PERCEIVED BARRIERS TO ONLINE TEACHING AMONG TEACHERS OF NATIONAL SCHOOLS IN COLOMBO DISTRICT

Athulathmudali O.[1*], Chandraratne A.R.[1], Indeewari W.A.P.K.[1], Sentheepan R.[1], Wickramasinghe C.L.[1] and Seneviwickrama K.L.M.D.[2]

[1]Faculty of Medical Sciences, University of Sri Jayewardenepura
[2]Department of Community Medicine, Faculty of Medical Sciences,
University of Sri Jayewardenepura
osuri2196@gmail.com

Abstract

With the COVID-19 pandemic leading to disruption of traditional face to face classroom-based education, the need of online teaching arose. In a country like Sri Lanka where online school education is a completely new experience in the state sector, assessing different aspects of online teaching relevant to school education was crucial. Therefore, the objective of this study was to describe commonly used online teaching tools and perceptions on online teaching among secondary school teachers in Colombo district. A descriptive, cross-sectional study was conducted among 368 secondary school (grades 6-13) teachers of National schools in the Colombo Educational zone selected by convenience sampling using a self-administered online questionnaire. Participants were requested to rate, following barriers they faced in a 5-point Likert scale where zero represented 'no barrier': cost of data, availability of a device, connectivity issues, computer literacy, English language literacy and low level of student enthusiasm. Data was analysed using SPSS and presented as percentages for qualitative variables. Majority were females (78.8%, n= 286) and between 31-50 years (61.4%, n=223). The most commonly used online teaching platform for real-time teaching was Zoom (69.3%, n=244) while WhatsApp was the majority's (96.9%, n=341) choice to send messages/links to students. Only 19.8% (n=73) were satisfied with the effectiveness of online teaching. However, 84.8% (n=212) were agreeable for blended teaching. A majority perceived lack of technical fluency (59.3%, n=207), connectivity issues (58.2%, n=203) and lack of devices (57.9%, n=202) as barriers to online teaching. If the aforementioned challenges were addressed, 51.0% (n=188) of the participants were willing to conduct online teaching. Teachers need to be provided with necessary support to make online education more effective.

Keywords: *online teaching, online teaching platforms, perceived barriers*