

USER SURVEY ON ONLINE LIBRARY RESOURCES AND SERVICES DURING THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC: A CASE OF UNIVERSITY OF KELANIYA

R. A. A. S. Ranaweera*

Senior Assistant Librarian, Library, University of Kelaniya, Sri Lanka
achala@kln.ac.lk

A. P. U. De Silva

Senior Assistant Librarian, Library, University of Kelaniya, Sri Lanka
udayangani@kln.ac.lk

A. S. Rubasinghe

Senior Assistant Librarian, Library, University of Kelaniya, Sri Lanka
sajeewanie@kln.ac.lk

Abstract

Covid-19 is one of the tragic outbreaks of the world. Emergence of Covid-19 has become a global crisis and has created a massive impact on the day today lives of people including business, education, health, transportation and careers. Temporary closures and social distancing were introduced to limit the spread of the virus in the society. Education was drastically affected by these restrictions and preventive measures. Universities were physically closed but methods were devised to continue their educational process. Online teaching and e-learning technologies were applied in university education. Along with that, university libraries round the globe also shifted their services more towards to digital and virtual environments. In Sri Lanka too, university libraries also shifted their formal services to digital platforms as much as possible to cater to the academic community who study and work from home. This study reflects on the user's opinion on the library resources and services rendered to them by the library, university of Kelaniya during the outbreak of Covid-19. It also investigated the challenges and barriers faced by the users using library facilities in this period. There were 264 undergraduates from the faculties of Commerce and Management Studies, Computing and Technology and Humanities participated in this survey. Adhering to the health guidelines, an online questionnaire was distributed among the study sample using the Google online form to collect data for this study. Study findings confirm that the 59% of the users were satisfied with the online library services and facilities offered by the library. Past papers repository (74.6%) was the most frequently used online library resource. Technical issues and lack of awareness prevented the undergraduates from fully utilizing the online resources and services offered by the library during the pandemic.

Keyword: *Online library services, Online library resources, User satisfaction, Covid 19 pandemic, University library*

*Corresponding author

Abstract No. ICULA2021 R1

International Conference of University Librarians Association of Sri Lanka (ICULA) - 2021

Introduction

The global pandemic "Corona virus" or the "Covid-19", was first reported in Wuhan, P. R. of China on the 31st of December 2019. It has rapidly spread to all continents, damaging all aspects of people's lives, causing high rates of hospitalizations and deaths. Lockdowns, restrictions on day to day activities were imposed in most countries across the globe to control mass scale spreading of the Corona virus. The Covid-19 and its associated restrictions have severely affected the economy, health and specially, the education sector both locally and globally.

Government of Sri Lanka imposed an island wide curfew for the first time on 20th March 2020 as a preventive measure to stop the spreading of the Covid-19 across the country (NILIS, 2020). This emerging situation entirely changed the day to day lives of the citizens of the country affecting all aspects including economic, social, education and health. Temporary closures and lockdown situations had been occurring from time to time within the country. Education sector of the country was critically interrupted due to the prevalent situation and schools and universities were closed for months in the process. However, despite the outbreak of Covid-19, the education process was supposed to continue though the schools and universities were to remain physically closed. Many nations successfully used online modes for teaching and learning, as recommended and introduced by UNESCO (Mbambo-Thata, 2020). Along with the other countries, Sri Lanka also shifted its traditional way of learning and teaching in primary and higher education to an E-Learning platform. University libraries were no exception and as an information provider to the academic community, library had to continue its services to users though the libraries were physically closed. Hence, to collaborate with the parent institute, the university libraries also shifted to this newly introduced online environment by transferring the library services more towards digital and online modes. Staff of the library also adjusted to this new environment as it was the best way of supporting the teaching and learning ventures in their respective universities during the pandemic.

In Sri Lanka, university libraries offer online library resources and services to users while the doors of libraries remain closed for the users. Services such as OPAC, digitalization of the collection, electronic databases with remote access, past papers repositories and institutional repositories were offered to users. In addition to these services, the subject liaison service, document supply services and user assistance services via chat, email and telephone assisted the undergraduate when they immediately needed any information assistance from the library. Library of the University of Kelaniya is always connected with the users through these online resources and services and the library has managed to continue its services to users while the library was physically closed.

Covid-19 pandemic situation widened the research horizons in university libraries in both the international and national research arena. Though this is a novel research area, few research have been conducted on Covid-19 and its impact on university libraries in Sri Lanka, exploring the topics of shifting the traditional role to digitized libraries, library usage during the pandemic, changing role of the librarians, etc. (Fernando and Senevirathna, 2020; Mashroofa, 2021; Ruwanpathirana and Pathirana, 2021). However, the present study was the first attempt of addressing the topic of library online resources and services offered by the University of Kelaniya during the Covid-19 pandemic.

Objectives

This study mainly focuses on the library services offered by the University of Kelaniya during the Covid 19 pandemic. The principal objective of this study was to explore the user satisfaction on online library resources and library services offered by the University of Kelaniya during the Covid-19 pandemic. It also aimed to identify the frequently used online library resources and services during the contagion of Covid-19. Finally, to find out the challenges and barriers which users encountered while using the library resources and services during the pandemic.

Methodology

Descriptive research approach was utilized for this study. University of Kelaniya has six Faculties, i.e., Social Sciences, Humanities, Science, Commerce and Management Studies, Medicine and Computing and Technology. This study was limited to the three faculties located in Dalugama and Paliyagoda premises. The total population of this study was 5460 undergraduates and based on the Krejcie and Morgan (1970) sample size determination table, 357 undergraduates were selected as the study sample from the faculties of Commerce and Management Studies, Computing and Technology and Humanities. Convenience sampling method was used for this study. Primary data for this study was collected through a structured questionnaire. This questionnaire was developed to get information on usage of library services and resources by the undergraduates, overall user satisfaction of services and resources, challenges and barriers they encountered and demographic information of the respondents. An online questionnaire was distributed among the study sample via Google form to collect data for the study. Primary data was descriptively analyzed and presented according to the research objectives of the study.

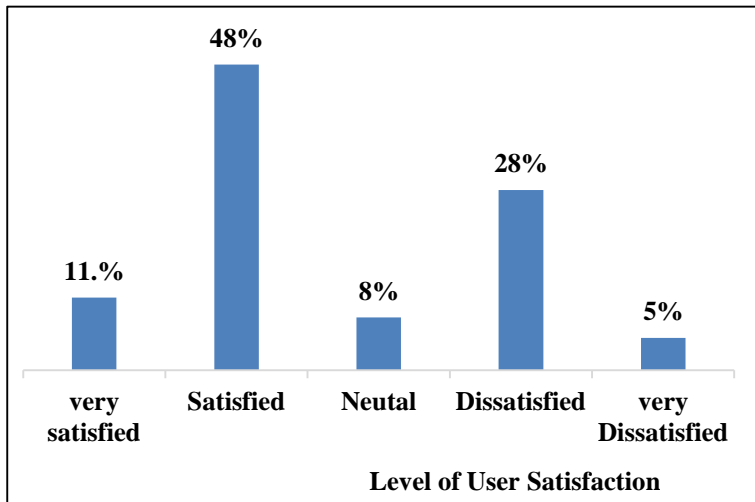
Results and Discussion

According to the survey results, out of 357 online questionnaires 264 were received with a return response rate of 74%. Gender distribution of the sample size consisted of 32.2% (85 undergraduates) males and 67.8% (179 undergraduates) of female. Majority of the sample represented the Faculty of Commerce and Management studies (72.7% - 192 undergraduates). 15.2% of the sample attached to the faculty of Humanities and sample

International Conference of University Librarians Association of Sri Lanka (ICULA) - 2021

representation of faculty of Computing and Technology was 12.1%. Considering the year wise distribution of the sample, 37.1%, 34.8%, 14.4% and 13.6% represented the first year, second year, third year and final year undergraduates respectively.

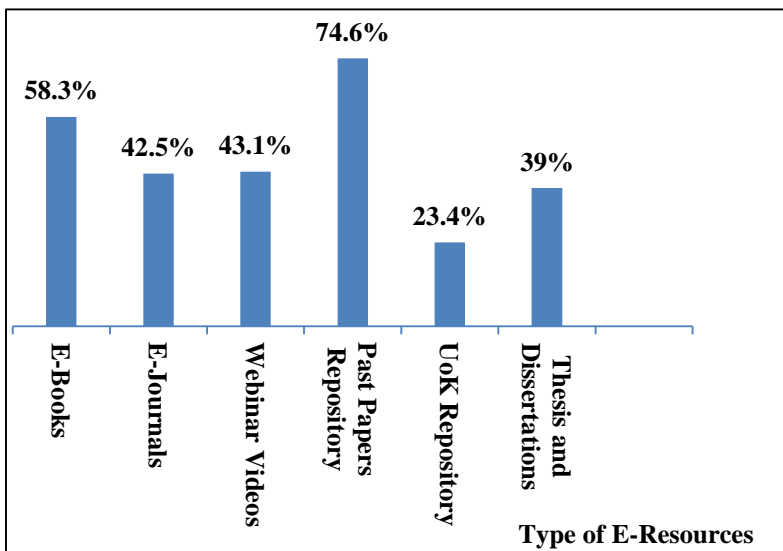
The first objective of this study was to explore the overall user satisfaction on the online library resources and services given by the library to the users on their learning activities. Figure 1 highlights the survey results on the level of user satisfaction. 11% of the users were



very satisfied and 48% of the patrons were satisfied with the online resources and services provided by the library during the outbreak of Covid-19. However, altogether 33% of the users were not satisfied with the library services granted for the users when the libraries were physically closed for them.

Figure 1. User satisfaction on online library resources and library services

Figure 2 showcase the survey results of frequently used online library resources by the undergraduates during the outbreak of Covid-19. Past papers repository was the highest used online resource, which marked 74.6% of the respondents and followed by e-books (58.3%) and webinar videos (43.1%).



The least used online resources offered by the library was the repository of the university (23.4%) which contains the articles of university conferences, symposiums, publications of academic staff etc.

Figure 2. Usage of Online library resources

The final research objective was to seek the challenges and barriers which users have been facing during the pandemic when they used library resources and services for their learning

engagements. Survey findings show that 48.3% of the users say that the access difficulty in terms of technology is the main barrier for using the library resources. At the same time, unavailability of the necessary textbooks and past papers (10%), lack of awareness of the library services and resources (7%), and lack of user guides (2%) to the e-resources are some barriers to access of the online library services smoothly. Also, 3% of the users denoted that staff assistance is not sufficient when attending to user queries during the pandemic time.

Conclusion

Based on the survey findings, the study concluded that the library, university of Kelaniya has played a significant role in providing information and disseminating knowledge for the undergraduates of the university during the pandemic. Survey results confirm the success of the initiatives taken by the library to offer a better library service which complied with the e-learning activities of the university of Kelaniya during the pandemic situation. Considering above findings, the study recommended the following suggestions to be followed to improve the quality of the online library services, university of Kelaniya. Library must conduct more user awareness programmes and training sessions in making aware of the users on the library online resources and services. Also frequently collecting user feedbacks regarding services and resources is much important to improve the quality of services and resources of the library. Finally, providing adequate technical support, if possible would be beneficial to users to enhance the usability of online library resources and services offered by the library, university of Kelaniya during the pandemic.

References

- Krejcie, R.V. & Morgan, D.W. (1970). Determining sample size for research activities. *Educational and Psychological Measurement*, 30, 607-610
- Mbambo-Thata, B. (2020). Responding to Covid-19 in an African university: the case of the National University of Lesotho library. *Digital Library Perspectives*, 37(1), 28-38. doi 10.1108/DLP-07-2020-0061
- Fernando, I. D. K. L. & Senevirathna, R. A. P. S. (2020). Reopening the academic library in the post-pandemic season: A lesson-learned from the Covid-19 pandemic. *Journal of the University Librarian Association of Sri Lanka*. 23(2), 47-70. DOI: <http://doi.org/10.4038/jula.v23i2.7975>
- Mashroofa, M. M. (2021). Sustainability of library and information services during Covid-19 pandemic: A case of South Eastern University of Sri Lanka (SEUSL) Libraries. Proceedings of the NILIS Research Symposium 2020, Colombo, Sri Lanka. 21p.
- Ruwanpathirana, A. D. N. L. & Pathirana, A. D. M. R. (2021). Covid-19 pandemic, university education and role of librarians. Proceedings of the NILIS Research Symposium 2020, Colombo, Sri Lanka. 24 p.