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Undergraduate Nursing Students' Perception and Barriers Towards Online Learning in a State University, Sri Lanka: A Quantitative Study

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Introduction: Nursing is a skill-based discipline. The effectiveness of online learning methodologies has not been well examined prior to adoption at many institutions. The sudden transition of physical classes into online classes may have an impact on nursing students' usual learning process. To get a better understanding of how these learning technologies impact students' learning, it is essential to assess the students' perceptions and barriers towards effective online learning for nursing education.

Objective: To determine the undergraduate nursing students' perception and barriers towards online learning studying in a state university, Sri Lanka

Methods: The study was conducted as a quantitative, descriptive cross-sectional study using researcher-developed validated Google form circulated via social media and email groups. One hundred seventeen (117) nursing undergraduates registered for all academic years at the University of Peradeniya participated in the study. Data were analyzed for percentages, frequencies and associations.

Results: Among total participants 30.8% were males. The number of students in 1st, 2nd, 3rd, and 4th years was 45, 36, 16 and 20 respectively. Students who had a positive perception (52.13%) towards online learning seemed to accept and adapt to online learning. The majority were perceived lack of motivation in online classes (53.8%), lack of interaction with the lecturer (54.7%), and lack of peer interaction (55.6%). The majority of participants (51.3%) preferred physical classes over online classes. A significant association was not identified with gender, year of study, and monthly income of the family. Of the total participants, 62.4% were disagreed with conducting exams online. Troubles with the internet connection (79.5%), computer literacy (63.2%), physical discomforts (59.8%), and getting distracted (51.3%) were the major drawbacks reported.

Conclusions: Even though students were faced with several issues, the perception of online learning was relatively good. However, there should be frequent assessments to evaluate adoption levels among students to online nursing education.

Keywords: Online learning, Undergraduates, Nursing Students, Perception, Barriers