

Identification of practical problems related to the use of emails as a means of communication in telework at institutions in Sri Lanka

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Most office work in Sri Lankan institutions had to be done without using paper due to several reasons in the first half of the year 2022. The main reason was the economic crisis occurred as a result of the economic malpractices and the poor management of the governing bodies of the country. During the Covid 19 pandemic period, the governmental institutions were instructed to reduce the use of paper for office work since it could prevent or reduce the spread of the Corona virus assisted by the transportation of letters, documents, papers, etc. within and among offices. During that time, there was the option to choose whether to use paper for office work or not. But during the economic crisis in 2022, paper was not readily available in the market. Therefore, the offices had to devise strategies to minimize the use of paper. One such strategy was to use emails as much as possible for communication instead of using letters. This saves paper used for the letter and the envelope. In addition, there are several other advantages of using emails. It is cost effective, time saving and reaches the receiver in no time, evident, and can be reached at any location without physically going to the workplace. But there are several practical problems arising with the use of emails as a means of communication in telework scenario. A survey was carried out by interviewing fifty officers and clerical staff members in both state and private sector institutions to identify the practical issues related to the matter. The reported practical issues related to the use of emails were poor knowledge in technology, power cuts, unavailability of devices like desktop computers, laptop computers, smart phones, etc., expenses for Internet supply and the maintenance and purchase of technical devices, poor Internet coverage, poor Internet connection speed, insufficient fluency in English, health issues resulted from overuse of computers for a considerable period every day, etc. The majority i.e. 82% of the interviewees have taken measures to overcome the above-mentioned practical issues that have resulted in stress at work. Some of them have purchased technical devices such as solar panels, routers, laptop computers, tablet PCs, etc. spending huge amounts of money, have followed courses to learn about technology, have started to improve English language skills and have taken precautions such as wearing protective glasses to minimize the health issues related to eye sight. Although the employees are putting extra effort to continue telework using emails as a means of communication in their occupation, the employers should also take measures to mitigate the practical issues arising with telework.

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