

## IMPACT OF INSTRUCTOR CHARACTERISTICS ON STUDENT ENGAGEMENT WITH ONLINE LEARNING ENVIRONMENT

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### INTRODUCTION

The image of modern education has significantly changed as a result of information and communication technology. The world's evolving e-learning system necessitates the importance of the movement of contemporary education in a new way. In the past, students who chose to participate in distance learning courses did so for a variety of reasons, such as a desire to learn at their place or a sense of isolation due to their location (Gangwani & Alfryan, 2020). There has been significant growth in distance education in recent years which was evidenced by the increment of number of online platform usage. This suggests that to meet students' needs for online learning, a flexible learning environment must be created. The expansion of the education industry has proven that online learning is superior in terms of student accomplishment as per the study by Richardson et al. (2022). To successfully teach in a variety of technologically integrated environments, online instructors are expected to be knowledgeable in a variety of skills and talents. Therefore, it is important to identify and emphasize teaching characteristics to adequately inform educators of the skills and knowledge required to ensure effective online teaching.

With the spread of the Coronavirus, online education began to grow rapidly. To stop the COVID-19 pandemic from spreading, Schools as well as the university system have been completely moved to online learning. Çakır and Barbara (2013) have stated that Students' satisfaction and student performance with online lectures affect the students' participation in online lectures. Also, Çakır and Barbara (2013) further mentioned that instructor's characteristics are another prerequisite to the increase in students' motivation to participate in online lectures. Therefore, it is questionable whether the instructor's characteristics can increase the student's participation in the online learning environment. Therefore, the study's general objective is to examine the impact of instructor characteristics on student engagement in the online learning environment.

### METHODOLOGY

This research utilized the quantitative approach as it was conducted in the field of university education to examine the impact of instructor characteristics on student engagement with online learning environments. Therefore, the target population of this study was Sri Lankan university students who used online learning platforms in their studies. The sample was derived from Rajarata University a count of 320 students. The sampling employed in this study is a simple random sample. The questionnaire was the data collection tool and they were disseminated through social media and e-mail for gathering primary data. Data were analyzed through SPSS software. Required secondary data was gathered through journal articles, magazines, and reports published on the internet.

#### Hypotheses

*H<sub>1</sub>*: There is a significant impact of instructors' online teaching competencies on students' engagement in online learning.

*H*<sub>2</sub>: There is a significant impact of instructors’ quality on students’ engagement on students’ engagement in online learning.

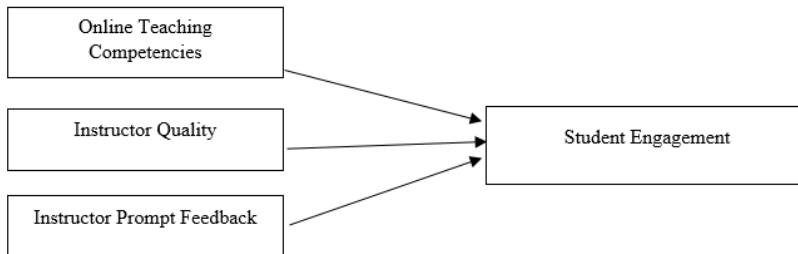
*H*<sub>3</sub>: There is a significant impact of instructors’ prompt feedback on students’ engagement in online learning.

Conceptual framework

The conceptual framework of this study consists of three independent variables namely online teaching, instructor quality, and instructor prompt. The dependent variable is student engagement. This conceptual framework was derived from the previous literature.

**Figure 1**

*Conceptual framework*



**RESULTS AND DISCUSSION**

As revealed through analyzing the demographic data of the respondents, the majority of them were females and 75.3% were in the age of 24-26 category. Further, the findings revealed that nearly half of the respondents (49.1%), mentioned that they are in the badge of 2018. This characteristic of the sample implies that the respondents are in their youth and they have the capabilities and capacities to engage with online education. Especially in the case of the women respondents, they are more willing to participate in online education rather than men. This is a kind of positive aspect of promoting online education, especially among women.

In addition to the demographic analysis, a key concentration has been given to validate the research objectives of this paper. The main objective of this study was to examine the impact of instructor characteristics on student engagement with online learning environments. Based on this objective, this study found three key characteristics which are affecting online learning environments. They are Instructor Online teaching competencies, Instructor Quality, and Instructor Prompt feedback. - Based on these characteristics, the researcher has developed three sub-objectives. The first hypothesis was “There is a significant impact of instructors’ online teaching competencies on students’ engagement in online learning”. According to the hypotheses, the summary online teaching competencies’ regressions coefficient value is 0.289, which is a positive value. Further considering the sig value of online teaching competencies (0.000), it is less than 0.05. Then online teaching competencies’ have a positive significant impact on student engagement. The second hypothesis is “There is a significant impact of instructor quality on student engagement in online learning.

According to the hypotheses, the summary instructor quality regressions coefficient value is 0.302, which is a positive value. Further considering the sig value of instructor quality (0.000), it is less than 0.05. Instructor quality has a positive significant impact on student engagement in online education. The third hypothesis is “there is a significant impact of instructor feedback on student engagement in online learning”. According to the hypotheses summary instructor feedback regressions coefficient value is 0.290, which is a positive value. Further considering

the sig value of instructor feedback (0.000), it is less than 0.05. The instructor feedback has a positive significant impact on student engagement in online education. Therefore, all the hypotheses were accepted and all the independent variables were positively and significantly influenced to student engagement in online education.

Among the measures selected (Online Teaching Competencies, Instructor Quality, and Instructor Feedback) the most suitable measure is Instructor Quality. Because its regressions coefficient value is 0.302 compared with the Online Teaching Competencies B value (0.289) and Instructor Feedback (0.290). It means the students are more willing to participate in online lectures due to the quality of the instructor.

Overall, it can be decided that there is considerable participation in online learning. Because, there is a significant impact of instructor characteristics such as instructor online teaching competencies, instructor quality, and instructor prompt feedback on student engagement for online lectures. Instructor characteristics are important to attract students to online learning. According to the results, instructors need highly concerned about their teaching capabilities. Also, instructors need to redevelop their online teaching competencies and ability to provide prompt feedback (to the students as they are slightly low compared to the teaching quality).

## CONCLUSION AND IMPLICATIONS

According to the findings of this study, Instructor characteristics have considerably improved participation in online learning. Because, there is a positive and significant impact of instructor characteristics such as instructor online teaching competencies, instructor quality, and instructor prompt feedback on student engagement for online lectures. Instructor characteristics are important to attract students to online learning.

This positive influence is supported by many previous research findings in academic history Brophy and Good (1986) however some found that there is no relationship Hammond (2000) Further, this paper provides a review of the university grant commission, the Ministry of Higher Education, and other players to make decisions or revise decisions relating to online education in universities.

This study was limited to three characteristics but the effect of the other characteristics of the instructors was not discussed. For further research, other than the selected three characteristics can be taken into account.

**Keywords:** Instructor's quality, instructor promptness, online teaching, student engagement

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