceived that EIR were not optimally used due to various problems. In a similar way, Sritharan (2018) carried out a research to assess the level of satisfaction towards EIR by postgraduate trainees at the Postgraduate Institute of Medicine, University of Colombo, Sri Lanka. Data were gathered via a survey performed among a random sample of 100 trainees from 32 medical specialties. It was revealed that majority of respondents (98.6%) used EIR to update knowledge and for study purposes. A considerable proportion (60.2%) of them was satisfied with Internet access of the library and more than half of them were satisfied with e-journals

subscribed by the library. The recommendations of the researcher included providing more training opportunities for these users. However, these studies have not applied a theoretical framework for their investigations. The absence of a guiding theoretical framework to systematically explain students' behaviours highlights a gap which the current study addresses by applying a prominent theory (TPB) to better understand postgraduate students' intentions to use e-resources in Sri Lanka.

In a different study, Millawithanachchi (2012) identified critical success factors on e-resources use by postgraduates of University of Colombo, Sri Lanka. This study was carried out as a case study at University of Colombo involving 302 postgraduate students from 7 faculties. Nine important factors were identified as to influence e-resource usage. Among them “technology” emerged as the most critical factor affecting e-resource use of postgraduate students. The other critical success factors for utilizing e-resources for learning purposes included Library support, information literacy, computer competency, usefulness and user attitudes. On the other hand, Jayakanthan and Jeyaraj (2019) applied the Unified Theory of Acceptance and Use of Technology (UTAUT) model to examine factors influencing the behavioral intention to utilize EIR by postgraduates of Eastern University of Sri Lanka. The authors tested a conceptual model with 208 postgraduates. Facilitating conditions and effort expectancy were found to be the most significant determinants of students' intention to use EIR. Also, intention was revealed to have a strong influence on the actual use of these resources. The authors stressed the importance of these types of studies done through the application of emerging technology acceptance models.

Selection of Theory of Planned Behaviour

Literature indicates that various theories and models explain user acceptance and adoption of technologies, including the Theory of Reasoned Action (TRA), Technology Acceptance Model, Theory of Planned Behaviour (TPB), Social Cognitive Theory, Innovation Diffusion Theory etc. Among these the TPB is a well-established, rigorously tested and widely employed social cognitive model for predicting user behaviour intentions (Austvoll-Dahlgren et al., 2012). Addressing limitations of the TRA, the factor Perceived Behavioural Control (PBC) has been introduced in TPB which recognizes that an individual's ability to engage in a behaviour may depend on their own capacity to perform it (Kripanont, 2007). Thus, TPB offers a comprehensive explanatory framework capturing multi-faceted influences on e-resources use. It provides specific information rendering deeper insight into why an individual or a user group might not use technology (Matheison, 1991). Studies have verified that the TPB has a sound predictive capability in explaining behavioural intentions across various contexts in technology adoption (Ajzen, 1991; Owusu et al., 2020; Sok et al., 2021). Therefore, TPB was chosen as the theoretical basis for the current study.

Application of TPB in Information Systems Research

In the realm of information systems, Ugwu and Ejikeme (2020) applied the TPB to investigate Library and Information Sciences (LIS) students' intentions to utilize e-resources. Findings indicated that all three constructs of TPB were predictors of the intention. However, attitude was the most salient determinant of intention, while PBC was a stronger determinant than subjective norm. In a related study, Zamani-Miandashtiet et al. (2013) employed TPB to predict the use of Internet behaviour among agriculture undergraduates of an Iranian University. A survey was performed among

214 students to gather data. Findings demonstrated that intention and subjective norm were the strongest predictors accounting for 57% of the variance. The most significant determinant of the intention was PBC whereas attitude did not directly influence the use of Internet behavior. TPB was found to be a successful model for explaining the use of Internet. Extending the higher order conceptualization of the basic factors of the TPB, Taneja (2006) examined the adverse use of Information Systems (IS) assets by employees. The author sought to predict employees' intention towards the adverse use of IS assets. Findings showed that attitude and social influence were significant predictors of intention. However, PBC exerted less influence on the intention. In another study, Austvoll-Dahlgren et al. (2012) applied the TPB to investigate cognitive factors that predict user intention to seek health information. A questionnaire was administered among a mixed population sample (n=30) and parents' sample (n=45). Findings revealed that attitudes and PBC were significant predictors of intention. The authors concluded that the questionnaire developed based on TPB served as a promising tool for explaining beliefs and intentions concerning health information seeking.

The aforementioned literature survey demonstrates that there is a dearth of systematic studies which have analyzed individual level factors that affect the use of e-resources by postgraduates in Sri Lanka. Therefore, it is crucial to investigate underlying factors influencing the intention of postgraduate students to use e-resources through a theoretical perspective. Moreover, despite the widespread applicability of TPB across various fields, the applicability and value of TPB in the LIS field is still uncertain (Ugwu & Ejikeme, 2020). Addressing this literature gap, the current study aims to apply TPB for the better understanding of postgraduate students' intentions

to use e-resources. The study will contribute to update the existing body of knowledge by extending the application of TPB into the context of LIS in Sri Lanka.

Research Model and Hypotheses

The Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB) is applied as the theoretical framework of this study. The TPB was introduced by Icek Ajzen in 1985 and it theorizes that user intention to engage in certain behaviour is influenced by three main factors: Attitude (AT), Perceived Behavioural Control (PBC) and Subjective Norm (SN).

However, the current study sought to identify key drivers of postgraduate students' intention to use e-resources, as a critical initial step in understanding the acceptance and adoption of these resources. While the TPB typically includes the behaviour component, this study omits the behaviour component, primarily shedding light on the formation of intentions than the actual use behaviour. Also, measuring the actual behaviour is beyond the scope of the current study as well as due to various practical limitations measured actual behaviour may not accurately reflect the underlying intentions.

In the present study, the targeted behaviour is use of e-resources for academic purposes. Intention is the immediate predictor of behavior (Ajzen, 1991) and in this research Behavioural Intention (BI) is the users' willingness or readiness to use e-resources (Ugwu & Ejikeme, 2020). SN refers to the "perceived social pressure to perform or not to perform the behavior" (Ajzen, 1991, p. 188). In this study, SN is the perception of expectations of important referents such as supervisors, peers, lecturers etc. with regard to postgraduate students' use of e-resources for their academic

work. PBC is “the perceived ease or difficulty of performing the behavior and it is assumed to reflect past experience as well as anticipated impediments and obstacles” (Ajzen, 1991, p. 188). PBC can be operationally defined as the postgraduate students’ believed ability to use e-resources effectively including their confidence in the ability to access, retrieve and utilize various e-resources successfully. Attitude is referred to “the degree to which a person has a favorable or unfavorable evaluation or appraisal of the behavior in question” (Ajzen, 1991, p. 188). In this study attitude is the postgraduate students’ overall positive or negative evaluation of utilizing of e-resources to fulfill their academic endeavours.

Based on the TPB and aforementioned literature the following research hypotheses are proposed in this study:

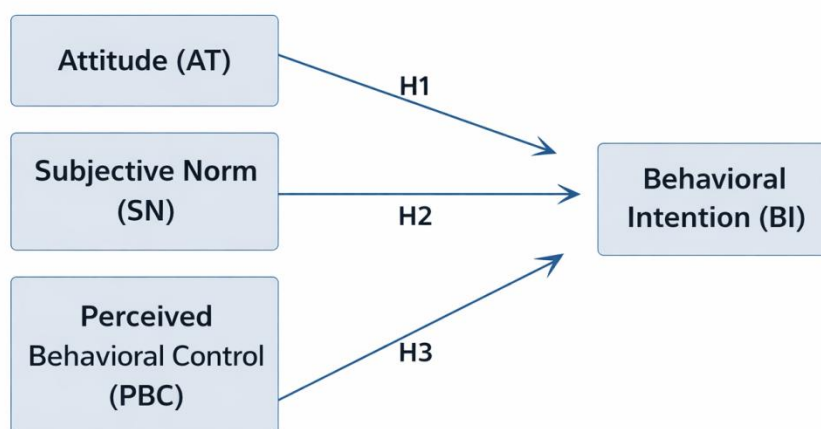
H1: There is a significant positive effect of attitude towards the behavioural intention to use e-resources by postgraduates in Sri Lanka.

H2: There is a significant positive effect of subjective norm towards the behavioural intention to use e-resources by postgraduates in Sri Lanka.

H3: There is a significant positive effect of perceived behavioural control towards the behavioural intention to use e-resources by postgraduates in Sri Lanka.

Figure 1

Adaptation of Theory of Planned Behaviour



Note. From Author Ajzen, 1985, 1991

Methodology

The study followed a quantitative approach using the survey strategy. The study targeted the population of all postgraduate students enrolled in Sri Lankan state universities. However, due to practical constraints a convenience sample which consisted of 150 postgraduate students was used to conduct the survey. Postgraduate students enrolled to follow a research methodology course at University of Kelaniya as well as postgraduate students registered at University of Peradeniya were considered in this sample (See below page 15). Convenience sampling method was deemed appropriate due to the exploratory nature of this study. While convenience sampling provides easy access to the geographically dispersed study population, the limitation in terms of generalizability is acknowledged.

Data were collected using a structured questionnaire created using Google form and it was distributed through email and social media platforms. The

measurement items for constructs of the model were adapted from previous research (Boyko et al., 2011; Hebeshy et al., 2020) and modified to fit with the current research context. For example, the following items were adapted to measure the construct of PBC:

“The decision to use e-resources is beyond my control”

“I am confident that I can use e-resources”

“Whether or not I use E-resources is entirely up to me”

A multiple-item 7-point Likert scale, ranging from “strongly disagree” to “strongly agree” was used to measure the items. Data analysis was conducted using Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) software applying descriptive statistics and regression analysis techniques.

Results and Discussion

Out of the distributed 150 questionnaires, 102 usable responses were received yielding a response rate of 68%.

Out of the respondents, the majority were females (51%) while 49% were males. Almost half of the postgraduates (49%) fell within the 31-40-year age category, with 35% belonging in the 41-50-year age category. Further, most of the respondents (60%) were pursuing a Master’s Degree program, followed by 27% of them enrolled in MPhil level. With respect to their subject discipline, majority were in the Science stream (43%), followed by Social Sciences (19%). The rest of the respondents were enrolled in various fields such as Humanities, Medicine, Commerce, Music and education. A significant proportion of postgraduate students (39%) were registered at University of Kelaniya, Sri Lanka whereas 31% of them were registered at University of Peradeniya, Sri Lanka for their programs.

Table 1
Demographic Profile of the Respondents

Demographic categories		Percentage (%)
Gender		
	Male	49
	Female	51
Age		
	<30 years	7
	31-40	49
	41-50	35
	51-60	7
	>60	2
Study level		
	PG Diploma	4
	Masters	60
	MPhil	27
	PhD	9
Subject field		
	Social Science	19
	Science	43
	Medical Sciences	7
	Commerce/Management	6
	Humanities	8
	Education	11
	Ayurveda	2
	Music	4
University		
	Kelaniya	39
	Peradeniya	31
	Colombo	10
	Sri Jayewardenepura	12
	Open university	8

Table 2 presents the reliability of the model constructs and it's evident that all Cronbach's alpha values of the items exceeded the acceptable level of 0.7 (Sekaran, 2000), reflecting the high internal consistency of the measures.

Table 2

Cronbach's Alpha Values of the Model Constructs

Construct	Number of Items	Cronbach's Alpha Value
Behavioural Intention	3	0.966
Attitude	3	0.994
Subjective norm	3	0.816
Perceived Behavioural Control	2	0.728

Multiple regression analyses with ordinary least squares method in SPSS, was applied to test the research hypotheses proposed in this study and the results are depicted in Table 3. The direct effects of each independent variable namely, AT, SN and PBC on the dependent variable of BI were tested.

Table 3

Hypotheses Testing Results

Hypothesis	Path	Standard Beta Coefficient	Results
H1	AT → BI	0.521 ($p < 0.05$)	Accepted
H2	SN → BI	-0.153 ($p > 0.05$)	Not Accepted
H3	PBC → BI	0.335 ($p < 0.05$)	Accepted

According to the findings, H1 was accepted. That is, there exists a significant positive relationship between attitude and the BI ($\beta = 0.521$; $p < 0.05$). This finding is in accordance with related prior studies (Austvoll-Dahlgren et al., 2012; Taneja, 2006; Ugwu & Ejikeme, 2020). It indicates that postgraduates' overall attitudes towards using e-resources strongly influence their intentions to actually utilize these resources. Thus, if the postgraduate students have positive attitudes towards e-resources, perceiving those to be relevant, beneficial and valuable they are more likely to engage with these resources. Also, H3 was accepted. That is, there exists a

significant positive relationship between PBC and the BI ($\beta = 0.335$; $p < 0.05$). This result complies with some previous studies (Austvoll-Dahlgren et al., 2012; Ugwu & Ejikeme, 2020). This result indicates that postgraduates' beliefs about their ability to use e-resources have a sound impact on their intentions to actually use these resources. Accordingly, postgraduate students who perceive that they have the necessary resources, skills and support to use e-resources are more likely to use these resources.

However, H2 was not supported indicating that the subjective norm was not a predictor of the BI ($\beta = -0.153$; $p > 0.05$). This finding is contradictory with findings obtained in some prior studies, in which subjective norm was revealed to be a sound predictor of the BI (Taneja, 2006; Ugwu & Ejikeme, 2020). It highlights that in the current research context postgraduate students are not much influenced by the opinions of peers or faculty in the adoption of e-resources. This result may be attributed to the fact that postgraduate students may have a high level of autonomy and independence in their academic work, leading them to make their own judgments over social norms.

In addition, the highest Beta value was obtained for attitude, complementing the results of Ugwu & Ejikeme (2020). The dominance of the attitude construct suggests that postgraduate students are mainly driven by their own beliefs about the value of e-resources for their academic goals. Thus, they are more likely to embrace e-resources if they have positive perceptions that these resources will enhance their learning experience. Further, as demonstrated in Table 4, it was found that $R^2 = 0.534$, reflecting that all three predictors (AT, SN and PBC) in the model jointly explained 53.4% of variance in the BI (dependent variable) to use e-resources by postgraduates in Sri Lanka. This shows that TPB has a high predictive power to explain the

intentions of postgraduates towards e-resource use for academic purposes in the Sri Lankan context.

Table 4
Model Summary of the Multiple Regression Analysis

Model Summary					
Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate	
1	.740 ^a	.548	.534	.87334	
a. Predictors: (Constant), Attitude, Subjective Norm, Perceived Behavioural Control					
ANOVA ^a					
Model	Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1					
Regression	42.21	3	14.07	39.61	.000 ^b
	34.82	98	.355		
Residual	77.03	101			
Total					
a. Dependent Variable: Behavioural Intention					
b. Predictors: (Constant), Attitude, Subjective Norm, Perceived Behavioural Control					

Conclusion

In the context of applying TPB to gain insight into the postgraduates' intention to use e-resources it was revealed that attitude and PBC were salient determinants of the intention, while attitude was the strongest predictor of the intention. It reflects that, positive attitudes towards e-resources will strongly influence students' intentions to use them. Library management must take measures to promote the positive aspects of e-resources, through effective communication and targeted training, outlining

their advantages, value, relevance, convenience etc. which will help shape the students' attitudes towards e-resources and in turn increase their intentions to use these resources. Also, PBC of postgraduates, that is their perceptions about their ability to effectively utilize e-resources play a vital role in shaping their intentions to use these resources. Thus, it is important that the library management provide necessary tools, resources and training to enhance students' confidence in using e-resources which will in turn have a positive impact on their intentions to use these resources. Yet, subjective norm was found to be a non-significant determinant of the intention to use e-resources. Based on this result, it can be suggested that instead of solely focusing on social influences, the library management should adopt more effective approaches such as emphasizing the benefits of e-resources, addressing individual beliefs and offering personalized resources and support to popularize the use of e-resources among postgraduates in Sri Lanka. Furthermore, the TPB was proven to be a successful model to predict the intentions of postgraduate students towards using e-resources and the study provides empirical evidence to support the applicability of TPB into the context of Sri Lanka. Taking into consideration the motivational factors identified via this study, library management and practitioners could design effective interventions and strategies to increase the e-resource use by postgraduates in Sri Lanka which will ultimately lead to better outcomes in their academic endeavors.

This study had a single-country focus and limited to the university sector libraries. Also, the study employed a non-probability sampling technique which may give rise to generalizability issues. This study could be replicated by using a wider sample size and the results could be improved by incorporating other factors and moderators into the model to gain deeper insight into the intentions of postgraduates to use e-resources. It should be

noted that the omission of behaviour construct from the TPB frameworks as another limitation of the study. Future longitudinal studies could investigate the extent to which the predictors of intention identified via this study convert into actual use of e-resources.

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