
Effect of COVID-19 on the Education of School Children: A Case Study in Mulatiyana Educational Zone, Sri Lanka

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With the closure of school doors, school children from privileged backgrounds ought to find alternative learning opportunities during the COVID-19 pandemic situation. The lockdown in COVID-19 catastrophe has interrupted the conventional learning in the education system in Sri Lanka. While the government has made concerted efforts to keep learning continuity, students have to depend on their own resources to continue learning remotely. Even though free education assures equal rights to all students, the current crisis seems to cause inequalities in the education system. Therefore, the present study aimed to examine the influence of COVID-19 pandemic on the education of Advanced Level students and ascertain the barriers on their online-education system. Data were primarily collected through a questionnaire survey conducted by the purposively selected 84 Engineering Technology students where their subjects are mainly focused on practical components. The study was conducted in the Mulatiyana Education zone in Sri Lanka as it is an area of limited resources towards online learning. Research findings indicated that only 50% of the students have mobile phones ($\mu=1.56$, $SD=0.499$) and 44% have personal computers ($\mu=1.50$, $SD=0.503$) for online access. 88% of the students have engaged with different learning methods while 77% have used online learning as their learning method during the outbreak ($w=4.495$, $p=0.000$). Among the students, 48% showed their higher consent to use mobile apps. Most of the students (39%) who engaged in online learning have the capacity to learn 2 hours per day. Results revealed that 59% of the students have satisfied with the online learning. Key barriers identified for the students during online learning were lack of devices ($\mu=1.66$, $SD=0.434$), network issues ($\mu=1.75$, $SD=0.434$), lack of digital skill ($\mu=1.75$, $SD=0.438$) and undesirable weather conditions ($\mu=1.90$, $SD=0.307$). Therefore, identified problems must be taken into the consideration in designing future online classes in an effective manner.

Keywords: Advanced level students, COVID-19, Online learning