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Background: With the COVID-19 pandemic disrupting the education sector, globally, online learning has gained popularity to continue the education process both amongst students and teachers. Undergraduates in Sri Lanka have embraced the move with mixed reactions. Whilst some are economically stable to pursue their education using technology, there is a segment of the undergraduate population that is unable to afford devices due to their economic status. The aim of this study was to assess students' attitudes towards online learning as well as their ability to engage with and adapt to the new normal educational developments that have been imposed on them.

Methods: A descriptive, cross-sectional, correlational web-based survey design was used to recruit eligible participants from the University of Sri Jayewardenepura, which is a state university situated in the Western province in Sri Lanka. A questionnaire with open ended questions was emailed to all the participants to collect data.

Results: The total population of 4761 Management Faculty students belonging to a plethora of management disciplines consented to take part in this online survey. This study revealed a significant correlation between undergraduates' attitudes and online learning behaviour. In addition to that, it showed that their gender, living area, university level, prior experience and devices available have significant impact on the effectiveness of their online learning. The main obstacles to online learning were identified as unstable Internet connection,

the lack of motivation, the lack of instructions and the lack of devices.

Conclusion: Most undergraduates had mixed feelings about online learning whilst being supportive of conventional classroom teaching and learning. Additionally, they were pessimistic about their chances of learning professional skills and core competencies online. Their inability to have uninterrupted access to data and their helplessness in being unable to purchase electronic devices, thus affecting their engagement ability, were seen as major impediments to the success of online learning. More research is required to determine whether undergraduates, especially in developing countries such as Sri Lanka, are ready and able to make greater use of online education in order to access high-quality learning opportunities.

Keywords: online education, undergraduate engagement, covid-19 pandemic.

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I. INTRODUCTION

The outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic brought schools and higher educational institutions to a grinding halt, rendering academic calendars ineffective. It is in this backdrop that online learning emerged as a saviour to pick up the broken threads of education and enable students and undergraduates to pursue their education to some extent and many educational administrators are pushing online education as the only solution in these uncertain times. In the scenario of undergraduates being unable to attend lectures at

their institutes of higher learning, and the COVID-19 pandemic causing challenging changes to the lifestyles of people, a 'new normal' to conduct lectures, came into being where there was a shift from face-to-face lecture delivery to the online mode of instruction. In the arena of education and higher education, the 'lecturing mode' pendulum swung from face-to-face delivery to the online platform (Wijewardene, 2021).

In Sri Lanka many undergraduates who enter state universities are able to continue their higher education due to the free education system, and the University of Sri Jayewardenepura is no exception. Being termed as the local university which has the highest intake of Management undergraduates, the Faculty of Management Studies and Commerce, of the University of Sri Jayewardenepura, which is the largest management faculty in Sri Lanka, <https://mgt.sjp.ac.lk/student/international-affairs/undergraduate/> has broadened its horizons and widened its scope to providing online education to undergraduates who are the future business leaders of the country.

Thus, it is necessary for these undergraduates to be able to benefit from the online methodologies adopted by the faculty to broaden their knowledge horizons. Yet the gap between those who can afford and those who cannot afford devices to engage in online learning is quite considerable and this study brings out this aspect through the data collected. However, the reality is that, even as we appreciate the role conventional classrooms have played in creating a sense of equality among students, the pandemic urges us to re-evaluate some of our assumptions whilst adapting to the new normal brought about by the COVID-19 pandemic.

Sri Lanka has enjoyed a free public education system encompassing the entire education span from primary up to tertiary levels. This has provided access and created educational opportunities for many students from economically marginalized families by enabling them to pursue their education. At the heart of this system is the traditional classroom which, despite the many institutional and regional

disparities, has functioned as a leveler to some extent, bringing students from different economic and cultural backgrounds to a common, shared space (ft.lk, 2020). However, the COVID-19 pandemic, has shifted the teaching and learning venue from classroom to home, whilst switching the learning mode from face-to-face to the online platform. Whilst this could be seen as a more convenient plan for learning for the main stakeholders which include teacher and student, it brings with it a whole new set of problems hitherto not encountered.

Whilst many have hailed the benefits of online learning, it has its downside as well. Online teaching eliminates those students who do not have the economic wherewithal to purchase the technology tools required to follow online classes and to connect with their peers and teachers. The COVID-19 pandemic has deprived many of their income due to the numerous lockdowns and many low-income families are eking out a hand-to-mouth existence. Similarly, many working-class families are struggling to find money to feed themselves. In this backdrop, it is questionable as to whether these students can have access to online tools to pursue their education.

Many homes from where our students come do not have electricity and uninterrupted internet connectivity, and their monthly income does not permit them with the ability to purchase internet data for their children's education which is an additional responsibility and burden on the family income. How many of our students have a learning environment within their homes that is free of disturbance from other members of their families? (ft.lk, 2020). Thus in the process of shifting to online education, these factors and realities need to be considered.

No online platform can ever replace the vibrant classroom dynamic. The classroom is not just a space for learning, but it is also a site where students interact with one another across the social and cultural boundaries that separate them and build lasting bonds, friendships, and solidarities (ft.lk, 2020). Additionally, the measures taken today to address the challenges

caused by the pandemic should in no way damage this shared physical space in universities in Sri Lanka that have nourished their ideas and conversations over the decades.

While the COVID-19 pandemic is an unusual impetus for encouraging online learning, it is still uncertain if students believe they are ready and willing to use online education to access high-quality learning, and whether their attitudes, expectations, behaviors, and, as a result, the general themes of online education will change [Watkins et al (2004) in Muflih *et al*, (2021)]. Engagement is a very important activity connected to student learning, especially in online courses. (Martin 2018). Student engagement in online learning is very important as online learners have fewer opportunities to be engaged with their institution of higher learning. Hence, it is essential to create multiple opportunities for student engagement in the online environment. The need for engagement has resulted in the development of guidelines for designing effective online courses (Roblyer and Ekhaml, 2000).

The present study investigated the correlation that exists between the undergraduates online learning engagement and the factors associated with their future learning engagement.

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

The temporary closure of educational institutions during the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic has abruptly transformed the global education landscape in favor of distance learning (United Nations Policy Brief, 2020). This radical shift saw a surge in the use of various digital platforms and applications, including digital learning management systems, collaboration platforms for live-video communication, massive open online courses (MOOCs), and tools for creating learning content (UNESCO. Distance Learning Solutions, 2020).

In Sri Lanka, access to higher education is already very limited (Hayashi *et al*, 2020). The government ordered all educational institutions closed from 12 March 2020, including higher education institutions - 15 state universities and about 40 other state and nonstate

tertiary education institutions. Such disruptions in tertiary education by COVID-19 could delay the creation of the leaders and skilled workforce the country needs to successfully make the transition to upper-middle-income status (Hayashi *et al*, 2020).

The glaring inequalities among students, now more visible as we move to online education platforms, should propel us into reflecting on the ways in which student participation in the traditional classroom even under normal circumstances is shaped by the socio-economic conditions of their homes and other social spaces they occupy (ft.lk, 2020). Their participation depends on nutrition they can afford, the time and space available for them in their homes to read, do their homework, relax and engage in recreational activities, the convenience created by transportation between home and school and their place in a society divided along lines of caste, class, gender and ethnicity.

Thus, the pandemic makes it even more evident that free education has had its wings clipped as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic hurricane that has wreaked havoc in the education sector globally as in many other sectors (ft.lk, 2020).

In order to continue their education, school students and undergraduates were forced to embrace Information and Communication Technology (ICT), which soon became an inevitable medium to engage in. This was a global shift (ft.lk, 2020). Hence, today, especially in the education sector, ICT plays a leading and immeasurable role. Especially in countries such as Sri Lanka, the need to make a transition from face-face education to online education was a huge leap, which entailed advanced technology, trained teachers and above all, the ability to own technological devices suitable for the facilitating of online lecture (ft.lk, 2020). According to many researchers, online and blended educational approaches are equivalent to conventional classroom models (Ali and Ahmed, 2011).

Other scholars, on the other hand, indicated that students had negative attitudes toward online learning, implying that they did not prefer it over

traditional classroom learning (Abbasi *et al*, 2020). While the COVID-19 pandemic is an unusual impetus for encouraging online learning, it is still uncertain if students believe they are ready and willing to step out to engage with the new methods of higher education delivery (Muflih *et al*, 2021).

When teaching and learning activities are obtained primarily via the Internet, this is referred to as online learning, or eLearning (Ali and Ahmed, 2011; Simonson *et al*, 2019; Watson, 2005). Online learning is founded on the principle of utilizing information technology to enhance educational quality (Muflih *et al*, 2021). Online learning is currently widely employed in undergraduate education, sometimes in conjunction with more traditional ways of learning (Muflih *et al*, 2021). While online learning provides enhanced convenience and accessibility to information regardless of location or time, it also has limitations, including challenges with Internet access, poor Internet connection quality, and respondents' limited digital abilities (Howlett *et al*, 2009; Sadeghi *et al*, 2014; Niebuhr *et al*, (2014); Bączek *et al*, 2021).

With online education being the only way-out, and with the imperative shift towards online learning, teachers are often struggling to cope with methodologies that they are unfamiliar with, as they are not tech-savvy, and the issue at hand is acquiring new technological skills (ft.lk, 2020). This could be an impediment to the student engagement percentage. Distance learning need not be restricted to digital platforms alone. The curricula designed for traditional classrooms under normal circumstances cannot be superimposed on teaching practices undertaken online during a pandemic. An education that fails to resonate with our everyday life, especially when we are facing a crisis of momentous proportions, will only become an additional burden for the student, his/her parents and teachers, thereby shrinking the chances of student engagement in an online environment (ft.lk, 2020).

However, it was necessary to evaluate the appropriateness of the online platforms and the curricula taught to the vision of education that

guides our activities as teachers and learners. Education is not simply about serving individualistic, market-dictated beliefs. At a fundamental level, education must equip us to make sense of the world, by critically processing our histories and current experiences, to make it better and more just for all, particularly those on the margins of our societies. (ft.lk, 2020).

According to a study conducted by Wijewardene (2021), on the results of a questionnaire distributed among undergraduates randomly selected at the University of Sri Jayewardenepura, more than 50% indicated that they did not have a suitable device and/or internet connection at home to follow lectures online, although they preferred the online method of lecture delivery. Thus, they were unable to access lecture notes, and videos uploaded, as part of their method of study (Wijewardene, 2021).

The lack of suitable technological facilities was an impediment to some for the furtherance of their education online. Internet connectivity is a crucial requirement for online learning (Rameez *et al*, 2020); however, students who lived in remote parts of the country faced severe connectivity issues and problems with network coverage (Wijewardene, 2021). Accessing well-equipped telecommunication equipment for students in poverty is challenging, and a lack of a suitable device such as a laptop, desktop, tablet or smartphone becomes a hindrance to students who have no option but to continue their education online (Rameez *et al*, 2020).

Engagement is an important aspect for student learning and satisfaction, especially, in online courses. Student engagement is defined as “the student’s psychological investment in and effort directed toward learning, understanding, or mastering the knowledge, skills, or crafts that academic work is intended to promote” (Newmann, Wehlage, and Lamborn, 1992). Hence, student engagement in online learning is vital as online learners have fewer opportunities to be engaged with the institution, and therefore, multiple opportunities need to be formed in order to facilitate student engagement in the online setting (Martin and Bolliger, 2018). The need for

engagement has resulted in the development of guidelines for designing effective online courses (Roblyer and Ekhaml, 2000).

Engagement strategies are intended to provide positive student experiences and active learning opportunities, such as facilitating participation in collaborative group work, encouraging active contributing in presentations and discussions, sharing resources, creating course assignments with hands-on components, and integrating case studies and reflections. Engagement is the key solution to the issue of learner isolation, dropout, retention, and graduation rate in online learning (Banna, Lin, Stewart, and Fialkowski, 2015).

Student engagement to online learning is important because student engagement can be shown as evidence of students' effort needed for their cognitive development and their given ability to create their own knowledge, leading to a high level of student success (Meyer, 2014; Banna *et al.*, 2015; and Britt, 2015). According to Banna *et al.* (2015), if content played a central focus in the past, engagement plays an important role in stimulating online learning today. To boost student engagement, three basic engagement techniques of online learning have been identified: student-content, student-instructor, and student-student (Bernard *et al.*, 2009). Interactions with content, peers, and instructors help online learners become active and more engaged in their courses (Lear, Ansorge, and Steckelberg, 2010)

Mature students prefer online education, but their biggest challenge is the use of technology (Mather and Sarkans, 2018), and a majority of students have encountered many problems on account of adaptability (Alsaaty, Carter, Abrahams, and Alshameri, 2016). In this new normal system of education, instructors should motivate students to engage in online learning and use e-learning by providing training to those who have poor IT skills users and by providing interesting contents through e-learning systems (Nafrees *et al.*, 2020). Concurrently, universities need to assist students by negotiating with the authorities to provide internet and handheld devices at affordable prices (Nafrees *et al.*, 2020).

Furthermore, students' behavioral intentions to use e-learning systems are influenced by factors such as, exertion anticipation, social impact, performance hope, work-life quality, internet experience and Hedonistic motivation (Sabraz and Rusith, 2019), and also writer suggested that, government should provide free internet and online learning devices to the students as many of them are from poor families, also, teachers need training on online platforms as many of them are unaware about it, and furthermore, it's not good to fully depend on online platform since classroom learning create opportunities for interact one with another across the social and cultural boundaries and most of the students doesn't have a learning environment at their home even in this COVID-19 pandemic (Ft.lk, 2020).

COVID-19 brought a "second wind to higher education in India." So, using this opportunity to improve the internet speed across remote areas, teacher training for online education and increase the number of tech-savvy educational institutes (Observer Research Foundation, 2020). Lack of technical knowledge, poor planning of online lectures and the expensiveness of internet causes the majority of the students to have negative perceptions on online learning. It was also noticed by the researchers that the imbalance in lecture and assignments make the students not to involve in online learning process effectively. The researcher recommends to implement online learning with proper planning and training as it is unavoidable in a situation like COVID-19 pandemic (Rohman, Marji, Sudjimat, Sugandi, and Nurhadi, 2020).

The need of online learning in higher education institutes is apparent as the future is unforeseeable. The online learning is highly depending on how convenient the Online learning to be used by students and the courage they get from their lecturers (Ali, 2020).

The type of e-learning adopted during an emergency is not necessarily synonymous with high-quality, carefully designed web-based online learning that has been practiced in the field of higher education for decades (Hodges *et al.*, 2020;

Means *et al*, 2020). Due to this, Hodges *et al* (2020) propose Emergency Remote Teaching (ERT) as a more accurate term to refer to the mode of teaching that many education institutions have adopted during the COVID-19 pandemic. ERT, unlike pre-planned online education, is “a temporary shift of instructional delivery” the goal of which “is not to re-create a robust educational ecosystem but rather to provide temporary access to instruction and instructional supports in a manner that is quick to set up and is reliably available during an emergency or crisis” (Hodges *et al*, 2020).

One context in which such ERT has successfully been implemented in Asia during the pandemic is universities and other higher education institutions in Sri Lanka (Hayashi *et al*, 2020). The successful implementation of ERT in the country’s higher education is especially noteworthy since online learning was not a term that had commonly been associated with Sri Lankan universities before the pandemic hit the country in March 2020 (Hettiarachchi *et al*, 2021). Until then, in the 15 public universities and other institutions involved in tertiary level education in the country, online learning had largely been limited to the exchange of materials and conducting selective assessment tasks via their Learning Management Systems (LMS) (Hayashi *et al*, 2020). This is also evident from the fact that before the pandemic, no public university in Sri Lanka had a single program of study online, except some distance education programs offered by the Open University of Sri Lanka—that had at least been partially conducted online Commission, U.G. Undergraduate Handbook. However, in response to their sudden closure due to the pandemic, many universities and other higher education institutions in Sri Lanka managed to establish an effective system of ERT in their respective institutions (Hayashi *et al*, 2020).

Like in other contexts in the world, the transition to online learning in Sri Lankan universities during the pandemic was sudden and abrupt: both lecturers and students had a very limited time to prepare for the new mode of teaching and learning (Hayashi *et al*, 2020). However, this

transition was facilitated by several initiatives taken by respective universities as well as the University Grants Commission (UGC) of Sri Lanka (Hettiarachchi *et al*, 2021)

Various challenges associated with online education in Sri Lanka were identified, some of which included the poor Internet connection, stressful nature of e-learning, difficulty in online assessments and/or exams, inadequate faculty student interaction, poor quality of video collaboration software, and inadequate access to devices, which are reported as common challenges associated with online learning around the world too (Hettiarachchi *et al*, 2021; Means and Neisler, 2020; Zeng, X. and Wang, T., 2021). The poor Internet was the most common among Sri Lankan students as 70% of the students had identified it as a challenge.

Engaging undergraduates in online learning or Electronic learning (E-Learning) is the major modern concept in education which has converted the traditional educational shape into a new form that transforms in person or physical learning into a virtual approach of learning, where students or teachers do not need to be available all the time, but the learning resources can be obtainable 24/7 in the form of video or audio or any other file formats. Furthermore, there are tools accessible to conduct classes online and offline such as Moodle, Zoom, Google Classroom, YouTube, and many countries have introduced new systems and websites in collaboration with World bank such as Educ.ar, Eduthek, and many more (The World Bank, 2020). Meanwhile, there are negative perspectives of these new technologies in terms of internet connectivity, device compatibility, adapting to technological tools, and immediate response from the lecturers or instructors (Nafrees *et al* 2020).

Online education would remain an important means for delivering tertiary education. Against this backdrop, it is important to understand emerging issues and challenges in the radical shift toward online education (Hayashi *et al*, 2020). Sri Lanka has made a remarkable, quick shift to online tertiary education post-pandemic. However, the lack of consistently stable,

high-speed internet access was the most significant challenge for students and faculty in continuing tertiary education during the early onset of COVID-19 (Martin and Bolliger, 2018). Some students had to access online education through smartphones, using mobile data packages that many could scarcely afford. Students from low-income households suffered disproportionately, and gaps grew in access to tertiary education (Hayashi *et al*, 2020).

Online education accessed through smartphones limits access to reading materials, writing assignments, and solving quizzes through learning management systems. In addition to challenges in internet connectivity, tertiary education in Sri Lanka needs to revisit curriculums, pedagogy, and assessment for blended learning (Hayashi *et al*, 2020) as providing online education using offline curricula is not suitable; for example, practical laboratory training is challenging to complete and student engagements are limited through online education (Hayashi *et al*, 2020). Responding to COVID-19 has provided opportunities for Sri Lanka's tertiary education system to become more resilient against unforeseen future challenges and it is imperative to create more open mindsets and attitudes toward blended learning if Sri Lanka continues to build on the lessons learned in this crisis (Hayashi *et al*, 2020).

III. METHODOLOGY

An online survey was conducted during the period of 11 to 30 in May in 2020. Therein, a Google form was developed, and sent to the FMSC undergraduate population which consists of 4785 active students (excluding 93 dropout students). The survey was promoted through LMS, Facebook, WhatsApp groups and email. A total of 4761 FMSC undergraduates (99.5% of the population) responded while 24 students (0.5%) did not. The descriptive data was analyzed and interpreted in detail in the results and discussion section below.

IV. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The total population of 4761 Management Faculty students participated in this online survey. The

data analysis shows a clear correlation between undergraduates' attitudes and online learning behaviour. Also, it shows that the participants' gender, living area, university level, prior experience and devices available have significant impact on the effectiveness of their online learning. The main obstacles to online learning were identified as unstable Internet connection, the lack of motivation, the lack of instructions and the lack of devices.

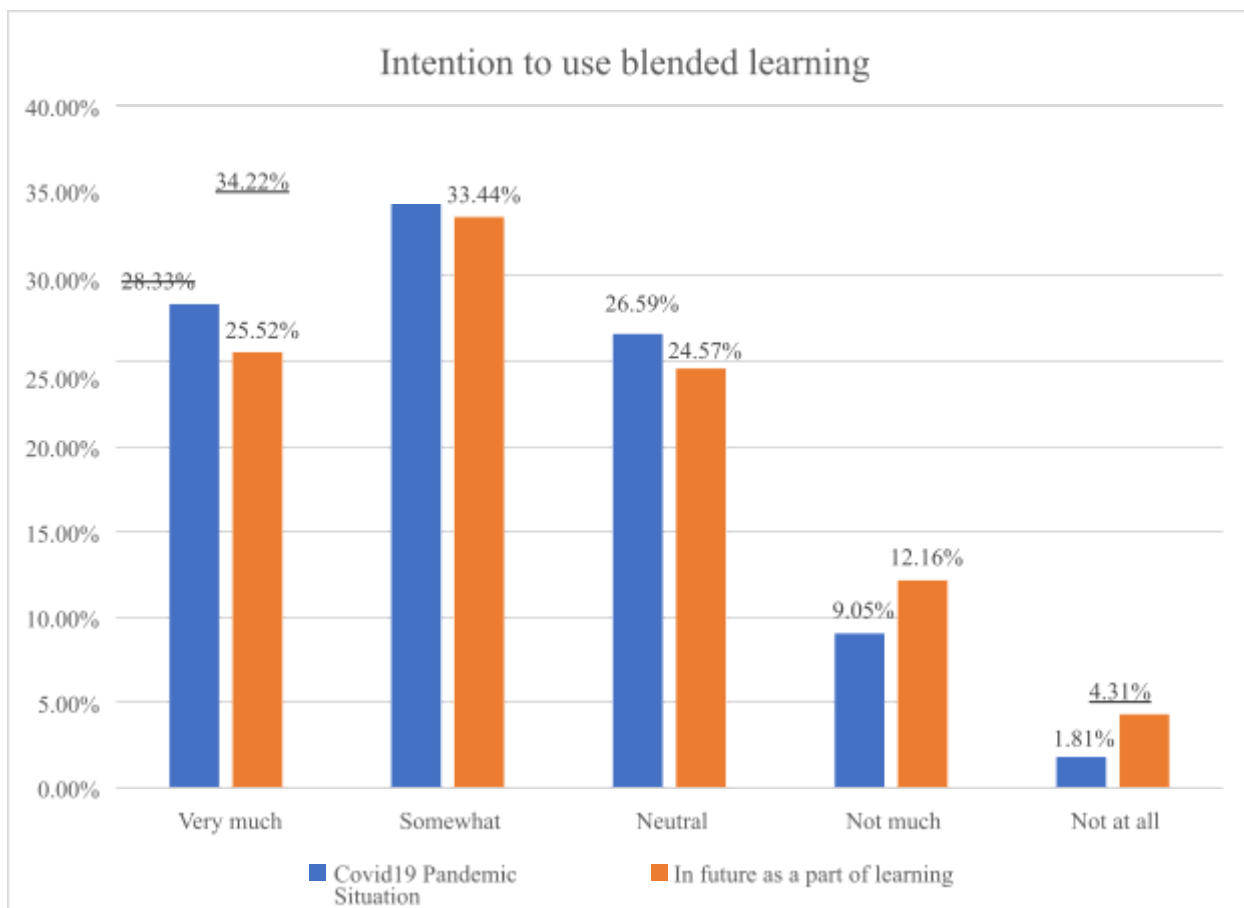


Figure 1: Students’ intention to use blended learning in future as part of learning

Figure 1 above shows that the majority (66%) of the participants prefer learning online during the pandemic but their intention to use blended learning in the future shows a declining pattern.

Table 1: Intention to Use Blended Learning among Undergraduates

Intention to use blended learning	Pandemic Situation		In future	
	Responses	%	Responses	%
Very much	1349	28.33	1215	25.52
Somewhat	1629	34.22	1592	33.44
Neutral	1266	26.59	1170	24.57
Not much	431	9.05	579	12.16
Not at all	86	1.81	205	4.31
Total Responses	4761	100.00	4761	100.00

Table 2: Availability of Computing Devices among undergraduates

Computing Device	Responses	%
Desktop Computer or / and Laptop Computer	3182	66.83
Desktop Computer or / and Laptop Computer or / and Smart Phone	4724	99.22
Do NOT have any Device	37	0.78
Total Responses	4761	

Table 3: Availability of Computing Devices with a broadband connection among undergraduates

Computing Device and Broadband Connection	Responses	%	%
Desktop or Laptop Computer with EXCELLENT Broadband Connection	216	4.54	30.52
Desktop or Laptop Computer with GOOD Broadband Connection	1001	21.02	
Desktop or Laptop Computer with POOR Broadband Connection	236	4.96	
Table or Smart Phone with Broadband Connection	283	5.94	5.94
Desktop or Laptop Computer with NO Broadband Connection	1729	36.32	63.54
Table or Smart Phone with NO Broadband Connection	1259	26.44	
NO Device and NO Broadband Connection	37	0.78	
Total Responses	4761	100.00	100.00

Table 4: Availability of Broadband connection among undergraduates

Broadband connection	Responses	%	%
Broadband (fixed/Fiber/ADSL etc) with EXCELLENT Connection	225	4.73	29.36
Broadband (fixed/Fiber/ADSL etc) with GOOD Connection	1173	24.64	
Broadband (fixed/Fiber/ADSL etc) with POOR Connection	338	7.10%	7.10
Do NOT have broadband connection	3025	63.54	63.54
Total Responses	4761	100.00	100.00

Table 5: Availability of pre-paid mobile connection among undergraduates

Pre-Paid Mobile Data connection	Responses	%	%
Pre-Paid Mobile Data with EXCELLENT Connection	277	5.82	57.76
Pre-Paid Mobile Data with GOOD Connection	2473	51.94	
Pre-Paid Mobile Data with POOR Connection	1418	29.78	29.78
Do NOT have Pre-Paid Mobile Data connection	593	12.46	12.46
Total Responses	4761	100.00	100.00

Table 6: Availability of post-paid mobile connection among undergraduates

Post-Paid Mobile Data connection	Responses	%	%
Post-Paid Mobile Data with EXCELLENT Connection	88	1.85	11.93
Post-Paid Mobile Data with GOOD Connection	480	10.08	
Post-Paid Mobile Data with POOR Connection	243	5.10	5.10
Do NOT have Post-Paid Mobile Data connection	3950	82.97	82.97
Total Responses	4761	100.00	100.00

According to Table 7 below, when the subjects are taught in the blended mode, no significant dropout rate was observed amongst the students in the Faculty of Management Studies and Commerce.

Table 7: Response summary by degree program.

	Degree Program	Enroll ed	Drop out	Active	Respon ses	%
1	B.Sc in Accounting (Special)	615	5	610	610	100.00
2	B.Sc in Business Administration (Special)	677		677	676	99.85
3	B.Sc in Business Administration (Business Economics) Special	231	1	230	230	100.00
4	Bachelor of Commerce	502	19	483	483	100.00
5	B.Sc. in Operation and Technology Management (Special)	164	2	162	160	98.77
6	B.Sc in Entrepreneurship (Special)	53		53	53	100.00
7	B.Sc in Estate Management and Valuation (Special)	236	14	222	222	100.00
8	Management Common Programe	932	27	905	888	98.12
9	B.Sc. in Finance (Special)	475		475	472	99.37
10	B.Sc. in Human Resource Management (Special)	199	3	196	196	100.00
11	B.Sc in Business Information Systems (Special)	192	7	185	185	100.00
12	B.Sc in Marketing Management (Special)	287	6	281	281	100.00
13	B.Sc. in Management (Public) (Special)	315	9	306	305	99.67
	Total Responses				4761	99.50
	Non-Responses				24	0.50
	Total no of enrolled undergraduates	4878	93	4785	4785	100.00

Table 8: Intention to use blended learning during the Covid19 Pandemic

Degree Programme	Very much	Some what	Neutral	Not much	Not at all	Grand Total
B.Sc in Accounting (Special)	215	215	140	32	8	610
B.Sc in Business Administration (Business Economics) Special	79	80	48	20	3	230
B.Sc in Business Administration (Special)	213	245	161	52	5	676
B.Sc in Business Information Systems (Special)	59	58	59	8	1	185
B.Sc in Entrepreneurship (Special)	13	18	13	9		53
B.Sc in Estate Management and Valuation (Special)	54	73	79	11	5	222
B.Sc in Marketing Management (Special)	65	88	103	18	7	281
B.Sc. in Finance (Special)	131	162	128	42	9	472
B.Sc. in Human Resource Management (Special)	45	66	56	23	6	196
B.Sc. in Management (Public) (Special)	86	97	84	32	6	305
B.Sc. in Operation and Technology Management (Special)	47	43	47	18	5	160
Bachelor of Commerce	140	165	115	52	11	483
Management Common Programe	202	319	233	114	20	888
Grand Total	1349	1629	1266	431	86	4761

A similar study conducted analyzing the degree of using communicative approach (Dharmawardene, 2021) to explore the blended learning effectiveness in Sri Lanka produced the findings consistent with the findings of the present study while the study conducted by Hayashi et al. (2020) has showed contradictory findings to those of the present study.

V. CONCLUSION

This study explored the correlation that exists between the undergraduates' online learning engagement and the factors associated with their future learning engagement. Most undergraduates had mixed feelings about online learning whilst being supportive of conventional classroom teaching and learning. Additionally, they were pessimistic about their chances of learning professional skills and core competencies online.

Participants' interrupted access to data and their helplessness in being unable to purchase electronic devices, thus affecting their engagement ability, were seen as major impediments to the success of online learning.

More research is required to determine whether undergraduates, especially in developing countries such as Sri Lanka, are ready and able to make greater use of online education in order to access high-quality learning opportunities.

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