

### **Difficulties faced in participating in online interactive sessions and factors influencing participation among medical undergraduates of the University of Jaffna**

Sathiyapradhap S<sup>1</sup>, Karunathilaka JKWHK<sup>1</sup>, Zujani MF<sup>1</sup>, Sathir SM<sup>1</sup>, Adikari AMDT<sup>1</sup>, Surenthirakumaran R<sup>2</sup>, Kumaran S<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup>*Faculty of Medicine, University of Jaffna*

<sup>2</sup>*Department of Community and Family Medicine, University of Jaffna*

**Background and Objective:** Online interactive sessions became a leading alternative teaching method during the Covid-19 pandemic in Sri Lanka. This study aimed to determine the difficulties faced in participating in online interactive sessions and to describe the influence of socio-economic and academic factors and internet connectivity, on participation among medical undergraduates of the University of Jaffna.

**Methods:** An institution-based descriptive cross-sectional study was carried out among medical undergraduates of the University of Jaffna using a stratified sampling technique. A self-administered questionnaire was used to collect data. Assessment of difficulty in participating in online interactive sessions was surveyed using a 5-point Likert scale. The chi-squared test was applied to measure the association between difficulties in participation and socio-economic, academic factors, and internet connectivity.

**Results:** Of 379 participants, 18.7% (n=71), 20.6% (n=78), 31.1% (n=118), and 29.6% (n=112) were from 38<sup>th</sup>, 39<sup>th</sup>, 40<sup>th</sup> and 41<sup>st</sup> batches, respectively. Among the students, 21.2% (n=81) were from the Jaffna district. Difficulties with participating in online interactive sessions were reported by 22.4% (n=85). PowerPoint Presentation was the preferred mode of teaching of the majority [88.4%, (n=335)]. Over three-quarters (76.6%) reported no internet connectivity or network disruption while following the sessions. Difficulties with participating in online interactive sessions had a statistically significant association with the permanent residence of the students (p=0.021), stability of internet connection (p<0.001), and the mode of teaching (p<0.001).

**Conclusions:** Even though over 75% reported that they had no internet connectivity/interruption, one-quarter complained that they faced difficulties while participating in online interactive sessions. The latter may be due to other sorts of problems, including health issues, time management, interaction with lecturers, and the technology knowledge of students.

**Keywords:** Online interactive sessions, Medical undergraduates, Difficulties, Distance learning, Jaffna.