

# **CHALLENGES FACED BY THE UNDERGRADUATES OF STATE UNIVERSITIES WHO SPEAK MINORITY LANGUAGES: AN EXPLORATION OF THE SRI LANKAN LANGUAGE POLICIES ON HIGHER EDUCATION**

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The present study attempts to investigate the challenges encountered by the undergraduates who speak minority languages in Sri Lankan state universities. Although there are varied issues that the minority undergraduates face, this area of research remains relatively understudied. The present study hypothesizes that (i) the undergraduates face difficulties due to the incompatibility between medium of instruction in the school and at the university; (ii) the undergraduates encounter problems in interacting in academic and non-academic settings and (iii) the authorities have taken necessary measures to implement the policies in order to minimize any issue that could arise. Random sampling was used for data collection. The sample consisted of 50 undergraduates from Sri Lankan state universities. For the study 50 online questionnaires were collected and 15 semi structured interviews were conducted. 88% of the participants were first language speakers of Tamil. 78% of them had studied in Tamil medium at school. 82% of them are studying in English medium at the university. The findings indicate that the undergraduates face problems in both the academic and non-academic settings. Although the constitution demonstrates some policies which are supposed to provide assistance to prevent such circumstances, the study identifies that necessary actions have not been taken. Hence; the first two hypotheses have been proven whereas the latter is falsified.

**Key words:** Challenges faced by minority undergraduates, language policies in education Sri Lanka, Language policies for Sri Lankan Universities

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