



Students' Perception of Online Education During the Covid- 19 Pandemic: an Analysis of Students of Higher Education Sector in Sri Lanka

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STUDENTS' PERCEPTION OF ONLINE EDUCATION DURING THE COVID- 19 PANDEMIC: AN ANALYSIS OF STUDENTS OF HIGHER EDUCATION SECTOR IN SRI LANKA

INTRODUCTION

Coronavirus – 2019, also known as Covid – 19, is a novel disease, and the virus was identified in Wuhan, China in 2019, December. Now the virus has spread all across the globe and was characterized as a pandemic by the World Health Organization in March 2020. Especially the Covid – 19 pandemic interrupted the higher education sector, and globally over 1.2 billion schools, higher education sector were closed because of this pandemic. Approximately 825 million learners are affected due to this pandemic. UNESCO recommended using the distance learning (online education) method to decrease the impact on all schools and higher education sectors. (United nation, 2020)

Online education is also known as virtual learning as well as e-learning. It is the new method of learning through the internet, and it helps us overcome this pandemic (Education.com, 2021). Currently, online education is a very new method for Sri Lankans. As a developing country, this phenomenon is not familiar to Sri Lankans because we have been used to physical education for a long time. In this pandemic, the only solution we have is modern technology and online education. The success of online education depends on many elements such as accessibility, various teaching methods, flexibility, health issues, interaction, etc. (Hongjiang & Omamerhi, 2007).

Many kinds of researches have shown the impact of online education (Mohamed,2020). After one and a half years of online education and still counting, I decided to analyze Sri Lankan students' perception of online education. Students' perception is more important than everything else in this academic life. They are the persons who face this reality, and their insight is the main thing in this pandemic.

The main objective of this research is to analyze the students' perception of online education during the Covid – 19 pandemic. The students of the higher education sector have many challenges due to online education. Like, academic workload, personal relationships, health issues, economic problems, and technology issues (Roudlotun & Muhammad, 2021). These challenges or issues often become stressful among students. Therefore, this study explores students' perception of online education during the Covid – 19 pandemic. This perception will benefit educators, lecturers, and higher education sectors to improve the quality of online education.

METHODOLOGY

This study applied quantitative methodology and attempted to identify and analyze students' perception of online education during the Covid - 19 pandemic. The respondents are students who are studying in the higher education sector in Sri Lanka.

Data were collected from both primary and secondary sources. The secondary data were collected from journal articles and websites. The primary data were gathered by a google questionnaire. It is the main source of data gathering in this research.

On March 20, 2020, the Sri Lankan government decided to close all higher education sectors in Sri Lanka for the first time. And as a result, every higher education sector is required to conduct online education. Therefore, a questionnaire was developed, and it was implemented as an

online google survey. Every student was allowed to complete the questionnaire according to their experience and opinions. This questionnaire was developed into two main parts with 16 – 18 questions based on student’s answers. In the first part of the survey, students are asked to enter their basic and academic details such as “age, gender, higher education institutes, etc., technology questions and some common questions about online education. The last question in the first part was very important and, depending on the student's answer, it will continue to the second part of the survey.

In the second part of the questionnaire, there are three parts as follows,

- Survey of students who enjoy online education
- Survey of students who don’t enjoy online education
- Survey of students who have no idea about online education.

116 students across Sri Lanka from 15 different state universities responded to this questionnaire. According to the respondents’ answers, 57 students are doing bachelor’s, 28 students are doing masters, 26 students are doing post-graduate diplomas, 9 MPhil students, and 2 PhD students.

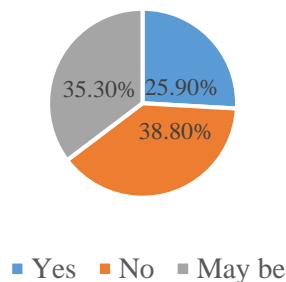
Data were analyzed with the statistic method. The respondents' answers in a google survey were analyzed to obtain the data needed and know the students’ perception of online education during the Covid - 19 pandemic.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

The study of students’ perception of online education during the Covid – 19 pandemic was carried out in the higher education sector in Sri Lanka. Before the pandemic occurred in Sri Lanka, almost all university lectures were conducted physically. But during the pandemic, every Sri Lanka higher education institute conducted online education. In conducting online education in Sri Lanka, the platforms used were Zoom, Microsoft teams, University LMS, and other online sources.

The survey result of the questionnaire was given through a google form and got responses from 116 students in higher education sectors in Sri Lanka. The respondents are from the University of Colombo, University of Kelaniya, University of Moratuwa, Wayamba University, National College of Education, Open University, and other higher education sectors. Most of the students' specialized areas are IT, English, Medicine, Engineering, Management, Arts field and so on. Among the 116 students, 26.7% are males, and 73.3% are females. The highest number of students who answered the questionnaire is under the 20 – 30 age category, and it's 93.1% of percentage. A total number of 57 (49.16%) students are doing bachelor’s, 28 (24.1%) students are doing masters, and 26 (22.4%) students are doing post-graduate diplomas. According to the survey feedback, 97.4% students have online education during the pandemic. 59.5% students have both practical, and theory and 39.7% students only have theory classes.

Figure 1. The result of survey about students who enjoying online education.



The pie chart in figure 1 is about students’ perception of enjoying online education, and it showed 38.8% of students who said: “No” (students who don’t enjoy online education), 35.3% of students who said “Maybe” (students who neither like nor dislike online education) and 25.90% of students who said, “Yes” (students who enjoy online education).

Let's see the feedback of 30 students who enjoy online education. Among these students, 93.3% of percentage said that online education is effective. Most students say they enjoy online education because they can study from anywhere, and it shows in the chart as 83.3%. The second reason is the comfort of learning from home and being with family members, and it is shown as 63.3% of the percentage. Self-learning and the ability to concentrate and saving on travelling and other expenses are the thirds reason, and this feedback is equally the same as 60%. Flexibility and reduced academic pressure are the fourth reason, indicating a 50% percentage in the survey. Online education is a rich experience for every student, giving flexibility, studying from anywhere, comfort learning, and easiness. Students feel relaxed, happy, motivated, and no more tension while learning online. That's why 25.9% love online education.

38.8% students think that online education is not enjoyable because they have difficulties understanding the lecture. It is common feedback and the main issue that students are facing in any study field. In this survey its shown as 46.7% percentage of students who have this issue. Listening to lecturers in front of a screen and doing practical using online are the major problems that mainly affect students. Compare to physical classes, online education is more difficult to teach to the point. When it comes to physical classes, lecturers hand over the materials to students, and the lecturer is physically present. Miscommunication and less focus may happen during online education, which causes difficulties in understanding the lecture. Sometimes they face connection interruption in the middle of the lecture. If this happens, it will ruin their entire lecture. Due to this trouble, students face difficulties understanding the lessons.

Another reason is that it is less interesting and makes students bored because of a lack of interaction with friends and lecturers. They are tired of staring at electronic devices every day from morning to evening. Totally 45 students prove that they have these three reasons, and that's why they are not enjoying online education. Sometimes this is difficult for them to focus without interaction. Furthermore, online education is more complicated because of the workload from the lecturers, and students get additional work such as creating and send photos, videos, download materials, and uploading tasks that need a long time process (Roudlotun & Muhammad, 2021).

Moreover, many students are not in a good mood, and sometimes they have different behaviour patterns like unhappy (64.4%), demotivate (24.4%), angry & frustrated (24.4%), tense by all day *20%), and complaining to others (13.3%). Among all this feedback, some students experience some symptoms like headache (64.4%), aches and pains (44.4%), sleeping problems (35.6%), depression (46.7%), memory affected (44.4), change of eating habits (46.7%), vomiting (4.4%) and sweating (8.9%). According to these assumptions, we can conclude that students may not enjoy online education. All these feelings, behaviour patterns, and symptoms are similar to stress conditions. According to the article of Mental Health Foundation, they show stress signs as follows. If you are stressed, you may feel anxious, afraid, angry, sad, irritable, frustrated, depressed. These feelings can sometimes come as physical symptoms. Sleep problems, headaches, aches and pains, sweating, memory effects, and eating habits are body reactions and behaviour patterns you may experience when stressed (Mental health foundation, 2021). Therefore, most of the students have stress signs and symptoms.

The 35.3% of the students who have given feedback as 'Maybe' might not have a clear idea of online education. We can assume that they neither like nor dislike online education.

This research feedback gives three main perceptions of students during the Covid – 19 pandemic. First, some students enjoy online education because it's a rich experience for every student, giving flexibility, studying anywhere, comfort learning, and easiness. Moreover, it can increase the student's responsibility, creativity, self-confidence, and independence. Secondly, some students don't enjoy online education because it has caused many health problems for them.

Mainly, they are stressed throughout the online classes. Thirdly, some students have no clear idea about online education because they neither like nor dislike it.

CONCLUSION

This research result demonstrates that students have both positive and negative perceptions of online education. Although online education is a valuable process, it can be more stressful for some students. This research can be used as a reference for educators, lecturers, and institutions to improve quality of the online education and minimize health problems among students.

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APPENDIX 1

Survey Questionnaire

Students' perception on online education during the Covid - 19 pandemic: An analysis of students of higher education sector in Sri Lanka.

Dear Sir/ Madam,

I am Nishadi Galgewela and Currently, I am reading Masters of Performing Arts in Bangalore University, India. Related to my master thesis I am doing this survey.

This Questionnaire is aimed at finding student's perception on online education during the Covid -19 pandemic. This questionnaire only have two parts with 16 - 18 questions based on your answers. It will only take 5 minutes to fill this survey. I would be grateful if you give your valuable time for this survey. Your answer will remain confidential and they will be only used for the purpose of this research.

You can start with the survey by clicking on the next button below. Thank you for your cooperation.

* Required

Part A

01. Age *

20 - 30

30 - 40

40 - 50

Above 50

02. Gender *

Male

Female

03. Name of the Higher Education Institute you are studying? *

04. Study Level *

Bachelors

Masters

Post graduate diploma

Mphil

PhD

Post Doctorate

05. Specialized Area *

06. Have you done online education during the Covid - 19 pandemic? *

Yes

No

07. What is the technology use by your higher education institute for online education? *

Zoom

Microsoft Teams

University LMS

Other: _____

08. What is the electronic device you use for online learning? *

Desktop Computer

Laptop

Tablet

Smart Phone

09. What kind of internet connection do you have? *

Not Good

Good

Better

Best

10. What kind of online classes do you have? *

- Theory
- Practical
- Both
- No classes taken

11. Are you enjoying online education? *

- Yes *Continue to Survey of students who enjoy online education*
- No *Continue to Survey of Students who don't enjoy online education.*
- May be *Continue to Survey of Students who have no idea about online education.*

Survey of students who enjoy online education.

01. Do you find online education effective during this pandemic? *

Yes

No

02. Why are you enjoying learning online? You can choose more than one answer. *

Flexibility

Study from any where

Comfort learning from home and being with family around

Self - learning and ability to concentrate

Saving on travel and other expenses

Rich learning experience (New learning method and new technology)

Improving communication skills

Reduced academic pressureOthers

Others

03. If you select "Others", please write your answer.

04. What are your feelings and behavior patterns after attending Online classes?You can choose more than one. *

Happy

Relax

Motivate

Others

05. If you select "Others", please write your answer.

Survey of Students who don't enjoy online education.

01. Do you find online education effective during pandemic? *

Yes

No

02. Why are you not enjoying learning online? You can choose more than one answer. *

- Difficulties of Understanding
- Lack of relationship with friends
- Lack of relationship with lecturers
- New technology

- Electronic Device
- Connection Interrupt
- Technology problems

- University environment needed
- Others

03. If you select "Others", please write your answer.

04. What are your feelings and behavior patterns after attending Online classes? You can choose more than one. *

- Unhappy
- Demotivate
- Tense by all day

- Frustrated and angry
- Depressed

- Find your self complaining to others
- Sleeping problems

Others

05. If you select "Others", please write your answer.

06. Do you experience one or more of these symptoms during online education? You can choose more than one. *

Headache

Vomiting

Aches and pains

Memory effected

Change of eating habits

Sweating

Others

07. If you select "Others", please write your answer.

Survey of Students who have no idea about online education.

01. Do you find online education effective during pandemic? *

Mark only one oval.

- Yes
- No
- No idea

02. Why you don't have any idea about online education? You can choose more than one. *

- Boring
- Difficulties of Understanding
- Lack of interaction with friends and lectures
- New technology
- Connection interrupt
- Others

03. If you select "Others", please write your answer.

04. What are your feelings and behavior patterns after attending online classes? You can choose more than one. *

- Happy
- Unhappy/ Sad
- Relax

- Motivates
- Boring
- Demotivates
- Frustrated, Irritable and angry
- Depressed
- Finding yourself complaining to others
- Sleeping problems
- No idea
- Others

05. If you select "Others", please write your answer.

06. Do you experience one or more of these symptoms during online education? You can choose more than one. *

- Headache
- Vomiting
- Aches and pains
- Memory effected
- Change of eating habits
- Sweating
- Others

07. If you select "Others", please write your answer.
