Sociological Analysis of University Students' Accommodation Issues in Sri Lanka

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Abstract

This paper discusses the accommodation related issues faced by university students during their study period. This also analyses the relationship of accommodation issues with other issues (faced by the students) and overall implication on students' (their) educational achievements. A stratified sample of 1000 students of a main state university in Sri Lanka located in suburban area of the City of Colombo was used to analyze the empirical situation instead of theoretical analysis over the problem. A questionnaire survey, Group Discussions, In-depth interviews, Interview of Experts were used as major data collection techniques. By means of descriptive statistics, a critical discussion was made having synthesized and analyzed gathered data and information. The study found that the accommodation problem of university students is critical and highly related to the economic status of the family. Students who don't have accommodations within the university premise are facing more and complex problems comparatively to the students who reside in hostels within the university premise. As private boarding places are more expensive, some students who belong to lower social class in Humanities and Social Sciences, as well as Management faculties, tend to use university hostels illegally. This practice is one of the major reasons for the problem of congestion and lack of essential resources and infrastructure

facilities in hostels. The other significant factor found by this study is that there is a great link with students' personal, social, economic and education problems with their accommodation facilities. Further, it is clearly identified a positive relationship between distance to the university and performance of the students. Finally, it is noted that accommodation issues are directly affecting on producing effective graduates and outcomes of the accommodation issues have not been scientifically analyzed. Hence, it is recommended to the university authority to improve the necessary physical, environment, social and education facilities, taking into consideration the rapid development of the global education needs and the necessary structural and functional changes of the current Sri Lankan university education system.

Keywords: Accommodation, Education Achievements, Educational Issues, Hostel Facilities, University Students

Introduction

In general, many universities are located in urban areas. For the purpose of higher education, many university students have to leave from their homes, where they used to stay for a long time. Students, who live within commuting distance, especially in major towns, can travel to universities from their homes. However, it is not possible for students travelling from far-off places. As Shoukat *et al.* (2013) mentioned, "Student Housing" is a great challenge that students need to face while they are preparing for studies in every semester. Therefore, universities have to organize accommodation services in order to operate education programmes smoothly. Previous studies during last few decades and public views propose that university students accommodation facilities have been a substantial issue in Sri Lanka and many other countries in the world (Hutt, 1970; Hiuen Tsang, 1983; Marasinghe, 1992; Rathnapala, 2001; Thomas, 2002; Isaac, 2005; Ali, Shoukat, *et al* 2013; Modebelu *et al* 2014; Gardner, 2016).

At the beginning of the university system in Sri Lanka, almost all students were provided accommodation facilities. The first state-sponsored university (earlier it was introduced as college) in Sri Lanka was established in 1920 which had some residential facilities in Colombo. In 1952 the Faculties of Arts and Oriental studies of the University of Colombo were shifted to Peradeniya as a fully residential university with 820 students. The even University of Peradeniya is presently not in a position to provide accommodation facilities to all its' students due to increased enrolment, apart from other universities, it provides accommodation facilities for more than 75% of its' students by 1990s (Marasinghe, 1992). This has been further increased during the recent past.

Compared with the University of Peradeniya, many students who are enrolled in other universities in the country do not have adequate hostel facilities at their universities. Therefore, such students have to find boarding places close to their universities. However, a higher number of students can't find suitable boarding places due to economic problems and some other reasons. As Rathnapala (2001) mentions, "*If they find a boarding place or hostel, their lives at those places are not comfortable*". Marasinghe, (1992) indicated, even though students' hostels must be aesthetically designed to create conditions of peace and comfort, the hostels provided by most universities are not in required standards. Even though some universities try to solve this issue expanding accommodation facilities through building new hostels, renting houses close to universities etc, in many occasions, they don't have taken into consideration the rapidly changing needs of the current university students.

Students should have certain basic needs to make maximum use of given opportunities for learning. University students' residential facilities are considered as a basic requirement of the learning

environment (University Grants Commission, 2004). If university students' basic facilities are not fulfilled, it will directly effect on their studies. Confirming this, Shoukat *et al.* (2013) describe that having a safe, comfortable place to live is an essential part of being able to focus and do good work. Further, Modebelu *et al.* (2014) explain that student learning can be enhanced and made more effective when learning environment is made adequate and appropriate. In here they further emphasized that Students' hostel management is very vital in attaining a quality education.

Hence, this paper attempts to discuss the university students accommodation related issues in Sri Lankan universities presenting the result of an empirical study and a review of the literature.

The methodology of the study

A comprehensive theoretical review on relevant aspects including socio-psychosocial factors related to university students' accommodation was done initially to strengthen the empirical study. One thousand (1000) stratified sample of students from the University of Sri Jayewardenepura was used for primary data collection. The sample consisted as 400 from Faculty of Management and Commerce, 300 from Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences, 150 from Faculty of Science and 150 from Faculty of Medicine proportionately from the registered students in the year. Questionnaire Survey, Group Discussions, In-depth Interviews, Contacting Experts were the techniques of data collection. The paper is descriptively presented by synthesizing and analysing gathered data and literature.

Theoretical Review of University Accommodation Issues

Education is a prime wealth of a nation. It is one of the basic needs and it turns a right of all human beings. Without education, dignified life is unthinkable in the social, democratic and redistributive state (Cloete and Moja, 2005). Students are key

expectations of society and also the main activists in future development. University education is a superb level of the formal higher education system, which helps to produce excellent leaders for the relevant sectors in a country. In sociological point of view, the university is an important part of educational institution that highly influences on individuals' personal, social and economic development and in turns, it determines the "place of the person" in modern knowledge-based society. Therefore, having university level qualification is one of the greatest achievements in many individuals' lives.

The importance of education has been recognized as an important factor in leading a better life since centuries ago. Hiuen Tsang (1983) pointed out that the students of Nalanda[6] in 7[th]centuary A.D. were provided with four requisites as food, lodging, clothing and medicine. Accordingly, students' accommodation has been identified as a significant requirement of university students all over the world for many decades. Hutt (1970**)** says that various surveys in several universities in England have confirmed that more than 70% of students' preference for better forms of accommodation. A recent survey (Gardner, 2016) conducted covering major university cities in Germany has found that university students are having increasing difficulties in finding accommodation and, therefore, the housing situation for students appears to have worsened in many cities. Furthermore, highlighting the statement of German Student Welfare Service, it was emphasized that rising such student numbers were aggravating the situation (Gardner, 2016). In Kenya, after the rapid expansion of higher education, far greater numbers of students have opportunities to have higher studies than a decade ago, but universities are hard-pressed to accommodate them in residences (Waruru, 2013).

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[6] Nalanda was a great education institution established for Buddhist monks in India.

Further, Modebelu *et al.* (2014) have identified several issues relating to university students' accommodation in Nigeria such as students do not have sufficient hostel accommodation, students live up to eight in a hostel room, poor spacing and congestion of facilities exist in the rooms, some students prefer to live in hostel throughout their study period if opportune, students struggle frequently over bed space and most of the time struggles lead to fighting, increase in enrollment of students promotes accommodation problems, inadequate funding for hostel buildings escalates students' hostel accommodation problems, students who live outside the hostels are usually late to lectures, students are provided hostel accommodation facilities less than other listed environmental factors etc.

Except that, there is a number of many other issues faced by the students such as safety, privacy, space etc. When considering safety, it is an issue throughout the study period of students. Even though universities employ security staffs to keep hostels safely when students move from university premise they cannot expect that security furthermore. On the other hand, even within the university security, some students have to face difficulties of some of their roommates' misbehaviour activities such as addiction to alcohol or drugs, some make big noises and arrange musical parties without considering the others' studies etc.

As Shoukat*, et al.* (2013) mention, some students don't have proper space to work, for example, music students who need a quiet rehearsal space or art students who need a place to work and store materials. They further explain that Student housing often means a large number of people living in a limited space, which can cause problems with privacy. Roommates sharing bathrooms and other shared spaces such as study lounges and kitchens may not provide peace and quiet needed to study or carry on a phone conversation (Shoukat *et al.* 2013). Amidst such environment,

many students in hostels or boarding places have to face many difficulties mostly without having a quiet place which essentially needs for a better concentration on studies as well as it negatively effects on their privacy.

Further Shoukat *et al.* (2013) pointed out that, high demand for student housing near urban campuses or large schools may cause real estate prices to rise, making nearby apartments and rental houses unaffordable for students. Confirming above opinion, Ezeukwu (2009) tries to explain accommodation facilities as a central point, around which, all other activities of students in an institution revolve and as an example he pointed out that overcrowding in a room is unhealthy, when two students share a small bed, it is difficult to trunk, hence, fail to sleep well and consequently, they end up sleeping in the class rather than listening to lectures or studying (in Modebelu *et al.*, 2014). The other hand, it further effects on their physical health as well as on their mental health.

Comparing with many other countries, the situation is most similar in Sri Lanka. By the year 2015, the university system in Sri Lanka has been expanded up to 15 universities, six undergraduate institutes, several campuses and locations. By 2016 the total student population of UGC intakes is 86,321 (www. ugc.ac.lk, accessed in 25.1.2017). Many university students in Sri Lanka come from distant and rural areas, and they need accommodation facilities within or near the university so that they may fit easily into the university environment and concentrate properly on their education activities (University Grants Commission, 2004). However, almost all universities do not have adequate accommodation facilities for their intakes, and many of them are failed to provide even most basic needs for the students accommodated in university hostels.

Some existing university hostels are too old and built many decades ago, and the conditions of houses renting by the universities are mostly not in the required conditions which help to fulfil current needs of the university students as they are not built for hostel purposes. Highly developing global society is expecting well-qualified graduates with sound personality to face challenges successfully within a competitive globalized world. Therefore, when providing accommodation facilities, Sri Lankan universities should consider relevant conditions and demands of the global university system. Teaching-learning methods are improving rapidly in worldwide with the higher usage of modern technology. As a lower middle-income country with an educated nation, knowledge and usage of modern technology such as a computer, internet etc. are rapidly increasing among student population in Sri Lanka. All most all university students are familiar with modern technology and also knowledge of information technology is must for university students. Almost all students have to spend many hours daily with a computer for their learning purposes. Hence providing necessary infrastructure facilities is essential and university hostels should be arranged accordingly.

The other considerable fact is, as a nation of knowledge-based society, demand for university education is significantly increasing in Sri Lanka like many other countries worldwide. A number of students registered for university education is increasing year by year. In there, it can be seen a greater gender imbalance as an increasing trend of female students in almost all degree programs (please see students enrolments in www.ugc.com, www.sjp.ac.lk). Further, a number of students who are engaged in part-time jobs and training while studying and married students etc are also some increasing trends of current university education sector in Sri Lankan society.

Except that, higher education sector in Sri Lanka is targeting to attract foreign students, and universities are frequently organizing international conferences, workshops, training programs, discussions, research, short courses, split programs etc with foreign scholars. Therefore, university accommodation facilities should be designed in order to fulfil such essentials. In addition to that, accommodation facilities should be improved for the convenience of differently able students too. By now developed countries worldwide have already developed their public buildings and other infrastructure facilities taking into consideration the convenience of the differently able community (Ariyawansa, 2009). Although a considerable number of differently able students are studying in Sri Lankan universities, no suitable facilities for them in their residing places.

The situation of private boarding places is more critical than university hostels. Marasinghe (1992) stated that there are restrictions overuse of water and electricity too. Though such limitations are not practised in university hostels, both places are generally overcrowded by accommodating four or more students in a single room (Perera, 2013b). Such shortcomings have been identified as major reasons for the university students' unrest which prevail for several decades (Rathnapala, 2001; Economic Review, 1983).

Theoretically, for a healthy physical and mental life, people need nutritious and well-balanced meals. Students' health depends on clean drinking water, sufficient wholesome food, and secure shelter including adequate, comfortable sleeping (accommodation), which are considered as effective instruments for student learning and general welfare (Modebelu *et al.*, 2014). However, when considering university students situation, as young students, they need a higher percentage of calorie. For that, they should have the opportunity to have nutritious food at an affordable price.

However, the majority of students cannot take enough food for three meals per day (Rathnapala, 2001; Perera, 2013a). Further, Marasinghe (1992) states, *"Even though meals are provided by the university through a system of canteens leased out to private caterers with many subsidies given by the university, the quality of meals provided by canteens are generally in poor quality"*. After two-three decades, even at present the situation of university hostels, as well as the canteens and there services, are not adequately developed to cater to students' food needs properly (Perera, 2013a).

A most significant factor which should be highly considered here is, many students who accommodated at university hostels are included in low-income families. The other hand '*belonging to low-income family'* is one of the eligibility criteria to have hostel facilities (University Grant Commission, 2004). Majority of these students cannot take wholesome food with good quality and quantity because of financial difficulties they are facing. Research evidences (Rathnapala 2001; Perera, 2013a) show that students who don't have proper accommodation and enough diet they have to face numerous other problems relating to their physical and mental health such as some diseases like gastritis, body weaknesses, laziness, feeling of drowsy, weaknesses in eyes, personality disorders, psychological problems etc. Consequences of all those may affect negatively on their education as less concentration, negligence of academic work and low achievements in education.

Highlighting Maslow's " need hierarchy", as Arnold and Feldman (1986) pointed out, without fulfilling the basic needs such as food, drink and shelter, it is not easy to achieve other needs Perera, 2013b). Confirming this, Modebelu *et al.* (2014) mention *"… comprehensive housing policy for adequate management of students' hostel accommodation problems is in line with Maslow's*

hierarchy of needs classification". Taking into consideration the findings of their study, they further explained how decent shelter motivates individuals to higher productivity (Modebelu *et al.*, 2014). Ballantine, (1997) also agreed with this and emphasized that students who are in hunger or lack of affection at home are more likely to be disruptive. Conducting studies, Gunathilake and colleagues (2005) and Senadeera (1999) further revealed that Arts and Management students behave more disruptively in Sri Lankan universities. Perera (2013 b) also mentioned that compared to their counterparts, the majority of Arts and Management students belong to families who cannot supply basic needs properly for their children due to economic difficulties, behave more disruptively than other students.

Accommodation facilities that students have during their university studies can be categorized into five types as,
- Student's own homes
- Students relative's /friend's place
- Private boarding places
- University hostels (legal occupants)
- University hostels (Illegal occupants)

Many urban university students do not belong to lower social class families. Some families of such students are residing in urban areas or closer to cities mainly to give better education to their children. As a considerable number of children of urban poor families dropout from the schools before they reach to O/L examination or after their A/L (Dharmarathne *et al.* 1998; ILO, 2005) students belong to the families of urban middle and upper social classes have more chances to enter the universities. In this way, many urban students have more opportunities to get university education while living at home with their relatives with necessary facilities. They don't get the experience of homesick or any type of

unfamiliarity and cultural shock etc. compared with the other students. Except that, who reside outside of their homes have to face many social, economic and psychological difficulties. Such students have to adopt two different contexts as "outside to home" and "urban living environment".

However, like Isaac (2005) stated, students who live with their parents have some disadvantages such as difficulties in having a social life at university. He further emphasizes that "*Housing students on campus gives coherence and unity to the broader student population*". Supporting to this statement, Altschuler & Kramnick, (1999) provide the empirical evidence to show that there exists a clear connection between stable accommodation on campus and relative success in studies, and shared circumstances and experiences tend to lead students identifying with each other in a way that is less obvious in more 'computer-based' campuses. Meanwhile, highlighting their study, Shoukat *et al.* (2013) indicate that the performance of graduate students do not vary with accommodation either they are living in a hostel or living at their homes. They further explained that hostel life might be beneficial as it provides an environment or peer study groups, but according to the findings of their research study, its effect is not significant on students' performance.

Students who are not eligible to have university accommodation facilities have to find another place to stay during their study period. Mainly the majority of Sri Lankan university students cannot afford the high cost of charges for outside boarding places. Except this, they also have to face many social disadvantages. Empirical evidence shows that there is a greater level of academic success among students who live in a stable and supportive non-residential environment (Issac, 2005). However, Issac (2005) further mentioned that non-residential students of College encounter problems of neighbourhood disputes, severed landlords

and landladies relationships, noise pollution, environmental pollution, lack of resting places, frequent water shortages, frequent disputes over payment of monthly electricity bills and less value for money for their various rented apartments.

Further, students who don't have university accommodation facilities are 'more likely to feel marginalized from their peers and that they occupy a lower position' (Thomas, 2002). Isaac (2005) also agreed with this and pointed out that, students whom failed to get a place in university accommodation facilities, adversely affects their opportunities to make friends. On the other hand, for the majority of students can be frightening and uneasiness as this will be the first time they have to live away from home, and sharing boarding places with unknown people. Those who found themselves living with compatible others are most positive in university life. However, for students who had more difficulties settling into university life, it was often people in their accommodation who provided emotional support when they were feeling uncertain about their new situation (Issac, 2005). Except that, students who receive university accommodation facilities mostly have opportunities to share their ideas, experiences, friendship and social interaction with their colleagues.

The factors noted in the above discussion are intensified due to some particular socio-psychological and demographical factors in current Sri Lanka. Accordingly, the "university accommodation issues" are increased due to changing university environment ("Internal factors") and external environment ("external factors") as illustrated by the following diagram.

Diagram 01 – Accommodation Problems
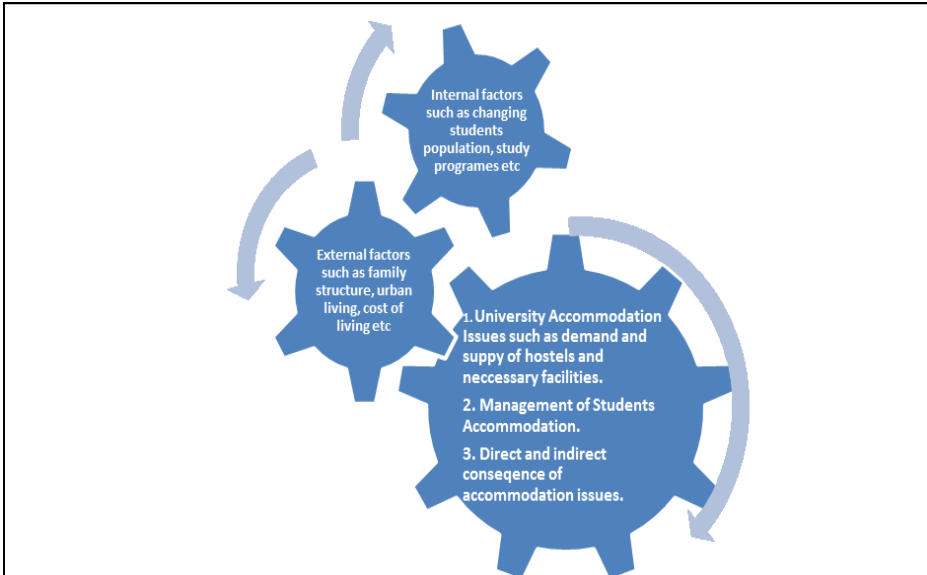
Internal Factors: Increasing total student population, changing gender ratio (an increase of girls), diverse nature of academic calendar, students' activities and so on.

External Factors: Socioeconomic and demographical background and personality characteristics of the young generation (students) for instance student who is the only child of the family have particular personality type such as the inability to do some works by him/ herself, relationship problems when moving with others, sharing and team spirit related issues etc. Families are hiving only child who has an only paper qualification, the child with urban fashion, children who have been poorly inculcated team spirit, sharing and so on.

Accommodation Issue: As per the diagram, university accommodation problem is aggravated due to internal and external situations. The shape of the problem can be explained in three levels. Demand and supply of accommodation is the basic level.

Secondly, rather than a mere supply of accommodation, it should be managed systematically. The third level is identification and handling of accommodation related direct and indirect consequences that affecting educational achievements and beyond the outcomes of graduates. Hence, the accommodation issues should be analyzed having considered internal and external factors seriously.

Need analysis of students' accommodation is essential in addressing the first level of the issue. Demand for rooms (bed and space), facilities, duration, special requirements, gender aspects, are some areas to be considered.

In the next level of understanding accommodation issues, there are several aspects of managing the accommodation.
  (a) General maintenance of premises and facilities.
  (b) Hygienic aspects such as bathrooms, washrooms, food & drinks, air and lights etc.
  (c) General and special security of students and assets.
  (d) Psychological and Sociological aspects such as leisure and pleasure, academic climate, the dignity of undergraduates, privacy, the need of group behaviour, link with friends and relatives, cultural needs, political needs, controlling misbehaviour etc.

Diagram 02 – Accommodation Problems
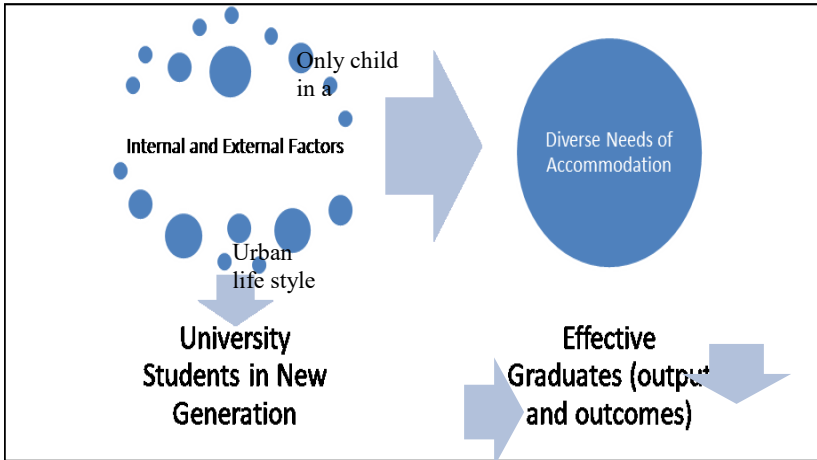
Empirical Evidence: A case of University of Sri Jayewardenepura

Provision of accommodation is a more expensive and complicated matter. Particularly, in Sri Lanka, this is severe as universities have to provide education for free of charges and charging only a nominal fee for the accommodation. Universities are not in a position to provide accommodation facilities to all needed students (Student Welfare Records, USJP, 2016). Even though the university provides hostel facilities, there are several issues mainly due to the insufficiency of rooms compared to the increasing number of student enrolments (University Grants Commission, 2004). Hence, to provide the available hostels, the university adopts many criteria to select students. These criteria also hint about different dimensions of students' problems. The followings are the eligibility criteria adopted by the university at present.

- **Year of study** - students in the first and final year are given priority. Some universities restrict only for first and final years. Since the first years have more adjustment problems at the beginning while final years have to give more weight

on studies. Therefore, it is expected that hostel facilities help them to solve their issues.

- **Distance** - from 30kms away from home to university (this depends on specific circumstances, available transport facilities, schedules of different programs etc).

- **Parental income** - the economic status of the student's family, for instance, "Samurdhi" beneficiaries are given priority in providing hostel facilities by the university.

- **The particular type of students** such as differently able students, students suffering from special kind of diseases and students involved in sports etc. are given special consideration in providing hostel facilities (University Grants Commission, 2004).

Generally, giving priority for above-mentioned requirements hostel facilities are granted for the students in many universities in the country. Table 01 shows a number of students registered in the year 2013 in each faculty of University of Sri Jayewardenepura (USJP).

Table 01- Students registered during 2013 – 2017 in USJP

Faculty	Male					Female				
	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017
Humanities and Social Sciences	598	598	630	647	639	2388	2557	2694	2647	2694
Commerce and Management	2229	2204	2176	1340	1843	2243	2857	2898	2949	2979
Applied Science	817	879	889	846	840	1157	1210	1268	1301	1358
Medical Sciences	53	66	75	69	76	98	155	149	159	152

Source: Academic, Student Affairs & Publications Branch, USJP 2013-2017, Records of Faculty of Medicine USJP

Figures of the above table show a greater gender imbalance of students in each faculty, i.e. the number of female students exceeds the number of male students. When considering the supplying of

accommodation facilities for female students, it is essential to draw attention to more facilities for female students' in order to fulfil their biological, social and personal needs than male students. Table No: 02 shows a number of students who were eligible to receive university accommodations during the last five years.

Table No: 02 – No of students who applied & received hostels in USJP (2012 – 2016)

	Number of students who apply for the hostels					Number of students who were eligible to receive the hostels				
	2012	**2013**	**2014**	**2015**	**2016**	**2012**	**2013**	**2014**	**2015**	**2016**
Rev. students	90	94	120	94	105	90	94	120	94	105
Male	740	1075	1158	1075	1037	656	966	420	966	975
Female	2796	2780	3141	2780	3820	2340	2458	2773	2458	3402
Total	3626	3949	4419	3949	4962	3086	3518	3313	3518	4482

Source: Student Welfare Records, USJP, 2016

Even though all students who applied for hostel facilities did not receive hostels by 2016, the number of hostel receivers has been increased due to actions taken by university authority. Accordingly, even if the supply of hostels is increased, related issues with accommodation such as overcrowding and other infrastructure facilities and food issue etc are not taken into adequate consideration. For an instant, as respondents' opinions, even though boys' rooms are smaller than girls, generally about 10-12 male students live in a single room with four beds while about 7-8 female students are sharing a room with six beds. Ezeukwu (2009) tried to explain accommodation facilities as a turning point, around which, all other activities of students in an institution revolve and as an example he pointed out that overcrowding in a room is unhealthy, when two students share a small bed, it is difficult to trunk, hence, fail to sleep well and consequently, they end up sleeping in the class rather than listening to lectures or studying (in Modebelu et al., 2014). This situation negatively affects on students education achievements.

In 2013, University of Sri Jayewardenepura recorded the total student population as 10455. Out of that, 3457 students were eligible to receive university accommodations according to the set criteria. However, except Medical students, usually, students who are not included in above categories also use the hostels without permission. It's called "*Gaje Gahanawa*" (illegally using hostels)) in the university sub-cultural language. Mostly male students use hostels illegally than girls.

Table 03 - Residential place of students

Residence	Faculty			
	Arts	**Management**	**Science**	**Medicine**
	%	**%**	**%**	
No Reply	0	.4	0	0
Home	8.2	31.0	45.9	48.5
Hostel	62.7	31.0	27.1	0
Private Boarding	20.9	34.3	21.6	45.5
Relative's Place	6.3	2.9	2.7	6.0
Other*	1.9	0.4	2.7	0
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0

Source: Survey data

Note: * Married students live with spouses in a rented annexe of a house, a room or a friend's place.

This study revealed that not only current students but some recently passed out students and friends of current students are also occupying in university hostels without permission. Some of them are engaging in jobs, following courses or involving with political activities inside as well as outside the university. This caused to increase in the occupancy rate of a room. Within this context, facilities about 100 students have to share among about 400 students. Negative consequences of this situation have to be faced by both university administrators as well as students. University has to bear higher water and electricity bills and maintenance cost etc while students have to depend on minimal facilities with great

difficulties particularly when using bathrooms and toilets etc. as hostels are highly congested. A dilemma under this circumstance is whether university hostels provide suitable accommodations for students facilitating their learning.

However, as explained by Isaac (2005) and Altschuler & Kramnick (1999), this study also clearly identified that students gain more advantages in having accommodation facilities within university premises. Therefore, students like to stay in hostels even amidst any difficulty because staying in a university hostel; students can gain more advantages compared to private boarding places. According to discussions made with students, it was found many benefits they can gain from living in hostels such as follows.

- Students have to pay a nominal fee. Until recent years, it was Rs 350/=, and it is increased up to Rs500/= until most recently, and it has increased Rs 750/= per annum at present. For illegal occupant, the cost is zero. The minimum cost of a private boarding house is more than Rs.4500/= per month. The condition of such rooms and facilities are very poor compared to university hostels.
- Hostels are on university premises or very close to the university. Therefore, students do not need to spend money on travelling, save time and reduce fatigue.
- Safety of university hostels is very high and no guarantee in some private places at all.
- Facilities for relaxation and recreations are available within university and hostels to a greater extent and not at all in private places.
- No restrictions or limitations for the use of water and electricity in university hostels. In private places, students have to suffer severely from limitations of facilities, particularly for girls.

- University is situated in a good location where it is easy to fulfil many needs and wants such as main roads, shops, banks, government and main private institutions etc.
- Students do not feel loneliness because many students are around them and one can get help soon when needed in university hostels.
- Familiarity with the environment is very high in university hostels.
- Better academic environment than in outside boarding places.
- Feeling of being in university which is not in private boarding places.
- More companionship among various students is possible in university hostels.

To provide hostel facilities, university spends a huge amount of money annually. It supplies many needs of students charging very small amount compared to total expenditure. Illegal hostel users increase expenses of the university to maintaining hostels more than three to four times. Even though the university takes many steps to minimize students' illegal occupations in hostels, it is difficult to address the issue. The main reason is that legal occupants allow others to stay with them sharing available limited resources because of their friendship, feeling of cooperation, social integration and more strongly as a practice of well-established university sub-culture. Accordingly, it is proved that many characteristics of university subculture has been created based on students' needs, wants, problems and difficulties etc. Blake (1990:08) mentioned, within university subculture students try to have collective solutions for their common problems. In that point of view, not only their political activities, demands, demonstrations, strikes and boycott classes etc but also their day to

day lives at university are highly characterized according to its' subculture.

However, many students stated that providing essential accommodation facilities is the responsibility of the university authority. Some students have extreme critiques on this, and according to them, university authority is not taking '*any actions'* to solve their welfare problems. They questioned as; "*an illegal usage of hostels completely be prohibited? "Can university provide hostel facilities to all needed students? Replied, themselves as "Cannot, because available hostels are not enough for the demand*". Students further blamed university authority for the action taken recently to accommodate six students per room where space is enough only for four students. Until recent years, four of them used one room, but now the same room is given for six students. The counter-argument of a warden of girls' hostel is that "*if it is possibly more than six to share a room illegally why six cannot share it legally*?" This arguments and counter-arguments imply the degree of struggle over the accommodation issue.

However, these actions and reactions of university authority and students have brought many problems to both parties. When taking into consideration the above facts with respondents' current residential facilities, it is clear that Medical and Science students have more opportunities to enjoy with such privileges as nearly 50% of them coming to university from their own homes. Nearly 1/3rd of Management students are also travelling to the university from their homes and enjoy more facilities with their families. However, the least percentage of Humanities and Social Sciences students, i.e. 08 % only have chances to come to the university from their own homes. This fact further implies that comparing with other faculties, majority of Humanities and Social Sciences students coming from long distances to university. Proving this, table No 03 shows that 62.7% of Humanities and Social Sciences

students have university hostel facilities. Legal, as well as illegal hostel users, are included in this figure.

Further, this study found that the main reason for the illegal use of hostels is the economic difficulties of students. As stated by eminent scholars such as De Silva (1977), Hettige (1992), Senadeera (1999) and Rathnapala, (2001), the majority of students in Humanities and Social Sciences faculties belong to poor families. In several decades ago Jayarathna report also pointed out that lack of suitable accommodation has imposed an extra heavy burden on the students from the village (Ministry of Education, 1971). If students don't have accommodation facilities at an affordable price provided by the university, they have to find out boarding places from outside. The charges of private boarding places closer to the university are very high with poor facilities.

However, students who belong to well to do families do not face many difficulties in this regard. They can find boarding places with good conditions and better facilities as they can afford higher prices. Majority of medical students, i.e. 45% who belong to well to do families are able to find accommodation at better boarding houses with more facilities and none of them residing in university hostel during their 3rd year of the university. On the one hand, they don't occupy in hostels illegally and, the other hand, many of them cannot claim hostels during their 3rd year as they are not included to categories which are taken into consideration to provide hostels for middle years of study programs.

Table 04 – Satisfaction of the space students have at their residing places

Space	Faculty			
	Humanities and Social Sciences	Management	Science	Medicine
	%	%	%	%
No Reply	0.6	0.8	0	0
V. Good	13.9	28.5	37.8	54.5
Good	14.6	24.3	18.9	27.3
Fair	38.0	24.7	24.4	18.2
Bad	23.4	18.8	18.9	0
V. Bad	9.5	2.9	0	0
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0

Source: Survey data

University students should have good space in their living places as it positively affects their mentality. Without good mentality, they cannot concentrate properly on their studies (Perera, 2008). Accordingly, compared to others, the highest number of Medical students, i.e. 55% revealed that they are highly satisfied with space at their residing places whereas 27% accepted it as good. Further, 56% of Science students and 52 % of Management students also mentioned that space that they have is good or very good while a less percentage, i.e. 28% of Humanities and Social Sciences students indicate space they have at their living places is good or very good. The main reason for this different experience of space between Humanities and Social Sciences and other faculty students is associated with the quality of residences. A majority of students who replied that their space is good or very good are residing in their own homes or better private boarding places or relative's places.

Table 05 - Surrounding environment of students' residence

Residence	Environment					
	Very Good		Good		Fair	
	Count	%	Count	%	Count	%
Home	106	44.5	05	13.9	09	4.7
Hostel	45	18.9	21	58.3	116	60.8

Private Boarding	70	29.5	07	19.4	61	31.9
Relative's Place	12	5.0	03	8.4	05	2.6
Other	05	2.1	0	0	0	0
Total	238	100	36	100	191	100

Source: Survey data

According to sociological perspective, living environment highly affects an individual's life. The pleasant environment helps a person to emerge himself with his full potentials. Students should be able to concentrate properly on their studies in order to reach better educational achievements. For that, university students should have a proper living environment in which they can maintain sound physical and mental health. The living environment is a wider concept and difficult to demarcate by boundaries. However, herein the environment means, a surrounding area where students are living, studying, enjoying and maintaining relationships with others and so on. About 45% of students, who are residing in their homes with family, indicated that their surrounding area is very good whereas another 14% said as it is good. Meanwhile, nearly 50% of students who are residing in private boarding places also indicate that their environment is very good or good. However, the majority of students, i.e. 61% who are occupying in the university hostels said the environment is fairly good. Accordingly, it seems that the majority of students satisfy their living environment.

Table 06 - Distance to the university from a residential place

Distance	Faculty			
	Humanities and Social Sciences	Management	Science	Medicine
	%	%	%	%
No Reply	1.3	1.7	0	3.0
Highly satisfy	19.6	32.3	29.7	48.5

| Satisfy	42.4	35.1	40.6	21.2
Less Satisfy	28.5	22.2	27.0	24.3
No Satisfy	6.3	7.9	2.7	3.0
Not at all	1.9	0.8	0	0.0
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0

Source: Survey data

The distance from the place of residence to the university directly or indirectly creates various types of troubles such as;

- Late attendance or absent to lectures.
- Long distance travel takes more time to reach to university and increase fatigue.
- With tired feelings, students cannot concentrate properly on studies.
- Wasting time reduce time allocated for studies, and extracurricular activities such as sports, aesthetic and creative work and also maintaining social relationships.
- Finally, all such experiences negatively affect on students mental health which highly influence on their educational achievements.

Agron's (1997) findings are also similar to this study. He reported pointing out studies in North America that students in the hall of residence have higher Grade Point Averages, higher retention of their grades, are able to take on more credit hours and have the ability to form connections with faculty members. They also have a higher propensity to be more involved in students' leadership and politics on campus. Modebelu *et al.* (2014) agreed that lateness to lectures as a result of students living outside of hostel affects students academically, especially when they come late to lectures, missing irreparable information. It also compels them to borrow notes which they may not understand. They are in the habit of leaving the classroom early for homes for safety and consequently,

they lose valuable time for studies. The following figure No 03 illustrates the phenomenon.

Figure 03 - Distance to the university vs performance
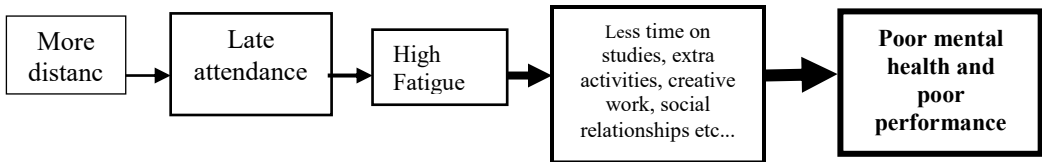
According to this study, no considerable amount of students indicate that distance from their residence place to the university is unsatisfactory. Most hostels are located inside the university or very close to the university. However, considerable fact is even though the majority of medical students, nearly 50%, highly satisfied with distance from residence to university are not residing at university hostels.

Within this context, it is clear that students' accommodation is so vital. Therefore, it is essential to take necessary actions to create a proper academic environment for quality teaching and learning giving preferential treatment to other factors that promote to produce quality graduates. As Lord Buddha preached 'giving shelter is like giving everything' (Gnanananda, 2004). Therefore students, as other human beings should be sheltered before settling for the studies. Resources which invest in creating a sound physical learning environment at the education institutions means that it has been invested most valuable resources for the future which will be the harvest of highly intellectual human resource which should have the better physical and mental health to give leadership not only to current society but also to future generations.

Concluding Remarks

Findings of this study proved that one of the major problems that university students faced is "lack of accommodation facilities", which also relates to the affordability of families for quality accommodation. Some students tend to use university hostels illegally, and the study found main reason for the problem of congestion and lack of essential resources and infrastructure facilities at hostels is overcrowding of hostels which are occupied more than thrice of the required number of students.

Proving the "economic difficulties" as the main reason for the illegal use of hostels, a higher number of Humanities and Social Sciences and Management students from families with economic difficulties are accommodated in hostels. At the same time, none of the students from Medical faculty and a few Science students uses hostels during their middle years. The main reason for that is the capability of their families to provide private boarding places with necessary facilities.

Except for economic reasons, many students like to have university hostel facilities because of advantages they can gain in living within the university premise is higher in many aspects compared with outside boarding places. Particularly, it was clearly identified that there is a positive relationship with distance to university and the performance of students. Long distance to university caused not only late attendance but also increased absenteeism. Results of these practices show poor social relations, less opportunity to develop the personality, less satisfied university life and also low educational achievements.

University students as the most valuable wealth of any nation in their development, there is a great responsibility to create university as an interesting as well as real academic place. For that purpose, it is essential to supply all the necessary facilities. Among

all basic needs, accommodation is more important. Giving better accommodation facilities to university students would be the most fruitful way to develop university students to reach their full potential in order to achieve higher education goals of the country which highly need for the development of the nation. For that, university authority should consider improving the necessary physical as well as, social, and education facilities while expanding accommodation facilities supplying hostels for all r students during the whole period of their university career.

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