

The Academic Library Support for E-Learning: Students' Perspectives and Web Observation

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Abstract

In today's digital age, ICTs have become an influence for the education sector, which has created exceptional learning experiences through virtual platforms. E-learning is capable of widening access materials, equality, reducing cost, improving quality, flexibility and maintaining interactive learning in university education. University education is geared towards teaching, learning and students are adept at new knowledge and information. Academics and information professionals help them develop information to enhance their knowledge in specific areas. The academic library is the largest provider of educational information and resources. In the e-learning context, the university library has a huge role and should directly support the educational process as well as research by providing facilities. University libraries continue to offer services that build on traditional learning. It also needs to improve how we support virtual users. Digital natives tend to learn virtually, and library services need to expand to support them. This study was conducted in advance of the COVID-19 pandemic to determine the status of academic library support and e-learning initiatives from a student perspective. The quantitative methodology was applied with the data gathering through a questionnaire from undergraduates. However, e-learning has rapidly changed in response to the COVID-19 pandemic. It has also resulted in a sudden transformation of library services. To validate the study results, of the research, the web observation has been added and to determine the recent development of library support for e-learning. The results of the study show that students expect library services through multimedia mode and expect on-line guide sessions on the use of modern technological facilities, information retrieval facilities for distance learning. It appears that the user expects to have access to information in a highly flexible and timely manner.

Keywords: Learning support, Academic libraries, e-learning, user perspectives, Covid-19.

Introduction.

The growth of information and communication technologies (ICTs) has brought a big shift from the traditional educational process to the massive use of multimedia and Internet technologies (Prasad, et al, 2017). E-learning has introduced new approaches to learning using information and communication technologies and digital devices. Moreover, it made a quick and easy of access for education for students and other participants. This is a process of interactive learning (Kanaganayagam & Fernando, 2013). Educational institutions have identified the value of e- learning as a platform for transforming people, performance, and skills (Prasad, 2017)

Hence, future-proof education concepts such as student-centered teaching, self-learning and collaborative research culture have been widely introduced to the library system (Sagitova, 2014) The library can support faculty works, reach students and staff by directly engaging in teaching, learning and research. In the current situation, the positive and active participation of libraries is necessary for an effective online learning program as they provide facilities for teaching, learning, research, and outreach. The library should understand current trends and information requirements of the digital community. The library should increase the direct involvement of university work in the respective universities and the library should develop interactive and collaborative participation throughout the university system.

OBJECTIVES

- In this study, the research objectives were approached in the following way.
- To identify the students' perspectives on academic library support on E-learning.
- Library support for online learning and education through web

Reresearch methodology

A quantitative and descriptive approach was adopted to recognize the importance of university library support for online learning. As a case study, this study selected one state university in Sri Lanka. The focus group was on undergraduates. According to the statistical report from the University of Kelaniya (Kelaniya, 2018), the total student population was 10,000. It has checked with the Morgan's table; students' sample was 370 (4%) it conceded as 400 students' sample from the student population. (Sample Size Determination Using Krejcie and Morgan Table, n.d.) The stratified random sampling procedure used in this study. This sample was broken down into four years, according to the stratified random sampling methodology. This study has granted ethical approval from the Ethical review committee of the University of Kelaniya. The process of collecting data from students based on a questionnaire printed by the visiting researcher. Finally, the observation of the library's website also provided information on current progress.

Findings

The student survey has been targeted for 370 (4%) participants across all the studying years of the university of Kelaniya. However, only 228 participants responded within the defined time frame. Also, under the background information it has considered the students' gender, frequency, it has shown a higher number of female participants, corresponding to 66% of total responses. According to the respondent's analysis, most participants are between 21 and 25 years old, or 89.5%. Then it considers students' distribution of faculties. There are six faculties. Of the total number of 228 students surveyed, most belong to the Faculty of Social Studies. That is 44%. The responding students' degree programs have been categorized as Honors Degrees and B. A Degrees. There were more special students, 64.5%. The remaining response rate for students enrolled in the general degree was 35.5% and covered the average responses. Students' year-wise representation indicates the maximum representation from the 2nd year students (35.1%) and minimum representation from the 4th year students (19.3%). The students' library usage is identified in both the physical and online. This is illustrated in Figure 1: Library Usage Rate.

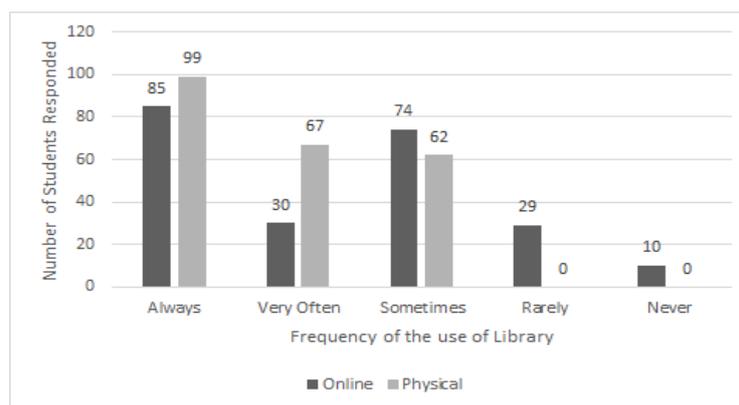


Figure 3: Frequency of library use.

However, this study surprisingly revealed that students continue to access the library physically rather than online. Most of the students are using LMS for their study. It has 72% and some are not using LMS. It shows 28%. Support from the university library for on-line learning was identified under four main components with general suggestions. They are E-resources, E-services, ICT infrastructure facilities, Roles, and skills of information professionals. All the E-learning related options were asked to be rated on a five points of Likert scale rating from 5 to 1, where 5 is the highest value and 1 is the lowest value. E resources, E Services, ICT infrastructure facilities, Roles, and skills of the information professionals. According to all those above-mentioned categories shows that library facilitating services are in satisfactory level according to the student's viewpoint.

E-resources and E-services are interconnected. Using e-resources, libraries can provide a variety of e-services. According to that, the study covers the user perspective on Proper arrangements of existing resources, Library new acquisitions based on the modern learning process, subscribing databases, Arranging Digital library services, implementing a proper searching facilities and features, subscribing e resources including databases and e journals. The consideration of the students' rate regarding the e-resources provided by the library as supporting e-learning process of the university, It was on the average level. After the covid situation, it has been developed with much more advanced facilities and that has identified through the web observation process. Under the e services provided by the library, that has considered supporting for the self-learning activities, Developing IL skills, Research supports for the students, information sharing regarding the free resources, library resource sharing services on individual request, effective communication system among both parties, OPAC and the guiding students electronically. It has shown library self-learning support rated by students on average and it is at a satisfactory level. Figure 2 below shows the scoring levels of students on OPAC as e-services provided by the library.

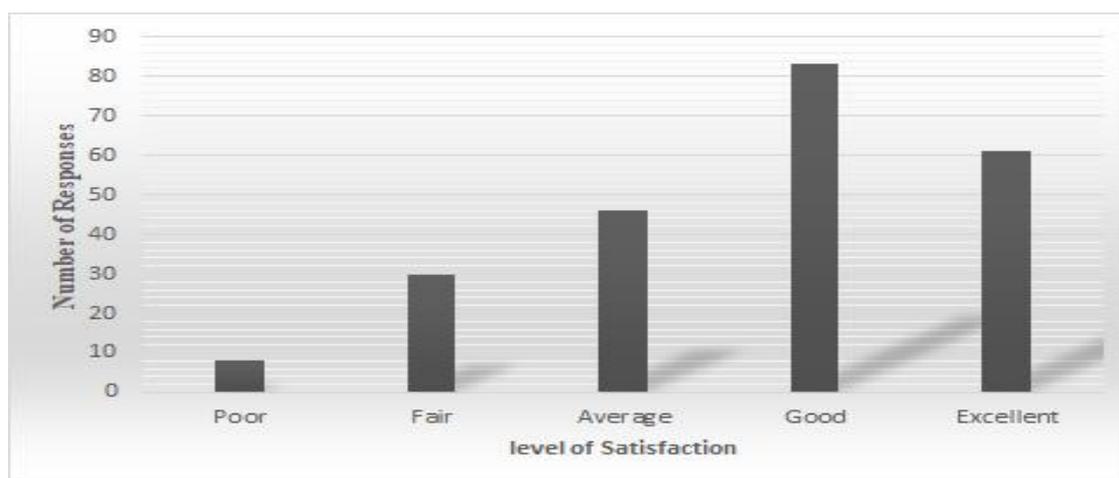


Figure 4: Frequencies of OPAC as a E- services

The library needs to electronically guide users in their studies. In an academic environment, libraries need to guide their users to avoid plagiarism while they are highly using the electronic media. In that way users can check their contents by email request to the library and the library can promote some electronic videos, PowerPoint presentations to guide users to avoid unethical writing works. The library can provide ICT infrastructure facilities as well as other learning resources. There were six sub areas checked under ICT infrastructure facilities. ICT facilities have categorized into two main groups as available modern ICT facilities and Acquisitions of modern technological equipment's. The student's perspective was satisfactory level. Academic library support for E-learning is necessary in the success of university education. Based on the user experience, the study gets the view of the users regarding the information professionals. That covers how the library staff act as information professionals, whether they can help users, and do they have relevant skills and qualifications. Academic library staff should be capable of providing services to them and they are also considered as scholars of the academic community. As an academic library staff, all members have different kinds of roles to guide university users. First, consider the instructors' role and under that they must Implement and conduct successful short-term training courses relating to curriculum developments and e-learning activities, The students have rated higher values for the 'Neutral'. The research identified that the Librarians have been upgrading themselves to extend services in areas related to research (Sanjeeva, 2018). The library users are expecting better and user-friendly services and guidance from the library staff that can be applied to any mode of services. That is illustrated in Figure 3.

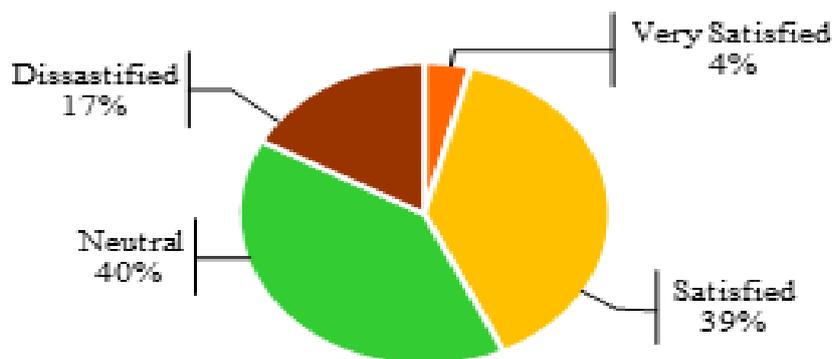


Figure 5: User satisfaction of friendly services

Web observation in covid 19 situation

The COVID-19 outbreak began in March 2020 in Sri Lanka. In that situation, the whole country was blocked and the effect of that, there was a sudden change in all the areas, mainly in the education sector. All the levels of education have rapidly changed to online education with lots of challenges and creating opportunities. As the state University, university of Kelaniya also faced the same situation and they started work from home with teaching through e-learning supporting tools like Zoom, Microsoft Team etc. The same challenge came to the university library, and they have identified web-based user services. That cannot start at once. This should ensure proper planning of work with well instructions and personnel support. Here it has been added as a general web observation that has applied to identify the new e-learning based library services started by the library through their web site Some of them are an attractive and user-friendly web interface, subject liaison services with separate faculty pages on the library website. There is a subject specific academic librarian to coordinate subject liaison service. The subject liaison librarian works for student support to identify their requirements and faculty coordination to identify the recommended readings for each subject under the faculty. Recommended reading facilities also provided through the web. The 24/7 chat services, Video tutorials with instructions to use of all full text databases, video tutorials for all eBook subscribed by the library, Quick access for e-resources, IMF library, Theses and Dissertations, Past paper collection, OPAC search facility, Database searching facilities, Federated searching facilities, General user guide collection for day to day IT based works, Document Supply Services, VPN services and guide, Training guides, and Social Media Support.

Discussion and conclusion

The support of the academic library for the study of E-learning identified by the suggestions of the user. According to that, Students need active collaboration with friendly services from the university library, more training programs, more E-learning related materials with access to up to date collection. They have mentioned that user awareness programs on new resources and existing services are needed, the library can improve services and information awareness through the new social media and email. This may help to save time for the users. According to the students' responses, faculties have an important responsibility on getting library support for their e-learning activities. That means the faculties can positively influence the student's learning process by productively associating with the modern ICT tools and library resources. It is evident that a higher

number of students are using the library infrastructure facilities when they are in the second year and above, during their study at the university. The university library systems can implement unique services for their users by clearly identifying what they need to do for the user's information needs. Library users are expecting active collaboration & updated discussion on the latest technology. That will help to improve library services for the e-learning environment. For that, the libraries can facilitate a proper communication system among the users. Further research must be conducted to identify the emerging trends of library user behaviors to provide better services for the university regardless of the physical opening hours. With the post COVID 19 and the new normal situation, University of Kelaniya library has started more user services they were expecting from the library side. That has created remarkable milestones in the Sri Lankan academic library sector.

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