ENSURING EQUAL ACCESS OPPORTUNITY TO ALL: IMPORTANCE OF DISPLAY OF PUBLIC BUS DESTINATION WITH NATIVE LANGUAGES

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Abstract

Inclusive and accessible public transit is vital to encourage increased usage of public transit in a sustainable perspective. It is crucial to ensure that all potential commuters feel invited to use public transit despite differences including religion, race, age, gender, disabilities, etc. Language-based differences have been an everlasting issue with the inability of people to carry out their daily activities in their language of choice. In Sri Lanka, Tamil-speaking individuals outside the Northern and Eastern Provinces are primarily affected by this issue, whereas individuals who speak Sinhala inside the Northern and Eastern Provinces also encounter similar difficulties. Public transit is not specific for a particular group of people but a common mode to transport commuters to destinations. Language disparity is evident in destination boards displayed in public buses with the absence of one or two of the three languages, despite the recommendations from authorities to bus operators to ensure display boards comprising Sinhala, Tamil, and English. There are also significant issues with the clarity/visibility of one language over the other and major spelling errors. The inclusion of all languages in destination boards throughout Sri Lanka is a significant aspect of social cohesion and post-conflict reconciliation. Trust among communities can be instigated with an inclusive public bus transit system. An opinion survey amongst commuters and an observational survey of destination boards in public buses in two distinct locations highlighted the disparity of language equality, requiring immediate rectification of the issue via a strict enforcement framework. Issues of commuters in reading mono-language destination boards are identified, resulting in the inability to access the specific bus service. The study highlights the need for Sri Lanka to identify the disparity and enforce strict guidelines to attain the concepts of 'Sustainable Societies' and 'Transport Equity'.

Keywords: *communal harmony*, *destination boards, language policy, public buses, social cohesion*

Introduction

In the current scenario of adopting sustainable transportation principles, public transit has become an alternative option that needs to be streamlined as the best possible option for all people engaging in travel. Policy and relevant stakeholders' primary responsibility is to facilitate public transit to provide a safe, secure, reliable, affordable, and accessible system. The fairness with which benefits and costs are allocated is referred to as equity. Decisions made on transportation planning have significant and varied equitable effects on society. Evaluating them is difficult since many different kinds of equality and

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consequences must be taken into account. Giving every person or group the same resources or opportunities is referred to as equality whereas recognizing that every person has unique circumstances, equity distributes the precise resources and opportunities required to get an equal result. Vertical equality argues that underprivileged groups should receive a larger proportion of resources, whereas horizontal equity assumes that people with similar needs and talents should be treated equally. The language issue in public transit majorly falls in the line of transport equity which has been evidently overseen in transport planning and related policy making.

This study outlines diverse viewpoints, their effects, and useful techniques for incorporating transportation equality objectives into policy and planning analyses. The scope of transportation equity is broad as there are different forms of equality to take into account, multiple effects and ways to measure those impacts, and several ways that individuals and travel can be categorized for equity analysis. Thus, post-comprehensive analysis, this study focuses on the language barrier issue in accessing public bus services and expects to incorporate and analyze further transportation equity parameters for further development and sustainable inclusion of all in public transit networks.

In the Sri Lankan public transit climate, all possible techniques need to be adopted to retrieve and increase the number of public transit users as people are moving into private modes of transportation. Despite their differences, all people must have an equal opportunity to access public transit options. Sri Lanka is yet to tackle the disparities (including gender, economic disparity, age, residential location, language, etc.) in transportation equity due to lack of policy and awareness. Minority language users find public transportation unappealing when they live in or travel to locations where the dominant language is spoken since there is no provision for their preferred or familiar language. When the majority travels to locations where minorities speak the dominant language, the situation is still the same. Native language is the first language or dialect that a person has been exposed to from birth or within a critical period (also referred to as first language or mother tongue). The number of languages the destination needs to be displayed depends upon the country, state, or region served by the public bus service. In the Sri Lankan context, it is Sinhala and Tamil, with English as the link language. English is an international language that not only facilitates communication between native language speakers but also provides a mode of communication to the majority of foreigners and other minority groups. In India, every state is dissected based on its language, which is a unique scenario and thus boards are usually depicted in the language of the state or states (in trips that start and end in different states) with English in certain display boards for commuters of other states and language users. Considering the importance of social cohesion, communal harmony, and sustainable reconciliation, the importance of three language destination boards in public buses in Sri Lanka has been stressed on many different occasions. Difficulties faced by the Sinhala-speaking people when visiting the north and east and the Tamil-speaking people out of the north and east have been a topic of discussion not only in public transit

but in other aspects as well. Even though many policy guidelines and frameworks have been put forward on the three-language policy, it is yet to be implemented on a national scale. Public bus commuters traveling on a day-to-day basis face practical difficulties in reading the destination boards and identifying whether they can utilize the particular service to reach their destination. This increases anxiety about using public bus services which is unsustainable and pathetic. Adoption and display of three language destination boards on public buses is not an economically expensive task and can be implemented with proper direction and implementation policies. It is the complete negligence of the transport authorities and the relevant stakeholders in understanding the sentiments of the commuters which has resulted in the unsustainable practice of being normalized in public buses. The study highlights the importance of the display of 'Three Language Destination Boards' in Sri Lankan public buses and provides a basis for immediate implementation on par with developing an accessible and equitable public transport system in Sri Lanka.

Literature Review

Studies with respect to language issues in public transportation and transportation, in general, are minimal. Even though different aspects of transport equity, including gender equality (McDonnell (2019), Abdullah et al. (2022), ADB and UN Women (2019)), disabled usage (Field & Jette (2007), TUMI (2019), Yiyuan (2022)), economically underprivileged are available via past studies, the importance is given to language equity in transport and mainly public transit which is utilized by all language backgrounds is scarce, both in the national and international context. Thus, this study focuses on individuals' language rights in terms of ensuring equal access to public bus services via the right of language. Public Representations Committee on Constitutional Reform (2016) clearly states the importance of the language rights of every citizen. The study highlights that public representations of language rights generally emanate from the desire to be able to receive services from and communicate with the state in a language of one's choice which is usually one's mother tongue. This is vital as it reflects a desire to be treated equally by the state regarding the use of one's language and a desire on the part of smaller minority groups to seek State recognition and assistance to protect their languages and associated cultural practices from being threatened with extinction. This argument applies not only to minorities in a country but also to minorities residing in an area where the minority resides as the majority. Further, the report indicates the importance of State information for the local public, including notices, websites, billboards, and signs with directions to be in all three languages (Sinhala, Tamil, and English). Wyss (2020) critically analyzes the language policy of Sri Lanka and the resistance factors to successful implementation. The study establishes the historical relevance of the national language issue, which magnified ethnic differences around language and identified as one of the root causes of the civil war, which lasted for three decades. The Lessons Learnt and Reconciliation Commission in 2011 recommended fully implementing the language policy to be the effective pathway for building post-war reconciliation in Sri Lanka, which could guarantee that the violence of the past will not resume.

Cardinal and Sonntag (2015) highlight those language policies should be political. It has been utilized by rulers as a weapon to marginalize people based on language differences and can reinforce or diffuse conflict between language groups. The study states, "They can be instruments of inclusion or exclusion. They can promote solidarity or stoke intolerance. …. They can be blunt instruments of power or enveloped in normative discourse. They can be overt or covert," where 'They' implies language policies. Adopting an active language policy is vital to social cohesion and creating an environment of belonging amongst ethnolinguistically different groups. Language policy that specifically recognizes markers of ethnic identity could foster reconciliation and further social cohesion (Footitt & Kelly, 2014).

Centre for Policy Alternatives provides a comprehensive analysis of the real case scenario of language rights and implementation flaws. The study describes language as being the heart of the ethnic conflict, and thus, addressing the language issue will have great symbolic and, more importantly, practical significance for Sri Lankans for a peaceful tomorrow. Restoring trust and confidence in full citizenship for all and genuine respect, trust, and confidence amongst all has immense short, medium, and long-term benefits not only in society but also in terms of economy and international approval as well. The study addresses the language disparity on destination boards of public buses in 2012. Ministry of Private Transport Services and the Sri Lanka Transport Board were instructed to display destination boards in all three languages for public buses in service under the mentioned institutions, which were agreed to be implemented in the short term. The circular dated February 28, 2012, instructed all railway stations to make announcements in all three languages. Despite both directives, it is evident that the three-language policy is not implemented, causing significant disruptions to public transit travel of commuters amongst ethnolinguistically minor groups. The study states a critical statement "Language rights are not just a matter of legal rights; they have to be understood as a matter of humanity and of empathy," which is yet to be identified and considered for social cohesion and reconciliation.

People who are a minority in a majority language usage environment are forced to live with anxiety and doubt, not only in terms of travel but also in other essential activities such as lodging a complaint at a police station or seeking health care from a government hospital, applying for compensation or pensions, obtaining licenses and registering a birth, death, or marriage amongst others. Within the 300+ cases relating to language issues submitted to the Official Languages Commission, Supreme Court, and the Human Rights Commission of Sri Lanka: the issue of bus destination boards was considered and the Human Rights Commission of Sri Lanka and the Official Languages Commission issued directives on bilingual destination boards on public transit modes (which is yet to be implemented in the national context). Stacy et al. (2020) state that metropolitan planning organizations focus more on the local environment and congestion reduction factors than on social equity in their planning frameworks. The absence of an explicit ideology of transportation equity impacts the considerations of the concept

amongst stakeholders in the transport industry, including public transit. Making transportation decisions via deep and meaningful community engagement is important, especially amongst low-income and historically excluded groups. The absence of proper international and local tools along with data to evaluate transportation equity needs to be addressed via appropriate research along with the inclusion of transportation equity as a sustainable transportation dimension.

Bettati et al. (2022) capture the reality of public transit users highlighting the stressful and unsafe environment for many commuters, including but not limited to women, senior citizens, and people with disabilities. Goal 11: Sustainable Cities and Communities mentions the provision of safe, affordable, and accessible public transit as one of the vital aspects of achieving the relevant goal and targets. Vulnerable groups include commuters who need to use public transit options but are deprived of access via the absence of any forms of elements where language identification is not highlighted even in international reports and studies despite its' practical impact on social cohesion, peace, and prosperity. The "Safe and inclusive transport and mobility' document by the United Nations: Economic and Council highlight various aspects of transport safety and equity, including road safety, inclusive transport for persons with disabilities, gender equality, and women's empowerment and poverty. The document does not highlight the need for language policy and related quality to all groups in transportation despite its comprehensive take on inclusive transport. Irshard (2018) highlights the potential of the trilingual language policy to achieve political goals of reconciliation and coexistence in the post-war Sri Lankan context, given the larger geo-political circumstances. Madhavee and Ariyaratne (2020) analyze the issues in implementing the trilingual policy in Sri Lanka. The study highlights the effectiveness of the implementation of the trilingual policy and the issue concerning the dearth of qualified and experienced personnel who can translate Tamil and Sinhala languages which is a major drawback in implementing the trilingual policy, requiring second language learning and professional training institutes.

Velas-Suarin (2021) defines 'Inclusive Transport' as a transportation system that allows ease of movement and mobility for all people, no matter their circumstances (including language barriers). An ideal transport system should allow everyone, to ensure equal ability to reach places of leisure and opportunities. The National RTAP Best Practices Spotlight Article on Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion in Public Transportation highlights the background, history, and issues around these related concepts that are critical to providing equal rights in transit workplaces and transit services for all, mainly focusing on the American context. The article highlights characteristics of people or groups when planning for equal and equitable opportunities and services, including language. Sanchez et al. (2003) identify inequitable surface effects of transportation policies. It analyses existing research and highlights the critical need for more research and data collection related to the impact of transportation policies on minority and low-income communities. Transportation planners focus primarily on

efficiency and cost of transportation, including people's mobility levels and the accessibility of transportation. It is important to focus on transportation equity to ensure fairness in mobility and accessibility levels across race, class, gender, and disability. It is important to incorporate national (country/state) aspects when developing transportation equity frameworks, as every scenario is unique. Clark (2017) analyzes the passenger demographics and travel in North America and is one of the few studies considering language as a relative concern in public transportation travel. Findings state that 85% speak English as their primary language, while 12% speak Spanish and 3% speak other languages among all transit users. Fan et al. (2019) analyze the transportation scenario and states the need for immediate efforts to advance transportation equity, focusing on the structural inequities built into our communities, such as segregation and discrimination, automobile dependency, and user-pay transportation finance practices as well as the specific transportation inequities that affect neighborhoods, individuals, and groups of individuals due to their racial/ethnic identity, income, ability, gender, age, and where they live. The study proposes the inclusion of language barriers in transport and transit access as a major factor in future transport policies and decision-making scenarios.

Methodology

The language issue in public bus destination boards has long been ignored in the Sri Lankan context. The study formulates a methodology to identify and mitigate the issue in line with achieving transportation equity in a sustainable transportation framework. The study's methodology is initiated through identifying the issue, followed by a comprehensive literature review to identify and analyze the research problem. The study utilized two survey options to analyze the language barrier in public bus transit usage an observational survey and an opinion survey. The data collected from the developed surveys were analyzed and related to literature review outcomes in understanding the barrier and providing recommendations for mitigating the language barrier to maximize public bus transit usage despite differences.

Observational Survey

An observational survey was carried out as a part of the study due to the unavailability of databases with respect to public bus destination boards. The survey aimed to identify the language issues of public bus destination boards and recognize the field scenario concerning the consideration of transportation equity within the public bus transit network. It was important to ensure an unbiased analysis of the destination board language scenario incorporating the representation of diverse public transit networks within Sri Lanka. Thus, two observational surveys were carried out at Dehiwala (Colombo) and Jaffna (Chavakachcheri). The survey locations are depicted in Figure 1. The two locations selected in the North and Western section of Sri Lanka were due to the significant dominance of an individual language majorly in day-to-day usage, resulting in other language users facing major hardships in day-to-day activities (not only in travel). Thus, the ease of access to survey data collection, time restrictions in data

collection, and the clear difference of language usage differences resulted in Jaffna and Colombo as the two locations of the observational survey.
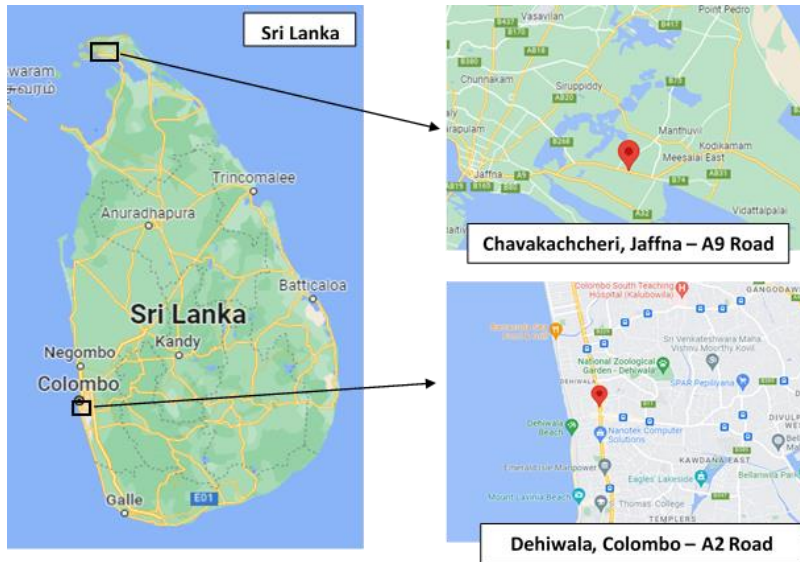
Figure 1: Observational Survey Locations

Buses at Dehiwala travel through predominantly Sinhala-speaking neighborhoods, while buses at Jaffna travel through predominantly Tamil-speaking neighborhoods. People most likely to be affected by the language issue of bus destination boards are Tamil-speaking people who cannot read or understand the Sinhala language and live in or travel through predominantly Sinhala-speaking neighborhoods and vice versa. Hence, both Dehiwala and Jaffna serve as prime locations to highlight the language disparity on bus destination boards. At Dehiwala, the survey was carried out on a weekday (Monday) in the morning peak (08.00 am – 09.00 am) for one hour. At Jaffna, the observational survey was carried out on a weekday (Tuesday) in the evening peak (05.00 pm – 06.00 pm) for one hour. The following data with respect to public buses were recorded via the observational survey for analysis:

- Ownership identification – private / government-owned (Sri Lanka Transport Board - SLTB)
- Service boundary - inter-provincial / intra-provincial
- Information regarding the destination board on display
    - Availability of the three languages (Sinhala/ Tamil/ English)
    - Spelling mistakes on the destination board
    - Visibility of the names on the destination board to all language users
- Route number & Remarks

Opinion Survey

The survey aimed to identify the impact of the absence of their literature language/s on public bus destination boards. It is important to identify and validate their opinion on the exclusion of their preferred language and the mandatory inclusion of three-language destination boards in public buses. The survey was conducted on a targeted population. The targeted population for the opinion survey was Tamil-speaking people residing or employed in majorly Sinhala-speaking areas and vice versa. To reach the targeted population, Sinhala-speaking university students and government servants temporarily residing in the Northern province of Sri Lanka and Tamil-speaking university students from the North and Eastern parts of Sri Lanka temporarily residing in the Western and Southern parts of Sri Lanka were selected. The opinion survey consisted of the following queries in a google form survey format;

- Residential District/Age/Gender (For further analysis)
- Language/s, the respondent, can read and understand
- Does the respondent use public bus services as his/her primary mode of travel?
- How often does the respondent use public bus services?
- Has the respondent ever come across a bus destination board where he/she could not read the board due to the absence of a familiar language/s?
- Has the respondent *not* traveled on a public bus due to the unfamiliarity with the language/s on the destination board?
- Does the respondent believe the inclusion of three-language destination boards will pave the way to social cohesion and reconciliation?
- Does the respondent believe the mandatory inclusion of three-language destination boards in public buses needs to be implemented via a legal framework? (since directives by transport authorities regarding three-language destination boards have been ignored)

Results and Discussions

Table 1: Results of the observational survey

Criterion	No. of buses	
	Dehiwala	**Jaffna**
Number of private buses	108	12
Number of SLTB buses	12	13
Number of inter-provincial buses	18	06
Number of intra-provincial buses	102	19
Number of buses that did not display the destination in the Sinhala language	00	06
Number of buses without any issues in displayed Sinhala language destination	120	19
Number of buses that had spelling mistakes in the Sinhala language destination	00	00
Number of buses that had visibility issues in the Sinhala language destination	00	00

1ˢᵗ International Conference on Harmony and Reconciliation (ICHR)

Number of buses that did not display the destination in the Tamil language	18	00
Number of buses without any issues in displayed Tamil language destination	84	25
Number of buses that had spelling mistakes in the Tamil language destination	04	00
Number of buses that had visibility issues in the Tamil language destination	14	00
Number of buses that did not display the destination in the English language	18	10
Number of buses without any issues in displayed English language destination	89	15
Number of buses that had spelling mistakes in the English language destination	00	00
Number of buses that had visibility issues in the English language destination	13	00
Total number of buses	120	25

Table 1 contains the results of the observational survey conducted at Dehiwala. From the survey, it can be observed that all the buses had their destinations in the Sinhala language without any spelling mistakes or visibility issues. This coincides with the fact that these buses travel through predominantly Sinhala-speaking areas. Out of all the buses in the survey, 15% did not display the Tamil Language on their destination boards. Out of all the buses that displayed the Tamil language on their destination boards, 3.9% of buses had a spelling mistake on the destination board, and 13.7% of buses had visibility issues in the Tamil language. Table 1 also contains the results of the observational survey conducted at Jaffna. All buses displayed the Tamil language on their destination boards in the Tamil language without any spelling mistakes or visibility issues. This coincides with the fact that these buses travel through predominantly Tamil-speaking areas. Out of the buses in the survey, 24% did not display the Sinhala language on their destination boards, and 40% of the buses did not display the English language. Unlike in Dehiwala, all the buses that displayed Sinhala and English languages on their destination boards in Jaffna had no spelling mistakes or visibility issues. Figure 2, Figure 3, and Figure 4 depict examples of the above-discussed scenarios at Dehiwala. Figure 5 illustrates the depiction of a public bus without the display of destinations in the Sinhala and English languages at Jaffna.

Figure 2: A public bus destination board without Tamil and English languages on display

Figure 3: A public bus destination board with poor visibility of Tamil and English languages on display

Figure 4: A public bus destination board with a spelling error in the Tamil language on display
(*Mathugama referred to in Tamil as Mathugamai is displayed as Maththalana*)

Figure 5: A public bus destination board without Sinhala and English languages on display

Table 2: Results of the observational survey for Private and SLTB

Criterion	Dehiwala		Jaffna	
	Private	**SLTB**	**Private**	**SLTB**
Number of buses that did not display the destination in the Tamil language	13.0%	33.3%	0%	0%
Number of buses without any issues in displayed Tamil language destination	76.9%	8.3%	0%	0%
Number of buses that had spelling mistakes in the Tamil language destination	3.7%	0%	0%	0%
Number of buses that had visibility issues in the Tamil language destination	6.5%	58.3%	0%	0%
Number of buses that did not display the destination in the Sinhala language	0%	0%	25%	23.1%
Number of buses without any issues in displayed Sinhala language destination	0%	0%	75%	76.1%
Number of buses that did not display the destination in the English language	13.9%	25%	25%	53.8%
Number of buses without any issues in displayed English language destination	81.5%	8.3%	75%	46.2%

Number of buses that had spelling mistakes in the English language destination	0%	0%	0%	0%
Number of buses that had visibility issues in the English language destination	4.6%	66.7%	0%	0%

As depicted in Table 2, destination boards of SLTB buses have significantly more issues in comparison to private buses concerning Tamil and English languages. Out of all the SLTB buses, 33.3% of buses did not display the destination in the Tamil language, compared to 13% of the private buses. According to Table 2, even though the percentage of private and SLTB buses that did not display the destination in the Sinhala language is approximately similar (25% and 23.1%, respectively), a significant percentage (53.8%) of SLTB buses had not displayed the destination in the English language compared to private buses (25%).

Table 3: Results of the observational survey for Inter and Intra Provincial buses

Criterion	Dehiwala		Jaffna	
	Inter	Intra	Inter	Intra
Number of buses that did not display the destination in the Tamil language	0%	17.6%	0%	0%
Number of buses without any issues in displayed Tamil language destination	83.3%	67.6%	0%	0%
Number of buses that had spelling mistakes in the Tamil language destination	0%	3.9%	0%	0%
Number of buses that had visibility issues in the Tamil language destination	16.7%	10.8%	0%	0%
Number of buses that did not display the destination in the Sinhala language	0%	0%	0%	31.6%
Number of buses without any issues in displayed Sinhala language destination	0%	0%	100%	68.4%
Number of buses that did not display the destination in the English language	11.1%	15.7%	16.7%	47.4%
Number of buses without any issues in displayed English language destination	77.8%	73.5%	83.3%	52.6%
Number of buses that had spelling mistakes in the English language destination	0%	0%	0%	0%
Number of buses that had visibility issues in the English language destination	11.1%	10.8%	0%	0%

According to Table 3, all the inter-provincial buses displayed the destination in the Sinhala language, and only 16.7% of buses did not display the destination in English. These percentages are notably lower than intra-provincial buses (31.6% and 47.4%, respectively). As discussed, this is attributed to the provision of mandatory destination board stickers issued by the National Transportation Commission

of Sri Lanka. All inter-provincial buses contained Tamil language destination boards compared to 17.6% of intra-provincial buses that did not display the Tamil language. This can be attributed to the provision of mandatory destination board stickers issued by the National Transportation Commission of Sri Lanka. Nevertheless, certain observations outside the survey timeframe did show SLTB inter-provincial buses not abiding by the three-language destination board policy. Another significant outcome of the survey is the complete omission of the Tamil language in luxury buses (Air Conditioned) destination boards (Out of the ten luxury buses, none contained the Tamil language).

Opinion Survey Analysis and Interpretation

Out of the 150 responses to the opinion survey, 147 responses were considered for analysis (3 were omitted due to mistakes in the responses). All the respondents were able to read and understand the English language and their native language (mother tongue), whereas no respondents were able to read and understand all three languages. Out of the 147 respondents, 75 (51.02%) could read and understand both English and Tamil languages, and 72 (48.98%) could read and understand English and Sinhala languages. An approximately 50/50 balance was achieved in responses in both categories for an unbiased interpretation of the analysis.

Table 4: Perspectives of survey respondents

Criterion	Sinhala–speaking respondents			Tamil-speaking respondents		
	Yes	No	May Be	Yes	No	May Be
Perspective on the inclusion of three language destination boards, increasing social cohesion, and reconciliation	58%	13%	29%	83%	04%	13%
Perspective on mandatory inclusion of three language destination boards in public buses needs to be implemented via a legal framework	54%	4%	42%	96%	00%	04%

Considering Tamil-speaking and Sinhala-speaking respondents, 96% and 41.7% have come across a bus destination board where they could not read the board due to the absence of a familiar language/s. 64% of Tamil-speaking respondents and 20.8% of Sinhala-speaking respondents have avoided traveling on a public bus due to unfamiliarity with the language/s on the destination boards. According to Table 4, 83.3% of Tamil-speaking respondents and 58.3% of Sinhala-speaking respondents are of the view that the inclusion of "three-language destination boards" will positively impact and increase social cohesion and reconciliation. Some of the extended views of the respondents (in the remarks) include the need to take immediate actions in the overall national scenario, including transport with respect to

language barriers, and transform Sri Lanka into a more equal and just society despite any differences, including language. 4.2% of Tamil-speaking respondents and 12.5% Sinhala-speaking respondents think it would not increase social cohesion and reconciliation, whereas 12.5% of Tamil-speaking respondents and 29.2% of Sinhala-speaking respondents are uncertain of the outcomes of the inclusion of three-language destination boards. Further, 96% of Tamil-speaking respondents and 54.2% of Sinhala-speaking respondents are of the view that mandatory inclusion of three-language destination boards in public buses needs to be implemented via a legal framework, while 4% of Tamil-speaking respondents and 41.7% of Sinhala-speaking respondents are uncertain of the move. 4.2% of Sinhala-speaking respondents did not agree with the implementation via a legal framework, where some instigated implementing the three-language destination boards in public buses via education rather than a legal imposition. Thus, the outcomes from the observational and opinion surveys highlight the critical issue of the absence of three-language destination boards in public buses and the resulting impacts on commuters of public bus services.

Conclusion

Identification of ways and means of achieving a sustainable public transportation system is important to attract the maximum number of commuters. The study deals with one of the most important but lesser-analyzed aspects in terms of an unequal public transit network whereas other transport equity aspects will be incorporated in the future. As a country that has dealt with major drawbacks due to language division, it is important to take sustainable measures, as mentioned throughout the study, to formulate a more inclusive society despite the differences. The language barrier is an issue that needs to be addressed with stringent policies and a clear implementation framework. Further, the display of the route number will have an increased effect on all commuters despite any differences which need to be highlighted on par with the language barrier in display boards for increased transport equity and accessibility. Public bus transport is preferred by most people in the country and helps in accessing people's basic needs and wants despite differences. The ability of people to access public transit using the language of their choice will decrease the anxiety level of users and further encourage communal harmony and social development. It is not only the absence of a specific language but also the misrepresentation in terms of visibility and spelling mistakes that have created a divide among people. Unfortunately, relevant authorities in decision-making positions are not able to relate to the difficulties of accessing public transit due to language barriers. Thus, the study has successfully identified the issue and recommends immediate intervention by authorities at the national and provincial transportation levels to create an equal, accessible, responsible, and sustainable public transit network with the inclusion of the three-language policy in destination boards of public buses.

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