

# Financial Impact of Online Education in the Film and Television Studies Degree Program: With Special Reference to the University of Kelaniya

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## 1. Introduction

The shift to online education due to the COVID-19 pandemic has significantly changed students' lives worldwide (Altun, 2023). For students in specialized fields like Film and Television Studies at the University of Kelaniya in Sri Lanka, these changes are even more pronounced. This study focuses on how online education has affected the financial status of these students, considering costs, internet expenses, and their preferred ways of learning.

Online education provides flexibility, enabling students to continue their studies amid disruptions. However, it introduces new financial burdens, particularly in Sri Lanka, where the pandemic has exacerbated economic challenges. With reduced household incomes due to the country's economic downturn, students struggle to afford the additional expenses of online learning, such as internet and digital devices (Lakmal, Khashunika, & Yatigamma, 2021).

While students may save on commuting and related expenses, online learning often requires increased spending on internet connections and digital devices. Film and Television Studies students, in particular, rely on high-speed internet for tasks like video streaming, editing, and using media-intensive applications (Kebritchi, Lipschuetz, & Santiago, 2017). In Sri Lanka, where economic challenges are prevalent, studying this group highlights the financial strain students face to stay connected and meet their academic requirements.

This research is essential for understanding the financial impact of online education on Film and Television Studies students at the University of Kelaniya. The findings will help educational institutions and policymakers create better support systems for students in this new learning environment.

*Research Problem:* How has the shift to online education impacted the financial expenditures and cost-related challenges of Film and Television Studies students at the University of Kelaniya?

### Research Objectives:

- To assess the perceptions of Film and Television Studies students regarding the cost-effectiveness of online education compared to traditional, in-person education.
- To identify the preferred mode of online learning for Film and Television Studies students at the University of Kelaniya, with a focus on its suitability for their academic needs.

## 2. Materials and Methods

When discussing the online learning impact on students, online education has impacted the financial situation of students, making it essential to evaluate such financial stresses (Dawson, 2006). This research aims to examine the financial impact of the transition to online education on Film and Television Studies students at the University of Kelaniya during. The study employs a quantitative methodology to analyze how online learning affects students' income,

educational expenses, and financial management. By gathering numerical data, it aims to identify trends and relationships, providing insights into the overall economic impact of online education on students.

**Population:** All the Film and Television Studies undergraduates, 225 students from the University of Kelaniya, Sri Lanka constituted the population of this study. The population encompassed male and female students hailing from various regions across the country.

**Sample:** For the sample, all the final year undergraduates (47 undergraduates) in the Film and Television Studies degree program at the University of Kelaniya, were selected using the purposive sampling technique. Final-year students were chosen as they represent the group with the longest exposure to online education throughout their academic program. This extended experience provides richer insights into the financial challenges posed by the transition to online learning.

**Data Collection Method:** A set of 10 questions is distributed to final year students enrolled in the Film and Television Studies degree program at the University of Kelaniya, Sri Lanka, using a Google Form. Students were informed about the study's purpose and provided consent before participating. Ethical measures, including anonymity and confidentiality, were upheld. The questionnaire collects data on students' financial situations, resource access, and perceptions of their online learning experiences.

### 3. Results and Discussion

According to Objective 01, which aims to assess the perceptions of Film and Television Studies students at the University of Kelaniya regarding the cost-effectiveness of online education compared to traditional, in-person education, here are the results.

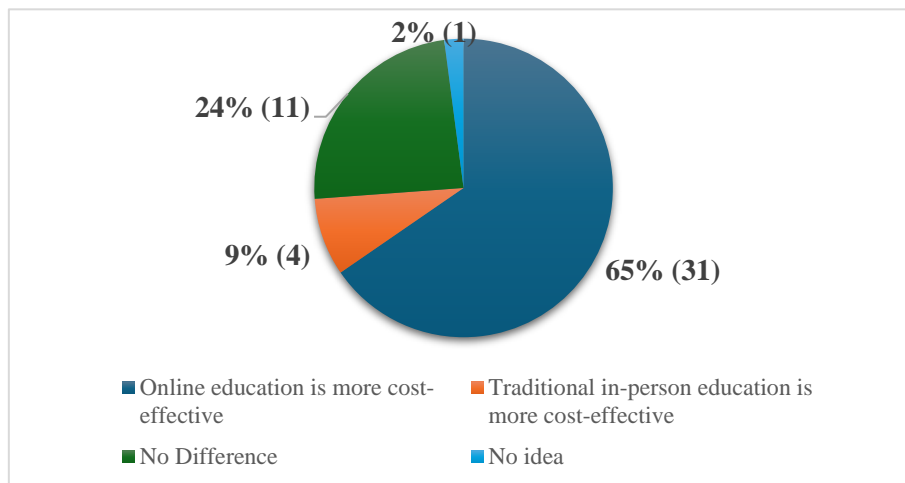


Figure 1: Opinions on the cost-effectiveness of online education compared to traditional education

The chart illustrates perceptions of the cost-effectiveness of online versus traditional in-person education. A majority (65%) view online education as more cost-effective, while 9% believe traditional education is more economical. Another 24% see no difference in cost-effectiveness, and 2% are uncertain or have no opinion. According to Objective 02, which aims to identify the preferred mode of online learning for Film and Television Studies students at the University of Kelaniya, with a focus on its suitability for their academic needs, here are the results,

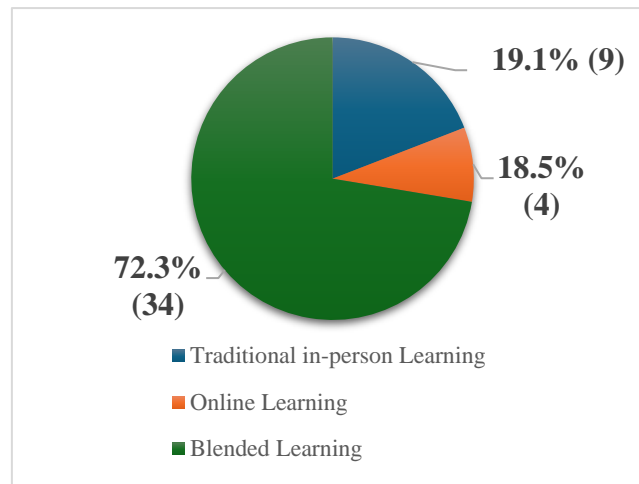


Figure 2: Preferred learning mode of Film and Television Studies undergraduates

In the chart, it's evident that among all the responses received, undergraduate preferences for different learning modes vary significantly. Notably, 73.2% of respondents express preference for blended learning, while 18.5% favor online learning. And 19.1% of respondents indicate preference for traditional, in-person learning.

According to the results of the questionnaire, the most preferred learning and teaching mode of Film and Television Studies students at the University of Kelaniya, is blended learning.

#### 4. Conclusions

The shift to online education has introduced significant financial challenges despite being cost-effective for many due to savings on commuting. The need for reliable internet access has increased costs, with students relying on family support, scholarships, or part-time jobs to cover these expenses. Blended learning, combining online theory sessions and in-person practicals, is preferred by Film and Television Studies students for its flexibility and efficiency, benefiting both students and teachers (Koumadoraki & Koumadoraki, 2023; Lakmal, Khashunika, & Yatigamma, 2021).

#### Suggestions:

- Increased Financial Aid: The university should offer more financial help specifically for internet costs to ensure all students can access online resources.
- Affordable Internet Plans: Working with internet providers to offer cheaper data packages for students can reduce financial stress.
- Blended Learning Programs: Creating strong blended learning programs can meet students' needs by combining online and traditional education.
- Support for Technology: Providing students with necessary digital devices or setting up a device lending library can help those who lack the required technology.

By addressing these areas, the University of Kelaniya can better support its Film and Television Studies students, helping them succeed in both online and blended learning environments.

#### 5. Keywords

COVID-19, Education, Learning, Online Education Challenges

## 6. References

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