ABSTRACT

The fundamental premise of Open Educational Resources (OERs) is strongly based on Article 26 of the UN's Universal Declaration on Human Rights, which proclaims, "Everyone has the right to education" (UN General Assembly, 1948). This belief advocates for the notion that knowledge should be available to everyone, breaking down barriers and fostering global educational opportunities. The increasing prevalence of digital technologies and the growing focus on enhancing educational accessibility have led to the emergence of OERs as an important part of modern education systems. OER directly align with SDG 4, offering a sustainable, inclusive and innovative solution to the academic community by expanding the scope of materials accessible for teaching and learning purposes (UNESCO, 2019). The adoption of OER has become one of the most prominent trends in higher education today. This open framework not only facilitates the global spread of high-quality educational content but also promotes the principles of academic freedom, as teachers are not limited by predetermined resources. Therefore, OERs have the potential to democratise knowledge, foster inclusivity, and make high-quality education affordable, accessible and adaptable. Hence for OER to have a significant and profound effect, it is crucial for teachers to not just utilise these materials but also actively contribute to their creation and refinement. By adopting OER into the core of teaching and learning, teachers and institutions have the potential to foster a more collaborative, inclusive, and adaptable educational environment. In essence, studying the attitude and adoption of OER among teachers in higher education provides valuable insights into their openness to embrace innovative approaches in teaching and also paves the way for more informed, effective, and inclusive future strategies for OER adoption.

Aligned with the aforementioned context, the present research focused on the attitude and adoption of OER among teachers in higher educational institutes, with a specific emphasis in the North-East region of India. The research undertaken for this thesis is systematically organised into six chapters. An overview of the contents and focus of each chapter is highlighted below:

The first chapter briefly explained the background of the study, including the origins of OER and, more specifically, the evolution of OER within the educational landscape of India. The chapter also included a summary of global and national efforts relating to OER. Further, the chapter provides a detailed explanation of the concept of OER and its

unique attributes, as well as an overview of the diverse international and national initiatives related to OER. This chapter sets the stage by conceptualising OER adoption and outlining the potential benefits of OER adoption and the challenges associated with OER adoption. It offers an overview of the Creative Commons (CC) license concept and the factors facilitating OER adoption followed by a theoretical framework and conceptual framework of the study. Special emphasis is given to the significance and rationale of the study, statement of the problem, research questions, objectives and hypotheses of the study, operational definitions of the terms used and delimitations of the research.

The second chapter provides an extensive review of the existing literature on OER in both international and Indian contexts. The chapter focuses on seven main categories of studies: studies related to attitude and perception towards OER, awareness about OER and CC Licences, adoption of OER, factors facilitating OER adoption, demographic variables affecting OER adoption, benefits of OER in teaching-learning process and professional development and challenges towards OER adoption. Lastly, the chapter elucidates the research gaps in the available literature, particularly in the context of North-East India.

In the third chapter of the thesis, the researcher unfolds the methodological underpinnings of this research. The chapter presents an overview of the geographical area in which the study is conducted. A mixed-method research design with a convergent parallel approach is employed to collect both qualitative and quantitative data to accomplish the objectives of the study. For this, the descriptive survey research method is used. The total population of the study consists of 442 teachers from the Humanities and Social Science disciplines across all 8 central universities of North-East India. A concurrent nested mixed sampling technique is followed. Through the multistage sampling technique, the study selected 221 teachers for the quantitative phase and through convenient sampling, 16 OER users and OER creators were interviewed for the qualitative phase of the research. A detailed explanation of the tools developed is presented in this chapter. It also explains the procedure of data collection and a concise depiction of the statistical techniques used for qualitative and quantitative data analysis. The chapter also presents a note on trustworthiness and objectivity of qualitative data and ethical considerations.

The fourth chapter of the thesis focuses on the analysis and interpretation of the research data. The study's findings indicate that most teachers in higher educational institutes in North-East India hold a moderate attitude towards the adoption of OER. The findings of the study indicate that there is no statistically significant difference in the attitudes of teachers towards the adoption of OER regardless of factors such as gender, teaching experience, and academic rank. The findings suggest that most teachers have engaged in the practices of retaining, reusing, revising, remixing, and redistributing OER to varying degrees. However, a limited number of teachers have created OER, primarily in the form of scholarly journals, video content, modules, and lessons which are published mostly under CC BY-NC-SA. The most popular CC license among teachers is CC BY-NC-ND, while the least popular is CC BY-ND. The result also verifies that most teachers have access to at least some of the basic infrastructure resources required for OER adoption and that educational institutions have clear IPR and copyright policies, yet many teachers believe their institutions do not maintain copyright rights to the works they create and distribute. The survey found that teachers have a moderate level of OER awareness, capacity, availability, and volition. The study shows that teachers' attitude towards the adoption of OER are unrelated to infrastructure and permission. There is a moderately significant positive correlation between teachers' awareness, capacity, availability, and volition and their attitude towards the adoption of OER. The study discovers that OER adoption provides stakeholders with a wide range of educational resources, allows content personalization, promotes active and self-directed learning, expands knowledge paradigms, fosters a culture of knowledge sharing, is cost-effective, increases collaboration and innovation, and improves teachers' pedagogy. This study outlines several challenges, including technological, informational, institutional, academic, ethical, and miscellaneous challenges, which must be addressed to ensure the successful adoption of OER.

In the fifth chapter, the researcher interprets and discusses the findings in light of existing literature. This chapter offers an explanation of the study's findings with previous studies as well as the researcher's own justification.

Lastly, the sixth chapter concludes the study by summarizing key insights and presenting practical recommendations for teachers, educational administrators and policy makers, and other stakeholders in general. The chapter also proposes potential areas for future

research that can contribute to a deeper understanding and success of OER adoption in higher education in North-East India.