

**IDENTIFYING THE E-LEARNING CHALLENGES FACED BY STUDENTS
DURING PANDEMIC SITUATIONS
IN CASE OF UNDERGRADUATES IN KURUNEGALA DISTRICT, SRI LANKA**

H. G. L. A. L. Jayasekara^{1,*} and R. A.M. Madhuwanthi²

^{1,2}*London Metropolitan University*

*Corresponding author (Email: anushka94jayasekara@gmail.com)

ABSTRACT

This study explores the e-learning challenges faced by students during pandemic situations, specifically focusing on undergraduates in Sri Lanka's Kurunegala District during COVID-19. The pandemic led to global lockdowns, severely disrupting education, with schools and universities forced to close. Sri Lanka experienced similar issues, with the government pushing for e-learning, though universities faced difficulties transitioning to online platforms. This research aims to identify the challenges faced by undergraduates pursuing bachelor's degrees, who are more dependent on structured courses compared to postgraduates. E-learning, while driven by technological advancements, presented various challenges, such as issues with technology, compatibility, affordability, adaptability, and the workload and stress placed on students. Effective e-learning requires not only engaging and motivating content but also addressing the psychological strain on students. The pandemic amplified these difficulties, highlighting the importance of enhanced e-learning strategies in developing nations like Sri Lanka, where resources are limited. The study followed a positivist research philosophy and a deductive approach, relying on a survey strategy and quantitative methods. To investigate these challenges, the study surveyed 368 respondents, with 361 being undergraduates from the Kurunegala District. The research utilized both primary and secondary data, with a structured online questionnaire used to gather primary data and secondary data drawn from websites, journals, and blogs. Data was analyzed using SPSS version 26 and MS Excel. The findings revealed a moderate correlation between e-learning engagement and the identified challenges: technology, compatibility, affordability, adaptability, and workload and stress. Interestingly, students faced no significant issues with e-learning applications, the internet, or devices, but struggled with a lack of suitable study spaces and collaborative opportunities. These insights provide valuable contributions to overcoming e-learning barriers in Sri Lanka's education system during future pandemic-like crises.

Keywords: E-Learning, engaging in e-learning, e-learning challenges, pandemic situations, undergraduates