

The attitudes towards Online Education and the role of the library in Online Education: a case study of the fresh nursing undergraduates of University of Colombo

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In times of COVID-19 pandemic, access to e-tools and online education platforms in higher education institutions has proven very useful to facilitate the emergency switch to distance learning. Several new ways of storing information emerged and libraries transformed accordingly for the purpose of assisting their online users. The study was conducted at the Faculty of Nursing to assess new undergraduates' attitude towards online education (ATOE) and the attitude towards the role of the library in online education (ATRLibOE). First-year nursing undergraduates were purposively selected for the study, thus the sample size was 89. A self-administered Google questionnaire was used to collect data. The collected data were analysed with Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) version 21. Majority of the students were female (n=62, 69.7%) and most of the students were Sinhalese (n=77, 86.5%). More than half of the students (n=58, 65.2%) reside in a rural area, and 87.6% (n=78) use Sinhala as their primary language. Majority of subjects (n=48, 53.9%) use both laptops and mobile phones for their online education. 4G router is the most common type of internet access used by majority of the respondents (n=44, 49.4%). Thirty students (33.7%) have no internet access at their residences, and 21 students of them reside in rural areas. The findings revealed that the undergraduates hold a negative attitude towards the online education (M=2.26) as well as the role of the library in online education (M=3.11). The attitude towards the online education was significantly different between male and female groups ($p < 0.05$). Positive correlations were significant among the variables of ATOE and ATRLibOE ($p < 0.05$). The findings imply that new undergraduates are less likely to accept online education and the online services provided by the library. Hence, it is recommended to conduct more awareness programmes and a qualitative study with the selected group to identify and improve specific online learning needs in future.

Keywords: Undergraduates, Nursing, User attitudes, Online Education