



PERCEPTIONS OF UNDERGRADUATES ON ONLINE TEACHING DURING THE COVID 19 PANDEMIC

A.M.S.M.R.S.G. Bandara *

Department of Agribusiness Management, Sabaragamuwa University of Sri Lanka

INTRODUCTION

Higher education institutions and universities in Sri Lanka were closed for nearly two years due to the COVID-19 pandemic. To continue academic activities, universities opted to teach online. Since online teaching is novel, it is important to identify the gaps and student perceptions of it to minimize undesirable features while implementing good features. According to Pei & Wu (2019), there are no differences in examination outcomes for online and offline teaching. But Doherty et al. (2018) states that online teaching is confronted with barriers such as time constraints, a lack of technical know-how, poor infrastructure, and negative attitudes. Although online teaching is associated with barriers, students have been able to continue their academic activities from different locations without travelling for their studies. Online teaching should not be limited to conventional lectures through zoom or Microsoft teams. Instead, it should border across different learning styles, such as visual, auditory, writing, and kinaesthetic, so that it has more impact and is effective (Wilson, Smith, & Lachman, 2021). Keen attention should be paid to the quality of the teaching materials produced and the methods of teaching as these sources recompense the students' lack of on-ground exposure (Longhurst, et al., 2020).

METHODOLOGY

This study was conducted in the first quarter of 2022 with 64 second-year students of the BSc in Food Business Management degree program. The batch of students was purposively selected for the study because it had participated only in online teaching since their enrolment in academic activities. Data was gathered through a self-administered online questionnaire while the secondary data for the study was gathered using published verified journal papers. Data was analysed using descriptive statistics with Microsoft Excel 2016.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Uses of online teaching and learning

According to the results, only 12.5% of students prefer online teaching while 62.5% prefer a combination of the online and in-person teaching method. Students were familiar with online teaching platforms such as Zoom, Moodle, You Tube, Padlet, and Google docs. Figure 01 denotes the mean scores of student preferences on online teaching platforms.

Table 01: Mean scores of student preferences on online teaching platforms

Teaching Platform	Mean Score	Preference
Zoom	4.73015873	Very High
Moodle	4.34375	High
You Tube	4.203125	High
Padlet	3.862745098	High
Perusal	2.851851852	Moderate
Google Docs	3.85	High
MS Teams	3.209302326	Moderate



Benefits of online teaching and learning

Only 29.7% of the individuals indicated they preferred online examinations. According to the results, the benefits of online teaching, as perceived by the undergraduates, included being able to learn at their own pace, saving time and costs, having flexibility, requiring no travel, and being comfortable raising questions. Figure 01 denotes the benefits of online learning.

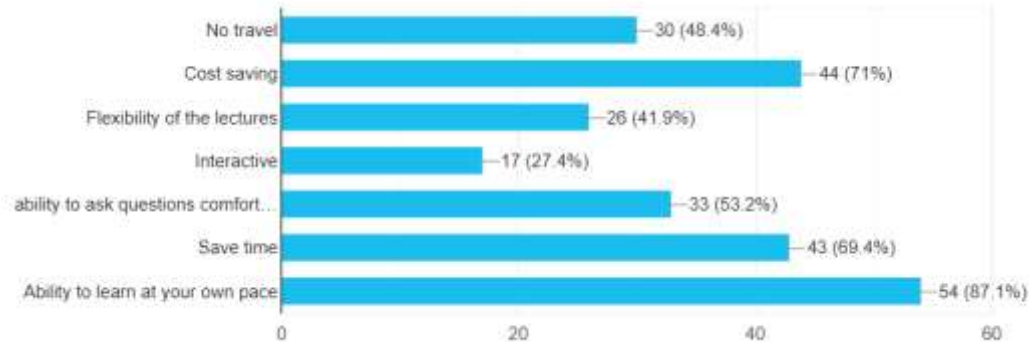


Figure 1 Benefits of online learning

Barriers to online teaching and learning

The main barriers students indicated they faced during online teaching sessions were poor internet connections, the timing of examinations, family distractions, difficulty of doing group work, a lack of motivation and technological devices, anxiety, and a lack of space in their homes. Figure 02 denotes the barriers of online learning.

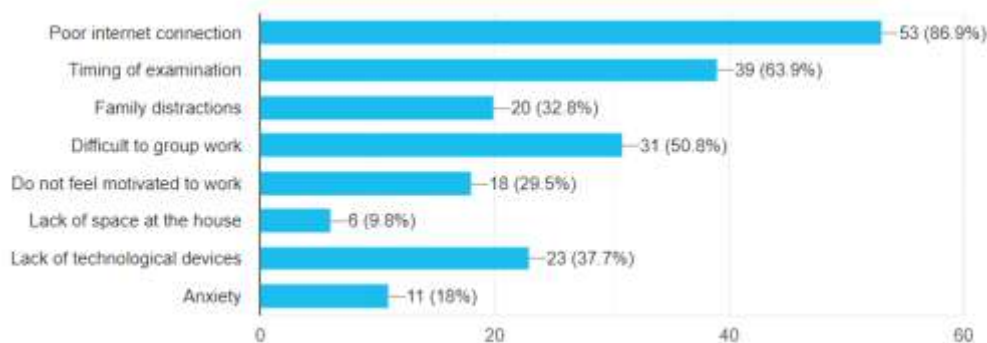


Figure 2 Barriers of online learning

Experience with online teaching and learning

Students were asked to rate the following statements on the experience of online teaching and learning (Table 02).

Table 02: Experience of online teaching and learning

Statement	Mean score	Preference
Teaching/learning is often stimulating and motivating	3.933333333	High
I find it easy to engage in the lesson	3.666666667	High
I feel able to ask the questions I want	3.883333333	High
I enjoy online learning	3.433333333	Moderate
I would like the online teaching to be more interactive	3.474576271	Moderate
I feel that online learning is as effective as face-to-face learning	3	Moderate
I prefer online learning to face-to-face learning	3.152542373	Moderate
The teachers are well prepared for the online teaching session	4.2	High
I feel that I am being well prepared for my profession	3.416666667	Moderate



CONCLUSIONS/RECOMMENDATIONS

To improve the efficiency of teaching online and to move forward with trending MOOCs/self-paced courses, this study suggests using a combination of online and in-person teaching sessions so that students can learn theories at home and while receiving hands-on experience at the university. Further, incorporating problem-based/ team-based/ flipped classrooms in online teaching will direct undergraduates towards self-paced learning. Moreover, the universities can accommodate students with poor signal connections at the hostels while other students can learn from home. Students can also be called in-person for examinations, which will relieve unnecessary stress and issues related to online examinations. These suggestions will minimize the negative aspects of online teaching while maximizing its positives.

REFERENCES

Doherty, D. O., Dromey, M., Lougheed, J., Hannigan, A., Last, J., & McGrath, D. (2018). Barriers and solutions to online learning in medical education – an integrative review. *BMC Medical Education*.

Longhurst, G. J., Stone, D. M., Duloher, K., Scully, D., Campbell, T., & Smith, C. F. (2020). Strength, Weakness, Opportunity, Threat (SWOT) Analysis of the Adaptations to Anatomical Education in the United Kingdom and Republic of Ireland in Response to the Covid-19 Pandemic. *American Association for Anatomy*.

Pei, L., & Wu, H. (2019). Does online learning work better than offline learning in undergraduate medical education? A systematic review and meta-analysis. *Medical Education Online*, 1087-2981.

Wilson, T. D., Smith, C. F., & Lachman, N. (2021). Going Virtual to Support Anatomy Education: A STOP GAP in the Midst of the Covid-19 Pandemic. *American Association for Anatomy*.