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SUSTAINABLE URBAN MOBILITY IN SRI LANKA: THE IMPERATIVE FOR AN INHERENT HUMAN-CENTERED APPROACH FOR HOLISTIC DEVELOPMENT

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ABSTRACT

Urban mobility plays a crucial role in the sustainable development of cities, shaping economic growth, supporting environmental sustainability, and enhancing social well-being. However, in Sri Lanka, urban transport infrastructure has failed to address key challenges in urban mobility, such as traffic congestion, air pollution, poor public transportation, and road safety. This research examines the necessity of a unique sustainable urban mobility approach that integrates human behaviour, cultural values, and environmental conditions. The study identifies the role of inherent solutions shaped by environmental, social, and cultural values in developing sustainable urban mobility approaches. By incorporating social values and behavioural theories, this study explores the role of human behaviour in sustainable urban mobility. The findings highlight the need for policies that align with local socio-cultural characteristics, emphasizing community-driven solutions rather than solely infrastructure-based approaches. The study concludes with policy recommendations to improve urban mobility through inclusive planning, enhanced public transportation, and promotion of active mobility. These findings contribute to the global discourse on sustainable urban mobility by demonstrating that a human-centered, context-specific approach is vital for ensuring the long-term success of transport policies in developing nations.

Keywords: *Context-specific; Human-centered; Sustainability; Urban Mobility.*

1. INTRODUCTION

Although the sustainable development concept became a topic of social discourse following the establishment of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) in 2015, current progress reports show that progress on more than 50 percent of targets across these goals, including poverty reduction, climate action, and sustainable cities, is insufficient, leaving more than half the world behind (United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs, 2023). Recent research in the field of sustainable development suggests that a key factor in achieving sustainability lies in the development

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of robust, sustainable, and resilient cities (Profiroiu et al., 2020; Sopiana et al., 2023). However, as of today, urban cities have reached a tipping point of severe environmental challenges, including air pollution, noise pollution, biodiversity loss, traffic congestion, occupation of public spaces by traffic, and greenhouse gas emissions (Pobrklić et al., 2022; Brůhová et al., 2020). Additionally, these challenges can negatively impact people's health and quality of life (Ileperuma, 2020) and are associated with a higher prevalence of mood disorders, such as depression, in urban areas (Tonne et al., 2021).

Research indicates that urban cities are experiencing above mentioned challenges due to transport systems, and most of them are intertwined with poor urban mobility planning (Torrisi et al., 2020; Raza et al., 2022). However, the traditional common solution of constructing road infrastructure has failed to resolve the urban mobility failures in city areas (Ortúzar, 2019). In this context, the European Union noted that a sustainable city must be consistent with sustainable and healthy mobility (Ravazzoli & Torricelli, 2017). Therefore, the concept of sustainable urban mobility became a discourse among the experts, aiming to ensure that transport systems support environmental, economic, social, and mental well-being (Gallo & Marinelli, 2020). Sustainable urban mobility refers to a mobility system that enables safe, affordable, reliable, and comfortable movement while meeting societal needs without compromising environmental or human well-being, now or in the future (Ravazzoli & Torricelli, 2017; Chatziioannou et al., 2023).

Similar to the global challenge, urban mobility has become a major issue in the Sri Lankan context. The transport sector in Sri Lanka is a significant contributor not only to the economy, by accounting for nearly one-third of Sri Lanka's total energy consumption (Sri Lanka Sustainable Energy Authority, 2015), but also a leading source of greenhouse gas (GHG) and other pollutant emissions. Moreover, due to the unsatisfactory public transport system, the private vehicle ownership level has increased to 28%, which should be maintained at around 10% based on the current per capita GDP in Sri Lanka (Samarasekera et al., 2023). Consequently, according to Kumarage (2012), the average network speed in peak hours for commuter traffic to Colombo will drop to 9.1 Km/h in 2031. This situation advocates the implementation of sustainable urban mobility approaches within Sri Lanka.

However, in the recent past, it has experienced the severity of economic challenges, and it has forced the government to make developments that would be sustainable and bring maximum return on investment (Samarasekera et al., 2023). In recent decades, there have been several failed city development projects, including the Rathnapura New City Development Project (J. A. C. D. Jayalath et al., 2021), the Moratumulla New Retail Outlet Project in 1998, and the Radampola Mini-Town Development Project, all of which were implemented without considering social behaviour, thinking patterns, cultural aspects, environmental features, or the meaning and sentiment associated with the city (Perera, 2016). Without a comprehensive exploration of this issue, existing design and planning approaches fail to effectively mitigate inefficiencies and unsustainable practices in urban mobility.

1.1 AIM AND OBJECTIVES

In this context, urban mobility in Sri Lanka faces significant environmental, economic, and social challenges, further compounded by the lack of understanding of human behaviour and needs, highlighting a critical research gap. Accordingly, this study aims to emphasize the need for context-specific urban mobility planning that prioritizes human

behaviour and cultural aspects, alongside environmental and economic considerations, to enhance sustainable urban mobility. To achieve this aim, the objectives were established as (1) To identify the current challenges and limitations in urban mobility in Sri Lanka, (2) To assess the need for developing context-specific approaches in designing sustainable urban mobility plans, and (3) To identify unique strategies to achieve holistic sustainable urban mobility in Sri Lanka. Furthermore, the scope of this research is limited to examining the implementation of mobility strategies in existing urban commercial cities in Sri Lanka, particularly those that are developing, low to middle-income, medium to high-density, and located in tropical regions.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

When looking at the current state, sustainable development will become a challenge due to rapid population growth in many countries (Rai & Fulekar, 2023). As discussed above, while cities today are designed to meet human necessities, they are grappling with challenges such as population growth, traffic congestion, and air quality, which are intertwined with the transport sector across the world (Giles-Corti et al., 2020). Thus, in order to address these pressing challenges, it is necessary to implement a farsighted policy to achieve efficient transportation for city planning (UN, 2023). However, in the context of Sri Lanka, urban mobility has shown significant drawbacks in every dimension, and it is time for an in-depth examination of these challenges to overcome them effectively.

2.1 URBAN MOBILITY IN SRI LANKA

The transport sector accounts for almost one-third of the total energy consumption in Sri Lanka (Sri Lanka Sustainable Energy Authority, 2015). In this context, Sri Lankan transport sector causes environmental pollution and other severe challenges that directly impact humans, animals, and the environment (Gamage et al., 2022). Among those challenges, air pollution is a growing problem in the Sri Lankan context due to the increase in the number of motor vehicles, traffic congestion, and it causes the rapid growth in health hazards in Sri Lanka (Ileperuma, 2020). Moreover, due to the rapid increase in energy demand of the transport sector in Sri Lanka, the government needs to spend a considerable amount of money to import diesel and gasoline (Sri Lanka Sustainable Energy Authority, 2020). On the other hand, there has been rapid growth in private vehicles after 2010, when the vehicle import tax was heavily reduced and vehicle ownership was widely promoted politically, especially as an indicator of a growing economy (Samarasekara et al., 2023). Although the Sri Lankan transport sector strives for effective and efficient mobility solutions, public transport continues to decrease because of deterioration in the service quality of all transport systems (Samarasekera et al., 2023). Thus, even more than 50% of the population uses public transport within Colombo, the majority of the passengers are unsatisfied with the waiting time, safety and comfort level of a passenger while waiting for the bus (Amarasingha & Malagalage, 2023).

Moreover, as a tropical country, Sri Lanka potentially experiences a higher number of road injuries due to distraction, slower response times, and driver fatigue caused by elevated temperatures (Hsu & Rodríguez, 2024). This elevated temperature and pervasive humidity also contribute to making outdoor walking more uncomfortable in tropical countries.

However, the projects that have greater political appeal, such as expressways that serve limited user groups, particularly the corporate sector and high-income households, have been prioritized over public transport in budget allocations for nearly two decades (Samarasekara et al., 2023). Therefore, Sri Lanka is at a tipping point to invest in new projects in order to address the aforementioned challenges and drawbacks by enhancing sustainable urban mobility in city areas.

3. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This study adopts a critical literature review methodology, aiming to explore human perspectives, behaviours, and lived experiences related to urban mobility in Sri Lanka. Aligned with the study's objectives, the review focused on understanding how cultural, behavioural, and contextual factors influence the effectiveness of mobility strategies and policies in urban environments.

The literature was selected through a relevance-based and purposive approach, focusing on sources that contribute to understanding sustainable mobility, transport behaviour, and planning strategies in developing urban contexts. Key databases such as Scopus, ScienceDirect, Google Scholar, and Web of Science were used to locate relevant academic publications. The review included more than 80 scholarly sources, comprising peer-reviewed journal articles, books, and conference papers, published primarily between 2010 and 2025. These sources were critically analysed to identify recurring themes, conceptual gaps, and practical challenges, with special attention to human behaviour and urban planning frameworks applied to the Sri Lankan context. The findings support the development of context-sensitive, human-centric mobility strategies tailored for commercial cities in developing, low- to middle-income, and high-density tropical regions.

4. DESIGNING A SUSTAINABLE URBAN MOBILITY PLAN

A sustainable urban mobility plan is inherently interdisciplinary, focusing on core objectives such as economic, environmental, and social well-being (Pawlyszyn & Ryzhkova, 2021). Unlike traditional transport planning, which increases the road supply based on the demand, this multi-criteria planning approach focuses on managing mobility demand within urban areas (Torrisi et al., 2020). Additionally, it promotes shared vehicle use and active mobility options as alternatives to private vehicle use (Torrisi et al., 2020). In this context, low-carbon transport, active transport, improved public transport systems, changes in urban form (mixed land use), and advances in vehicle technology are among the top transport-related topics being discussed to achieve sustainable development goals.

However, the sustainable urban mobility policies of each city depend on several factors, including the condition of the road network, availability of public facilities, technological development, environmental conditions, lifestyles, cultural traditions, and social activities (Pawlyszyn & Ryzhkova, 2021). In addition to these practical factors, sustainable urban mobility's philosophical and theoretical foundation significantly differs from traditional approaches. According to Pawlyszyn and Ryzhkova (2021), while traditional urban mobility planning mainly focuses on traffic flow, speed, road functionality, and demand-based expansion involving only the transport sector, the philosophy of sustainable urban mobility goes beyond this by prioritizing people, viewing

streets as spaces of vitality, integrating urban form, and considering all transport modes through interdisciplinary planning teams.

Considering all these features, the human-centered approach, emphasizing social and human dimensions in planning, emerges as a central element of sustainable urban mobility (Pawlyszyn & Ryzhkova, 2021; Torrisi et al., 2020). A successful sustainable mobility plan is inherently human-centered and reflects community-specific values that embody individuals' experiences, emotions, and needs (Ahmed et al., 2019). Moreover, this approach addresses not only environmental, social, and economic aspects but is also linked to greater subjective well-being by enhancing community travel satisfaction (Mouratidis et al., 2023). As the human-centered approach becomes more prevalent in sustainable mobility planning, increased levels of public engagement are observed compared to traditional practices. In this context, it is worthwhile to examine the foundations of the human-centered approach in depth before applying it to optimize its relevance and effectiveness.

4.1 NECESSITY OF A UNIQUE DEVELOPMENT APPROACH

In evaluating philosophies within social, human, and environmental sciences, there is an emerging tendency to rethink the role of humans in modern social and ecological systems. In this context, the concept of the noosphere, which is described as the global sphere of collective wisdom, memory, culture, and human thought, has gained significant popularity (Ouyang, 2021). The modern view of the noosphere has expanded its boundaries by adding human knowledge, human behaviour, and beliefs. Nevertheless, this knowledge and these thoughts are shaped by our surrounding environment, and they influence our culture and behaviour (Ouyang, 2021). Noosphere represents one of the most critical components of the spiritual response of humanity related to global problems in society (Gubanov et al., 2019). The noosphere is especially tightly interwoven with our survival in the biosphere by generating knowledge that originates from our daily understanding of the world around us (Ouyang, 2021). Moreover, humans share a profound interconnection with the geosphere through their memories, stories, and daily experiences, giving rise to identity, values, and social responsibility (Bellaubi, 2021).

Additionally, each regional group or community develops unique ways of thinking shaped by religious, professional, regional, and national influences. These modes of thought are essential for solving global issues and preserving the Earth's civilization and humanity (Gubanov et al., 2019). Consequently, this knowledge, way of thinking, and these experiences aid in developing unique solutions at the right time and place. In Sri Lankan culture, this is referred to as *"sthanochitha prachnava" (wisdom of place),* and such solutions become more practical and accurate because they originate from an inherent sense of the time and the surrounding environment, including ecosystem, culture, and society.

Furthermore, a space becomes a meaningful place when humans interact with it, imbuing it with value through feelings, symbols, and cultural expressions. This human-geosphere connection, grounded in "soil", "society," and "soul", fosters a sense of responsibility and inspires visions of future possibilities (Bellaubi, 2021). The renowned urbanist Jane Jacobs similarly argued that the term "urban" should not be interpreted merely in physical or structural terms but as a dynamic cultural landscape shaped by strong social capital, economic vitality, and local identity (Ravazzoli & Torricelli, 2017). In the context of Sri Lanka, *"handiya"* represents the foundation of urban life. According to Perera (2016),

since the "*handiya*" is not merely a physical place but a social space defined by a set of activities and processes, it has become a complex form and illegible place for planners, policymakers, and scholars. Therefore, this situation calls for focusing on the inherent environmental, economic, and social features with Indigenous knowledge when developing effective and efficient sustainable urban mobility policies in Sri Lanka. The previous projects that failed due to a lack of consideration for these features always advocate this statement, highlighting the necessity of unique approaches to establish efficient and sustainable urban mobility in the country.

4.1.1 Implementation of a Unique Sustainable Urban Mobility Approach

In the last few decades, sufficient evidence has emerged to prove that authorities are precisely unable to read this complex form, which is shaped by a set of social, physical, and economic factors. Rathnapura's new city, which was built to avoid natural disasters, is one of the best examples of a failure in rearranging urban forms in Sri Lanka. The reason for the flood disaster problem in Rathnapura district is not only due to the location of Rathnapura city, which is positioned at the lower part of the Kalugaga Basin, but also due to factors related to the location of population settlements and their behaviour (Edirisooriya et al., 2018). In the early 1980s, the government of Sri Lanka decided to move the main functions to a higher elevation near the city's original location to avoid facing major floods every year. But the new town becomes inactive after the regular working hours of the government offices, since all city activities, except a few administration institutions, are still in the old town (Bandara et al., 2010). Further to the author, due to a lack of study regarding human behaviour, social behaviour and economic factors, the government has spent considerable cost on roads and infrastructure investments and maintenance for this rearrangement, even the original problem of flood and related hazards continues with losses recurrently recorded almost every year (J. A. C. D. Jayalath et al., 2021).

Radampola mini town development plan is further evident in the failure of attempts to replicate the city, which was implemented with huge political support (Perera, 2016). According to the author, in the newly developed city, it was strictly prohibited for betel-chewers to spit on the newly paved sidewalks or sit on the walls, and wide roads were restricted to interacting with users on both sides of the road. Certainly, these kinds of urban forms tend to fail in social, economic and environmental aspects, as the people are not welcome in their own city.

In this context, although urban forms play a major role in sustainable urban mobility, Sri Lankan authorities and policymakers have still failed to align urban form with social, cultural, and lifestyle factors to implement efficient and sustainable urban mobility. In fact, Sustainable urban mobility policies always should be shaped by the city's lifestyle, cultural traditions, and social activities (Pawlyszyn & Ryzhkova, 2021). As an example, when designing urban mobility plans and policies for Eastern countries or regions, planners have to consider more spaces for gathering people, as Eastern culture is group-oriented (collectivism), in contrast to Western culture, which is individual-centered or individualistic (Beckett, 2023). Moreover, Eastern people would see a society with interrelated members, and they attend closely to the social world, while Westerners believe that it is a collection of independent persons (Nisbett, 2004). Therefore, these cultural features need to be considered when developing cities, such as streets, because the street plays a crucial role in shaping the life of the society by involving cultural, social,

and economic functions of the city, such as walking, eating, meeting friends, and going shopping (Abdulmughni et al., 2021).

Additionally, a notable observation in Eastern culture is that people always search for relationships between things, and the world seems more complex to Eastern people (Nisbett, 2004). Further, according to the author, studies revealed that Eastern people prefer to group objectives based on thematic relationships. Moreover, as previously mentioned, they perceive the world as a network of interrelated objects and change in a single objective impacts the entire system, in contrast to the perspective of Westerners (Nisbett, 2004). This phenomenon is also focused on place attachment theory, and when rearranging urban forms, place attachment between people and places needs to be explored. Place attachment is "a set of feelings about a geographic location that emotionally binds a person to that place as a function of its role as a setting for an experience (Sun, 2020). Most studies to date advocate that place attachment encompasses place identity, including emotional meanings, rules, regulations, norms, behavioural intentions, attitudes, beliefs, knowledge, and place dependence, which describes general behaviour and functional relationships with specific settings (Koohsari et al., 2023). Furthermore, Sri Lankans exhibit strong attachment to their families, workplaces, and daily routines. As such, urban mobility planning that disregards place attachment becomes inherently more complex and less effective. In this context, as per the Eastern ways of thinking and Jane Jacobs' guidelines, Sri Lankan authorities need to focus on more performance zoning and relocate the features based on easy-to-function (looping the interrelated features) and feel comfortable and acceptable to citizens as per the place attachment theory and their way of thinking. In addition, when planning an urban city, it warrants considering cultural and Indigenous knowledge, which encompasses a wide range of categories, not limited to socio-economic context but also cultural context, experiences, and geomorphology that have been built upon and passed on from one generation to the other by word of mouth (Tran et al., 2009).

Additionally, supporting pedestrian mobility is also a key factor in sustainable urban mobility development. However, people's preferences and willingness to choose walking are different in countries, regions, personal behaviours, and due to many other reasons (Perera, 2016). Recent studies have shown that the travel behaviour of citizens is also shaped by several factors such as culture, personal habits and preferences, socioeconomic status, climate, transportation management, transportation frequency, and general safety (Chen & Felkner, 2020). Thus, Urban mobility can be defined as "a complex system of social, economic and spatial interactions" (Wang et al., 2022). Consequently, under these circumstances, although the established sustainable urban mobility development goals are similar globally, the economic, social, and environmental policies and challenges are uniquely dynamic across the regions, countries, and other local contexts (Hossain & Jami, 2023). In this context, literature findings advocate that, to overcome these challenges and promote sustainable urban mobility, understanding and addressing influence factors on social behaviours is just as important as studying the economic and environmental features of the city.

4.1.2 Integrating Human Behaviour to Promote Sustainable Urban Mobility

The concepts related to behavioural aspects, which play an important role in attempts to predict and explain human behaviour (Siqueira et al., 2022), can be applied by authorities to encourage people to adopt environmentally friendly behaviours, such as using

sustainable urban mobility options like public transport and active transportation. According to these concepts, human behaviour is consistently shaped by their attitude, values, and beliefs (Yuriev et al., 2020). In promoting sustainable urban mobility, as a form of pro-environmental behaviour, individuals' environmental concerns, beliefs, and values play a prominent role in shaping societal outcomes.

However, even though society has less environmental concern, as a dominant influencer on the beliefs and attitudes of people, cultural values can fill the gap between environmental concern and pro-environmental behaviours (Chwialkowska et al., 2020). Previous case studies have proven that people's cultural values and beliefs help to form environmental beliefs or attitudes that are directed towards environmentally friendly behaviours (Samarasinghe, 2012). The story behind Adam's Peak, located in Sri Lanka, is one of the greatest pieces of evidence for this phenomenon. Adam's Peak is a conical mountain with 2,250 meters, featuring a highly sensitive ecosystem and serving as the source of three major rivers in Sri Lanka (Raikar, 2025). According to Living Heritage Trust (2017), the inhabitants of Sri Lankans believe that this mountain is in the kingdom of God, "*Saman*", one of the four guardian deities of the island. Our ancestors held this utmost belief and respect as a cultural and emotional value to preserve this ecosystem by enhancing the pro-environmental behaviours of the people. As a result, people were scared to damage this sensitive ecosystem, and this folklore has been spread strongly as a result of a collectivist cultural background. Another notable observation is that our ancient spatial planning had been given an iconic ideology for the hard rocks by establishing religious sites at the peak (G. R. Jayalath & Jayalath, 2019). They have identified that by ensuring the longevity of the complex rock form, the ecosystem. After establishing religious sites at peaks, no human settlements were found inside and around the landscape due to the utmost respect (G. R. Jayalath & Jayalath, 2019). In light of the foregoing, social, cultural beliefs and collectivist cultural backgrounds also play a major role in planning environmentally friendly behaviour in Sri Lanka.

Moreover, these scenarios advocate that in Sri Lanka, which has an Eastern culture with collectivistic characteristics, the social network is the primary source of information in the culture (Chwialkowska et al., 2020). Therefore, as of today, social marketing has emerged as a straightforward approach to promoting pro-environmental behaviour by focusing on identified domains, including health promotion, injury or accident prevention, environmental protection, and community mobilization (Setiawan et al., 2021). In this context, when implementing sustainable urban mobility, it is important to focus not only on developing infrastructure but also on engaging social norms and characteristics to ensure success. Additionally, many studies have revealed some more factors, such as pro-environmental activism, moral norms, and social responsibility, that influence human intention and behaviour (Ali et al., 2023). Taken together, these conditions highlight that on the path toward sustainable urban mobility, social values, human perspectives, and beliefs play a major role.

4.2 UNIQUE SUSTAINABLE URBAN MOBILITY APPROACHES FOR A HOLISTIC SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

To achieve holistic and sustainable urban mobility that addresses both objective dimensions (such as environmental protection, social equity, and economic resilience) and subjective dimensions (such as mental and emotional well-being), mobility strategies must be fundamentally people-oriented. Under the concept of people-oriented

development, enhancing human life satisfaction has gradually become the goal across the globe (Li & Liu, 2021). After widespread attention has attracted on life satisfaction, recent studies identified that objective characteristics (Urban safety, natural environmental comfort, convenience of transportation, environmental health), subjective characteristics (government integrity, environmental protection, gap between rich and poor, medical level) and personal attributes (gender, age, material status, health status, income level) are the main variables which effect on life satisfaction in urban areas (Li & Liu, 2021). Considering the aforementioned areas, it is evident that numerous factors influencing human life satisfaction are intertwined with urban mobility. Additionally, a notable observation is that indices, which focus on the conditions for happiness (Chetri, 2023), are also formulated based on factors such as standard of living, health, environment, social support, healthy life expectancy, community vitality, time use, psychological well-being, good governance, and cultural resilience culture (Keiff, 2022), all of which are directly interrelated and interconnected with urban mobility. Therefore, to develop unique development approaches that address holistic sustainable development, it is essential to focus not only on environmental features and the country's economic stability but also on social characteristics such as gender, age distribution, income levels, health status, values, beliefs, and more.

Consequently, literature findings highlight that since each city has inherent social, cultural, and environmental characteristics, solutions tailored to these unique features are more effective and efficient in addressing the challenges of urban mobility. Moreover, as sustainable urban mobility plays a major role in life satisfaction, varying based on social and environmental factors, it is essential to establish unique sustainable urban mobility approaches shaped by social and anthropological characteristics in the context of Sri Lanka.

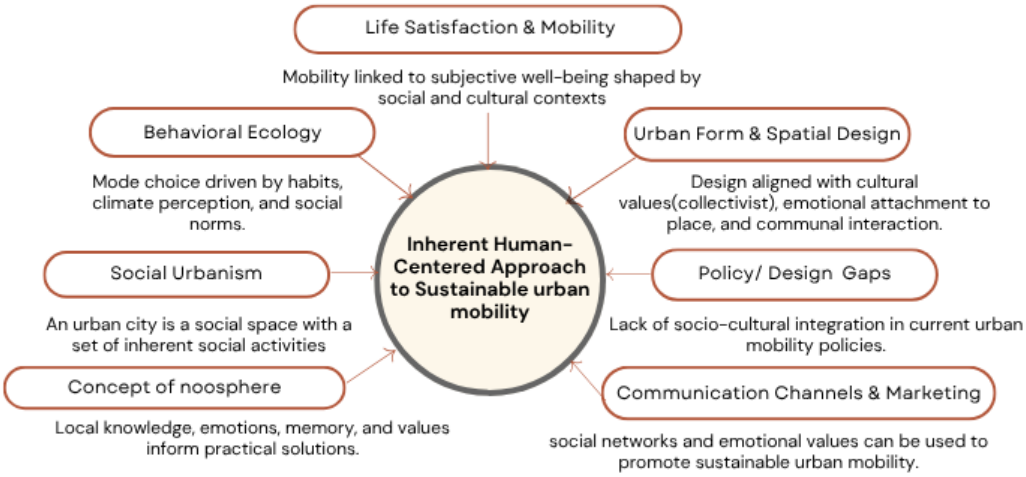

Figure 1: Conceptual framework highlighting the necessity of an inherent human-centered approach to sustainable urban mobility

In this context, even recent global studies have identified several key strategies for achieving sustainable urban mobility, including changes in urban form, investment in active transport infrastructure, enhancement of public transportation and shared mobility, policy reform, and the integration of advanced technologies, such strategies must be carefully contextualized to address the specific socio-cultural, environmental, and behavioural realities of Sri Lanka. According to literature findings, urban form

transformations should emphasize performance zoning, communal spaces, and locally grounded solutions aligned with Sri Lankan socio-cultural values and behaviours. Additionally, to promote active and public mobility, facilities must suit the tropical climate, support social interaction, ensure comfort, and use social networks for behaviour change, to address both challenges and opportunities to enhance sustainable urban mobility in Sri Lanka. Lastly, policy and technological innovations should be inclusive and avoid rigid rules that weaken social cohesion or alienate citizens. However, beyond these measures, there is a critical need to deeply explore transitional dynamics and identify policies and strategies best suited to the Sri Lankan context. This will foster a meaningful shift from 'planning for people' to 'people for planning,' encouraging bottom-up, participatory policy development. To achieve this, the integration of multidisciplinary expertise, community feedback and opinions, and indigenous knowledge is essential to ensure contextual relevance and effectiveness. By following these processes, policymakers can gain valuable insights for developing holistic, sustainable urban mobility solutions that address social, environmental, and economic dimensions. Simultaneously, this evolving field offers academics rich opportunities for in-depth research and knowledge generation.

5. CONCLUSION

Urban mobility in Sri Lanka faces significant challenges due to the infrastructure-focused planning that disregards human-centered development. The study highlights the failures of past urban projects that neglected socio-cultural dynamics, environmental features, resulting in inefficiencies and public dissatisfaction. By integrating environmental considerations, economic factors, human thinking patterns, social norms, and cultural traditions, alongside multidisciplinary approaches and indigenous knowledge, this research demonstrates that urban mobility can effectively address the environmental, social, economic, and mental well-being of communities. Key recommendations include enhancing public transportation and active mobility, reforming urban forms, adopting inclusive policy and technological innovations, and promoting sustainable travel modes. These strategies must be carefully contextualized to reflect Sri Lanka's indigenous knowledge, unique cultural values (collectivism), emotional attachments (sense of place and beliefs), social behaviours, and environmental conditions. In conclusion, Sustainable mobility planning should transition towards a localized, participatory approach, shifting from "planning for people" to "people for planning", to enhance quality of life and ensure the optimal performance of urban mobility strategies that support holistic sustainable development.

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