

ADOPTION OF AUDIOBOOK TECHNOLOGY AMONG DIFFERENTLY ABLED UNIVERSITY STUDENTS IN SRI LANKA: CHALLENGES AND OPPORTUNITIES

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Audiobooks are increasingly recognized as effective learning resources that promote access and inclusion in higher education. For differently abled students, such as those who are blind, those with dyslexia, or those with locomotor impairments, these technologies offer a valuable alternative to print based materials. In Sri Lanka, however, where digital transformation in universities is still progressing and audiobook adoption remains minimal.

This study investigates the use of audiobook technology by differently abled university students in Sri Lanka, focusing on barriers to adoption and opportunities for integration. A mixed methods design was employed. Surveys of differently abled students across several universities were combined with semi structured interviews involving educators, policymakers, and technology developers. Comparative insights from international best practices in audiobook adoption also informed the analysis. Findings show that audiobook usage in Sri Lankan universities is at an early stage. Adoption is hindered by limited access to platforms, a shortage of localized content, insufficient training for educators, low levels of technological literacy among some students, and persistent socio cultural attitudes toward disability. At the same time, opportunities are emerging. These include growing national and institutional attention to inclusive education, potential partnerships with international audiobook providers, and rapid innovation in digital learning technologies.

The study concludes that audiobook technology has strong potential to advance inclusivity in Sri Lankan higher education. Realizing this potential requires closing infrastructural gaps, raising awareness among stakeholders, and enacting supportive policies. Stronger partnerships between universities, policymakers, and technology developers are essential. By prioritizing audiobook integration, Sri Lanka can create a more equitable higher education system that empowers differently abled students and aligns with global best practices.

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