

Developing Leadership Skills and Positive Attitudes In Undergraduates of Sri Lanka

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INTRODUCTION

The General Certificate in Education (Advanced Level) (GCE A/L) examination, for which approximately 270,000 students sit for every year is one of the most competitive exams held in Sri Lanka. Out of this, only about 20,000 students countrywide, i.e. less than 8% of the total student population is selected for undergraduate programmes in national universities. Due to this extreme competition, majority of the students entering A/L classes refrain from engaging in activities outside the prescribed curriculum in the belief that it might hamper their academic careers, thereby foregoing opportunities to develop self-confidence, personal abilities and leadership skills despite the fact that it is the most critical age of a student's life for such development. Consequently, the majority of the undergraduate population in Sri Lankan Universities demonstrates a lack of leadership qualities and positive attitudes. This is a growing concern in the country today.

The student population in Sri Lankan universities therefore, has serious lapses in their personalities, leadership and attitudes; deficiencies which the academia faces the difficulty in addressing as the academic environment and classroom settings are highly focused on theoretical education in almost all local Higher Education Institutions (HEIs).

The problem at hand does not lie in the tertiary or higher education set up itself. Instead, it has its roots in the primary and secondary education systems in the country, which encourage students to be equipped with theoretical knowledge to pass written examinations while discouraging them from taking part in extracurricular activities which are mandatory for self-development and for cultivating leadership abilities and positive thinking.

There is another dimension to the problem – the unequal distribution of resources among schools and provinces, an inequality that prevails even among schools within a province. For this reason, schools are differently identified as 'popular schools' and 'the rest' – the latter is not termed as 'unpopular' for unspecified reasons. Simply, the students in 'popular schools' category have distinct advantages over those in the 'rest of the schools' category in terms of their reach of better teachers, study aid, materials and other facilities.

The opportunities for higher education in state universities are limited, and hence, the education authorities have adopted a system to select the best lot out of the mammoth student population. In that, the entrance mark for University academic programmes for students who study in less developed districts is low compared to the students who study in developed districts in the country. The students of both categories are in a competitive environment and focus only on examinations that only test their knowledge through written papers. This has been another factor for students to opt out of extracurricular activities essential for cultivating leadership skills and positive attitudes.

Under these circumstances, students are only focused, throughout their school career, on getting through a set of written examinations. This is totally different to what is being practiced in most of the developed countries, where extracurricular activities of students are taken into account and a written examination is not the only factor that determines their future prospects. In the Sri Lankan context, high achievements in sports and such extracurricular activities of students are also considered, but it is insignificant compared to developed western practices. Therefore, students put all their efforts to get through the written examination while purposefully neglecting extra-curricular

activities which would otherwise help them to learn valuable lessons for leadership and positive attitude development. Therefore, the students who enter the University system after crossing all the aforesaid obstacles are equipped with theoretical subject knowledge sans leadership and positive attitudes which are vital to their lives.

The modern education system in Sri Lanka was inherited from the British colonial rule which was initiated in the late 19th century, but the history of education in Sri Lanka dates as far as back to the Anuradhapura era. As a result, Sri Lanka's literacy rate is presently at 92% which is higher than that of most developed countries, and it is the highest in South Asia.

In the present context, the education in Sri Lanka has been converted into a 'race'. Students in government schools face three hurdles in their learning path, namely the 5th standard scholarship examination, GCE Ordinary Level (O/L) examination and the GCE Advanced Level (A/L) examination. Students sit for the Grade 5 scholarship examination in their 5th year of school, and high marks in this examination guarantees them of opportunities to enter the so called "popular" schools in the country. The next hurdle is the GCE Ordinary Level examination, and a competition also exists there, as the stream of further education is decided on the basis of the results of this written examination. The GCE A/L examination is the final and the toughest hurdle. The rare prospects for university education in the state university system in Sri Lanka are decided on the results of this written examination. Tertiary education opportunities in state universities are so limited that even the majority of those who pass this examination are not able to secure a place in undergraduate degree programmes. Observing the prevailing deteriorating situation, the Ministry of Higher Education sought the assistance of the Sri Lanka Army through the Ministry of Defence & Urban Development to introduce and conduct a programme to develop leadership skills and positive attitudes in the candidates selected to the Universities under the University Grants Commission (UGC) for the Academic Year 2011. The objective of the programme was to equip university students with leadership, skills and positive attitudes necessary to be good and productive citizens of Sri Lanka. The selection of the Armed Forces to conduct this programme was for the reason that the Sri Lankan Armed Forces had proved to be the most disciplined and result-oriented organization in Sri Lanka with vast experience in leadership and maintenance of discipline in all forms of its activities. Moreover, the government viewed that the Armed Forces was the only establishment that could effectively undertake a leadership training programme of this large a scale, for more than 20,000 students at a time, particularly due to the availability of multiple command, administration and logistical institutions and training centers. The discussions on planning and preparation of the proposed programme was initiated with the participation of higher officials of the Ministry of Defence and Urban Development and the Ministry of Higher Education, including the Minister of Higher Education, Secretaries of the two Ministries, Chairman UGC, Vice Chancellor of General Sir John Kotelawala Defence University (KDU), Directors of Training of the Army, Navy, Air Force, Cadet Corps, and the Police and other relevant officials.

The Vice Chancellor of KDU was entrusted with the task of developing the syllabus for the proposed programme and of providing assistance to the Tri-Services, the Cadet Corps and the Police in conducting the course.

The Vice Chancellor, KDU spearheaded the Working Group at KDU in developing the course curriculum, and the programme was designed for a duration of 21 days including a total of 171 periods. The programme, according to the views of students, parents and society was a success and the post-evaluation of the programme showcases a necessity to implement such a well designed programme to be followed by the whole student population of the country.

The researcher conducted a questionnaire survey incorporating 10,000 university students who followed the above programme. The participants have indicated its usefulness in developing their leadership abilities and positive thinking.

The present study is an attempt to evaluate the success of the leadership programme conducted for the undergraduates selected to Universities in Sri Lanka in 2011.

PROBLEM STATEMENT

University undergraduates are the future leaders of society. In the Sri Lankan context, they lack the required leadership abilities and positive attitudes to take up future challenges in society.

The Researcher conducted a survey by administering questionnaire among 10000 students who followed first leadership and positive development course conducted by the Army, Navy, Air Force, Police and Cadet Corp.

Areas covered during the course :

- a. Drill
- b. First Aid
- c. History
- d. Leadership
- e. Conflict Management
- f. Psychology
- g. Sexual Harassment
- h. Law and Order
- i. Social Ethics and Customs
- j. Personal hygiene
- k. Physical Training
- l. Miscellaneous (Debates, Presentations and some competitions such as dancing, singing)

1. Syllabus

S/ No	Subject	1 st Week	2 nd Week	3 rd Week	Total
1	Arrival and Registration	9	-	-	9
2	Opening Address and Introduction of the Course	2	-	-	2
3	Drill	13	8	5	26
4	First Aid	3	3	-	6
5	History	-	4	-	4
6	Leadership	9	31	26	66
7	Conflict Management	5	-	1	6
8	Psychology	3	-	-	3
9	Sexual Harassment	-	2	2	4
10	Law and Order	-	6	2	8
11	Social Ethics and Customs	6	-	-	6
12	Personal hygiene	6	-	1	7
13	Miscellaneous	-	-	9	9
14	Passing out and closing address	-	-	6	6
15	Clearance and Departure	-	-	9	9
Total		56	54	61	171

2. **Daily Routine**

a.	Wake up	0500 hrs
b.	Physical Training	0600 – 0645 hrs
c.	Breakfast	0715 – 0745 hrs
d.	Muster Parade	0745 – 0800 hrs
e.	1 st Period	0815 – 0855 hrs
f.	2 nd Period	0900 – 0940 hrs
g.	3 rd Period	0945 – 1025 hrs
h.	Tea Break	1025 – 1045 hrs
i.	4 th Period	1045 – 1125 hrs
j.	5 th Period	1130 – 1210 hrs
k.	6 th Period	1215 – 1255 hrs
l.	Lunch	- 1300 – 1400 hrs
m.	7 th Period	- 1400 – 1440 hrs
n.	8 th Period	- 1445 – 1525 hrs
o.	9 th Period	- 1530 – 1610 hrs
p.	Tea Break	- 1610 – 1630 hrs
q.	PT/Recreations	- 1645 – 1800 hrs
r.	Self Study	- 1900 – 2030 hrs
s.	Dinner	- 2030 – 2130 hrs
t.	Roll Call	- 2130 hrs
u.	Lights Off	- 2215 hrs

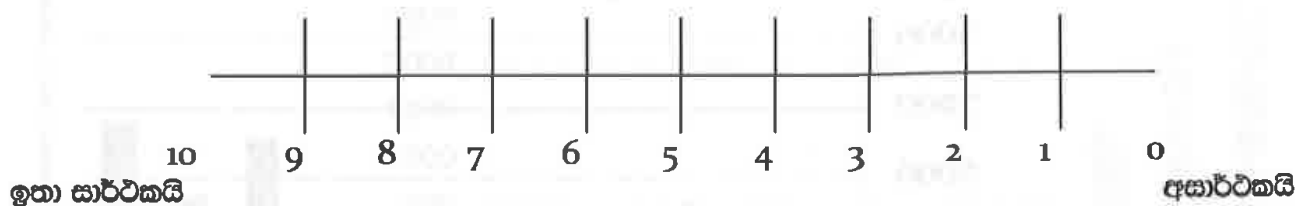
3. **Trainers Training Programme** – A trainers training programme was conducted at Panagoda on 13 May 2010 the KDU military and academic staff. Total number of instructors who participated in the workshop: 1,500 (Army/Navy Force/Cadet Corps/Police). Minister of Higher Education, Secretary Ministry of Higher Education, VC KDU, and KDU addressed the trainers

4. **Methodology**

- a. Distributing a well-designed questionnaire among the total population of the first batch of the lead programme in Sinhala and Tamil as appropriate.
- b. Total number of participants 9,118.

5. The questionnaire is as follows :

තායකතාව පුහුණු වැඩ සටහන පහත දැක්වෙන ගුණාංග වර්ධනය කර ගැනීමට මෙම උපකාරී වූ ආකාරය දක්වා පරිමාණයක දක්වන්න



- 1. පෞරුෂ වර්ධනය
- 2. කාල කළමනාකාරණා හැකියාව
- 3. තම ඵලදායී කටයුතු කිරීමේ හැකියාව
- 4. නොදැනුවත්ව සිටි අංශයන් පිළිබඳ දැනුවත් වීම
- 5. සමාජමය හැකියාවන් වර්ධනය
- 6. සාමූහික ගැඹුමෙන් කණ්ඩායමක ක්‍රියා කිරීම
- 7. විවිධ සමාජ පසුබිම් සහිත පුද්ගලයින් හඳුනාගෙන එක්ව ක්‍රියාකිරීම
- 8. දරාගැනීමේ හැකියාවේ වර්ධනය
- 9. මෙ සතු විෂය භාගීර ක්‍රියාකාරකම් ප්‍රදර්ශනය කිරීම
- 10. නිවසින් බැහැරව ස්වාධීනව ජීවත්වීමට
- 11. පොදු මූලික පහසුකම් හවුලේ පාවිච්චි කිරීම

6. මෙම වැඩසටහනට සහභාගී වීමෙන් ඔබ ලබාගත් සමස්ථ ප්‍රතිලාභ 100 කින් දක්වන්න

- අනාගතයේදී මෙම වැඩසටහන තවත් සාර්ථක කරගැනීමට ඔබේ ඇති යෝජනා මොනවාද?
- ඔබ සඳහා වූ මෙම වැඩසටහන තවත් සතියකින් දීර්ඝ වනවාට ඔබ කැමතිද?
- මෙම සති තුනේදී ඔබ ලැබූ අත්දැකීම් වල හොඳ/තරක කෙටියෙන් දක්වන්න
- මෙම වැඩසටහනට සහභාගීවීමට පෙර තිබූ බලාපොරොත්තු/ආකල්ප මෙම කඳවුරේදී සති තුනක් ගත කිරීමෙන් පසු වෙනස්විද? ඒ කෙසේද ? විස්තර කරන්න

7. Results of the Each Question

		0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	
Q1	පෞරුෂ වර්ධනය	63	25	49	65	123	558	585	1080	2273	1884	2409	9114
Q2	කාල කළමනාකරණ හැකියාව	33	19	44	58	111	321	417	827	1931	2463	2894	9118
Q3	තම ජීවිතයේ කටයුතු කිරීමේ හැකියාව	22	15	24	29	38	201	185	461	1300	2170	4667	9112
Q4	නොදැනුවත්ව සිටි අංශයන් පිළිබඳව දැනුවත් වීම	37	22	46	83	151	482	602	1099	1946	2225	2416	9109
Q5	සමාජමය හැකියාවන් වර්ධනය	30	24	48	55	130	411	553	1160	2243	2207	2249	9110
Q6	සාමූහික හැඟීමෙන් කණ්ඩායමක ක්‍රියා කිරීම	22	24	19	28	58	200	235	553	1402	2148	4428	9117
Q7	විවිධ සමාජ පසුබිම සහිත පුද්ගලයින් හඳුනාගෙන එක්ව ක්‍රියා කිරීම	35	13	23	32	62	227	295	675	1625	2361	3760	9108
Q8	දරා ගැනීමේ හැකියාව වර්ධනය	19	25	20	30	56	205	311	644	1735	2472	3596	9113
Q9	ඔබ සතු විෂය භාහිර ක්‍රියා කාරකම් ප්‍රදර්ශනය කිරීම	69	55	96	135	232	666	652	1282	2081	1736	2095	9099
Q10	නිවසිත් බැහැරව ස්වාදීනව ජීවත් වීමට	34	33	33	46	56	219	232	461	1152	1881	4967	9114
Q11	පොදු මූලික පහසුකම් හවුලේ පාවිච්චි කිරීම	24	23	42	19	52	168	191	435	1193	1839	5127	9113
		388	278	444	580	1069	3658	4258	8677	18881	23386	38608	100227

Table 1

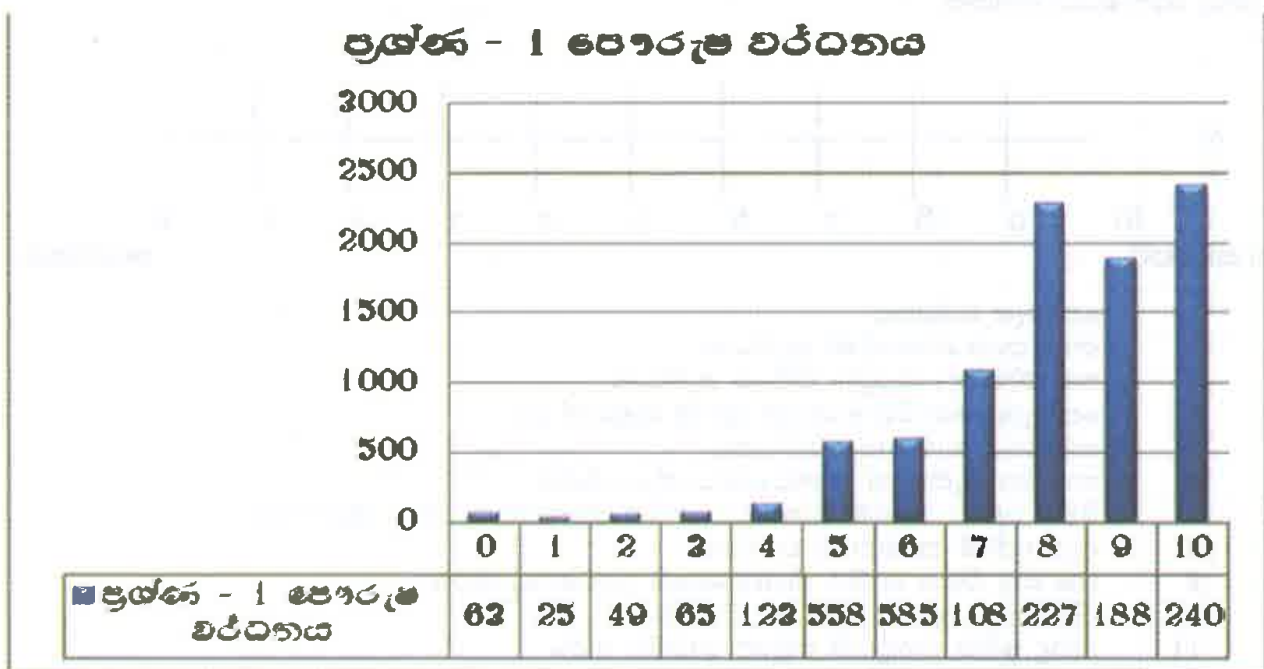


Figure 1

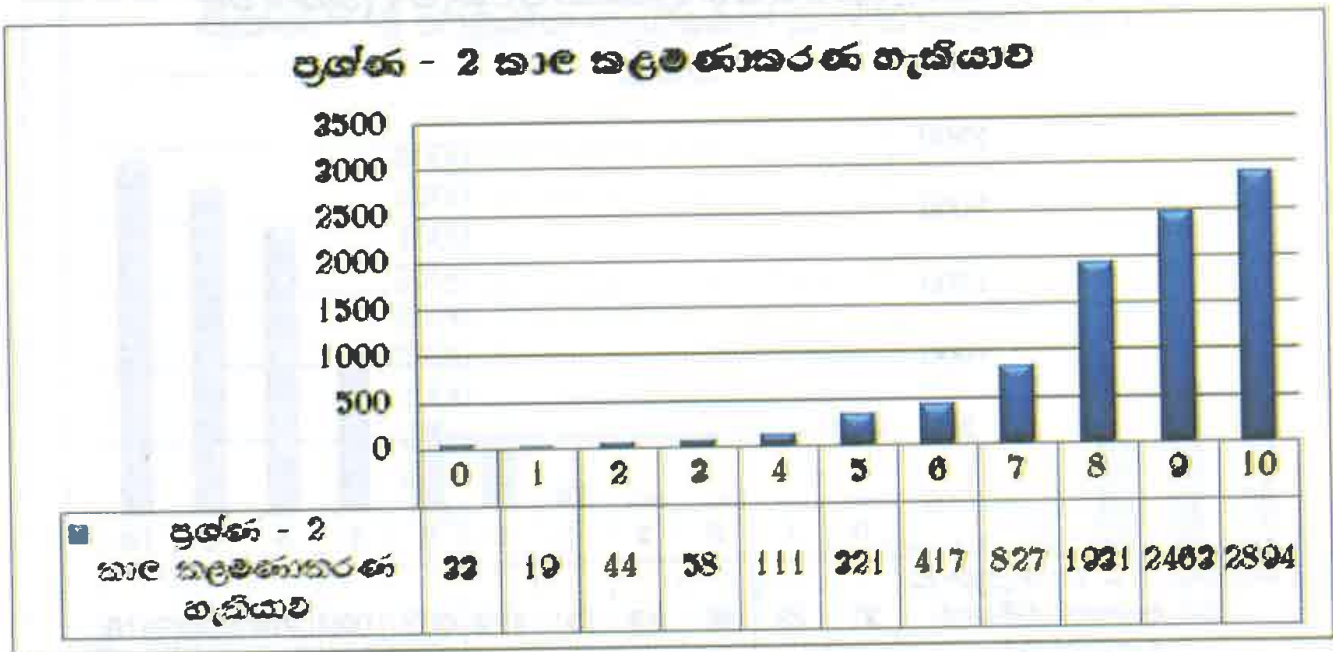


Figure 2

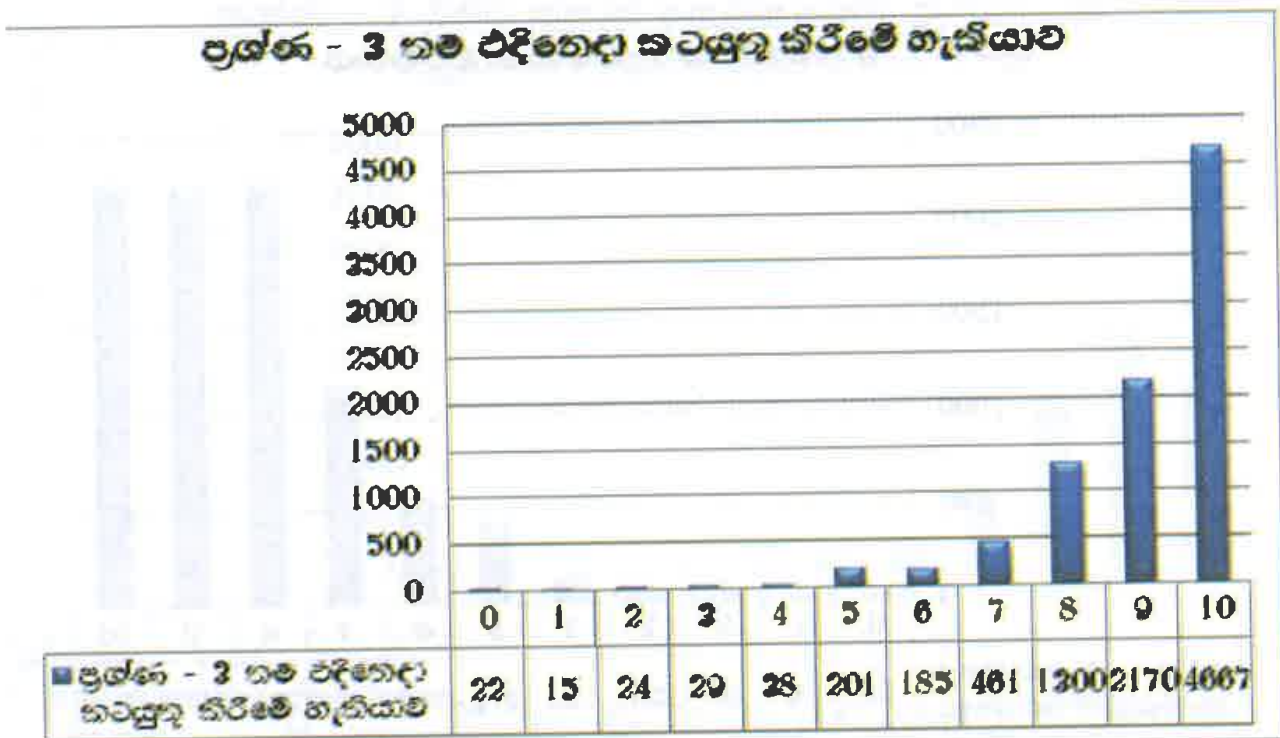


Figure 3

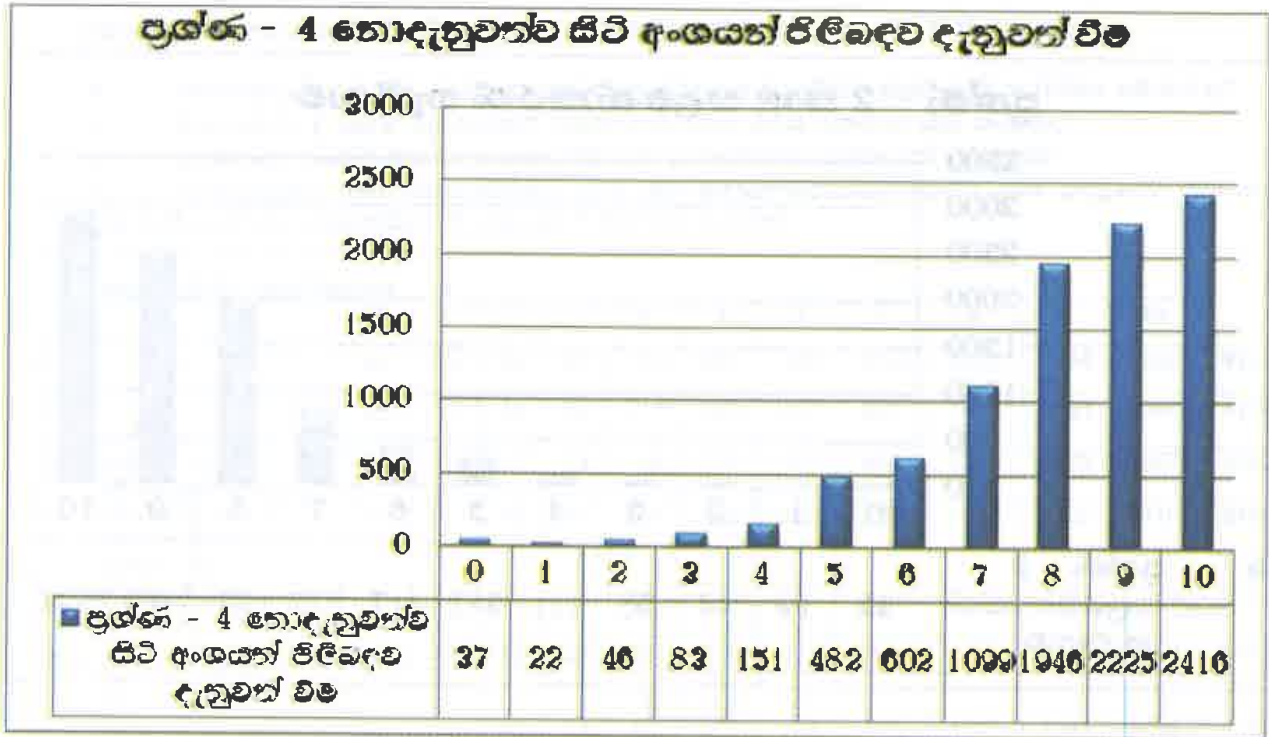


Figure 4

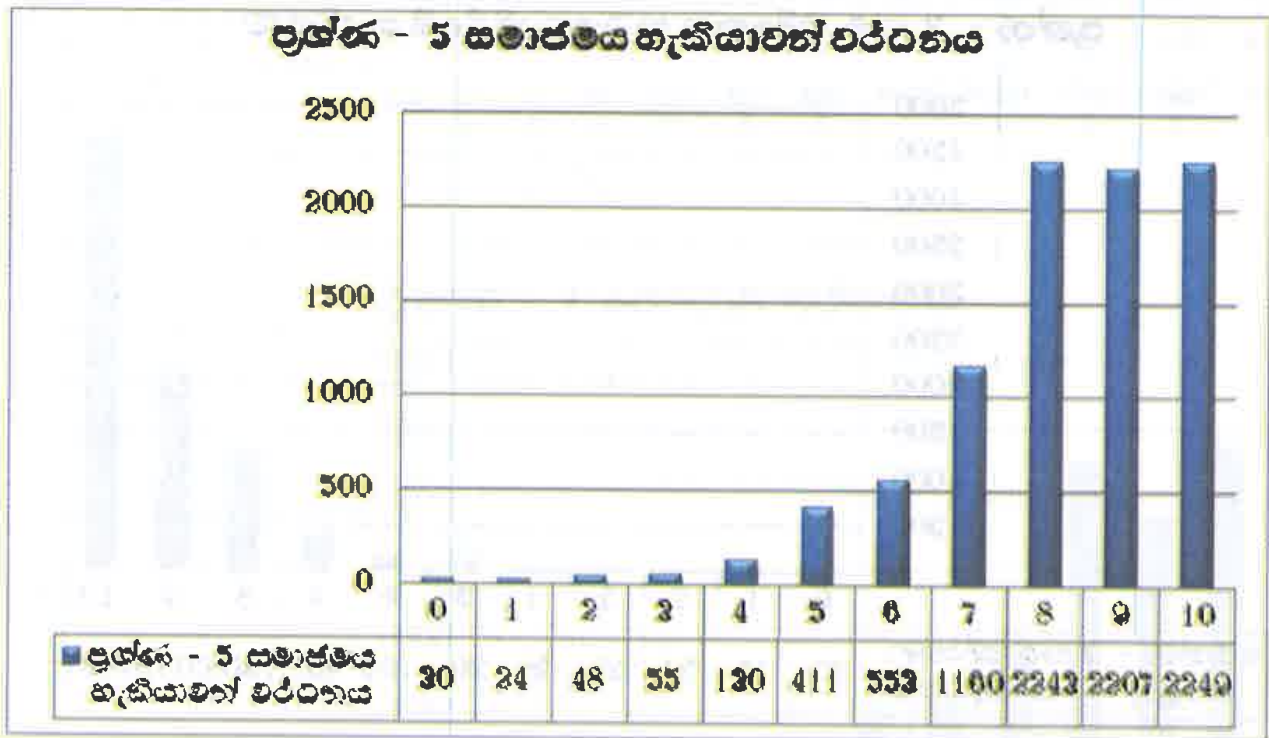
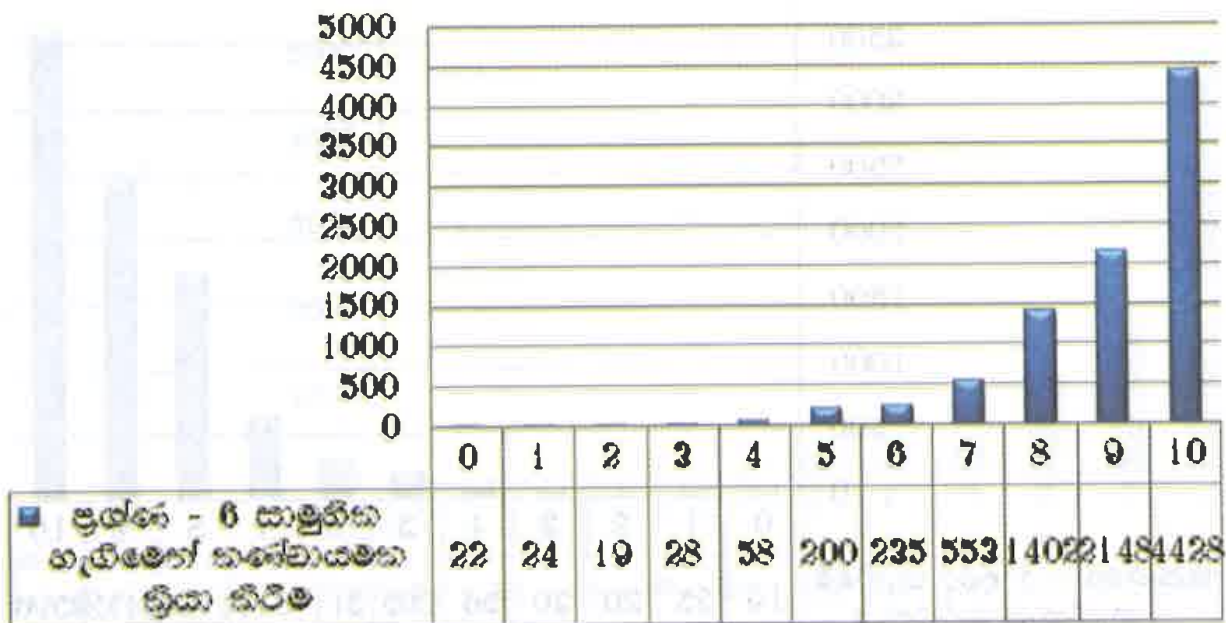


Figure 5

ප්‍රශ්න - 6 සාමූහික හැඟිලිමෝකන් චන්ඩායමක ක්‍රියා කිරීම



ප්‍රශ්න - 7 විවිධ සමාජ පසුබිම සහිත පුද්ගලයින් හඳුනාගෙන එකවර ක්‍රියා කිරීම

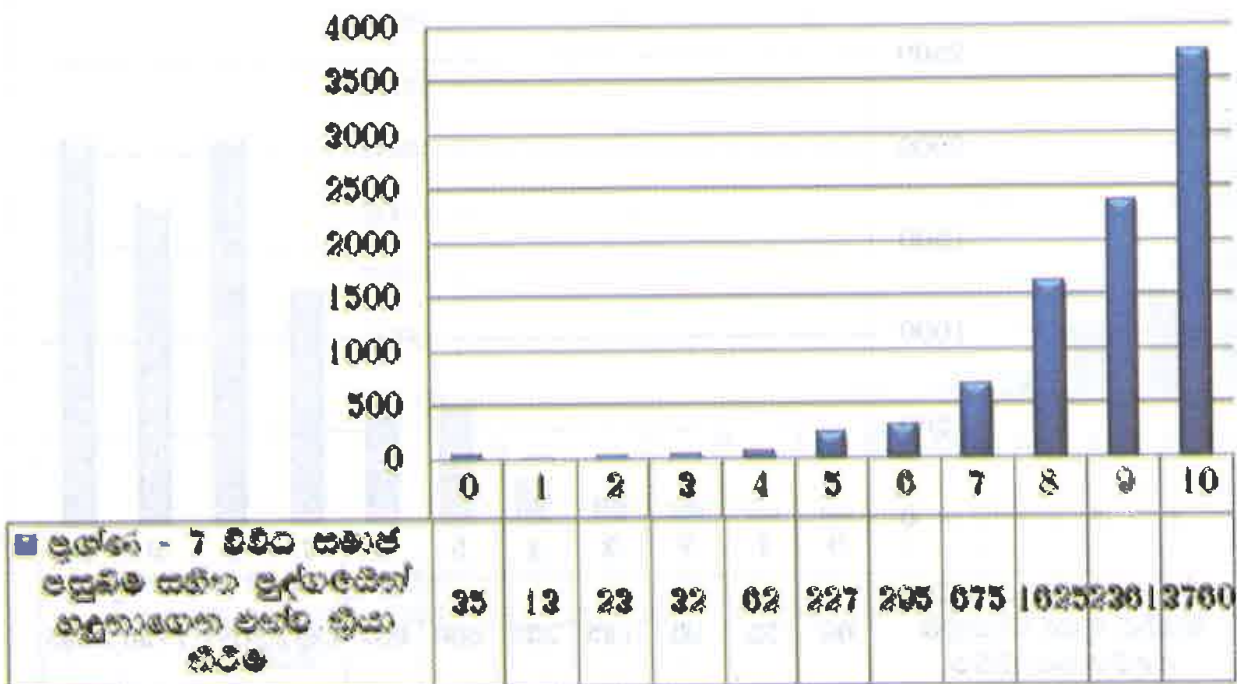


Figure 7

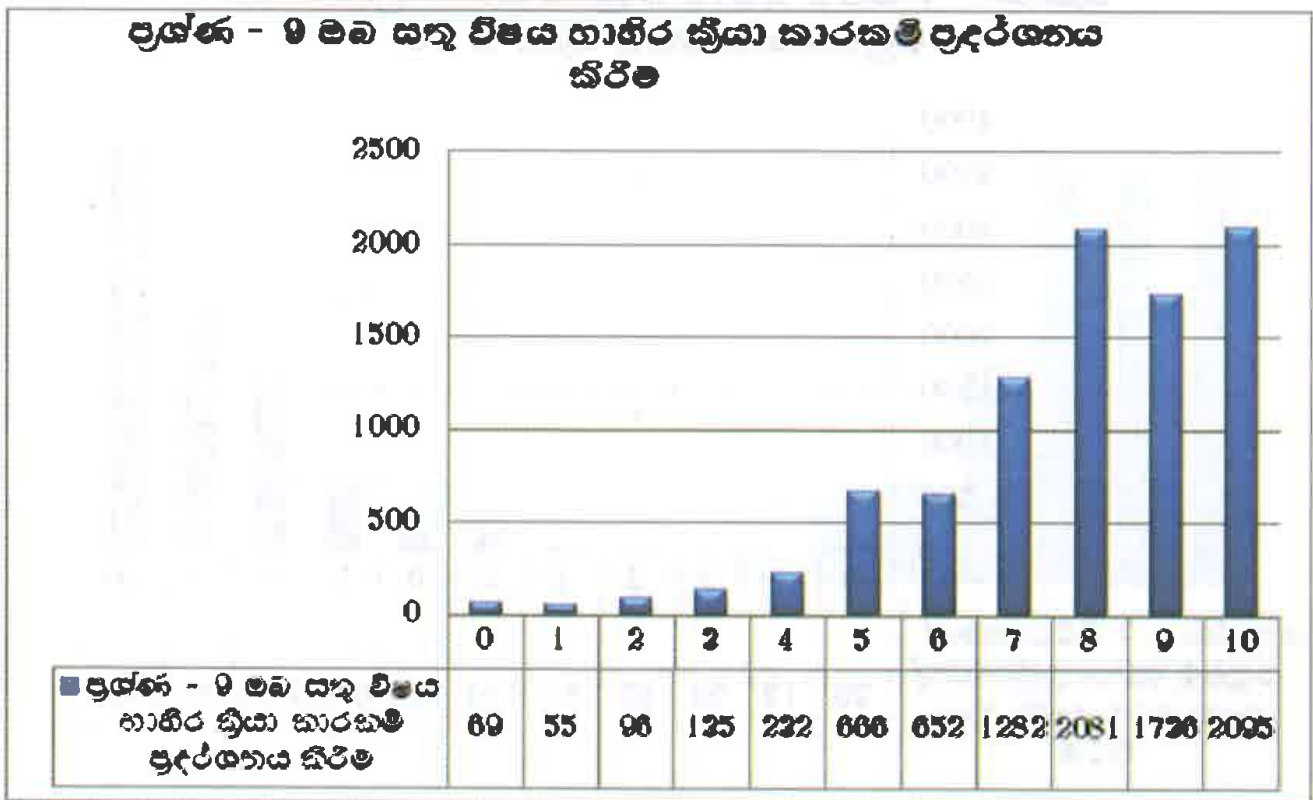
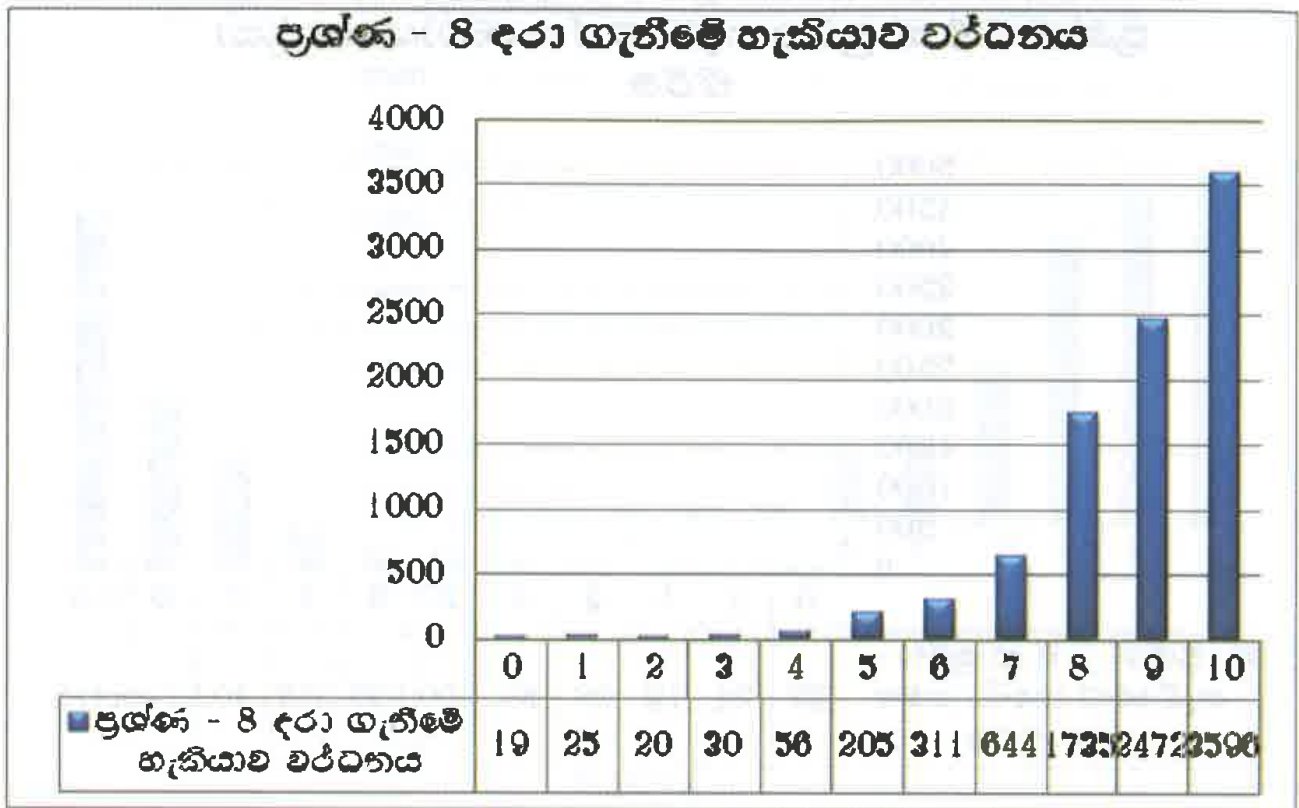


Figure 9

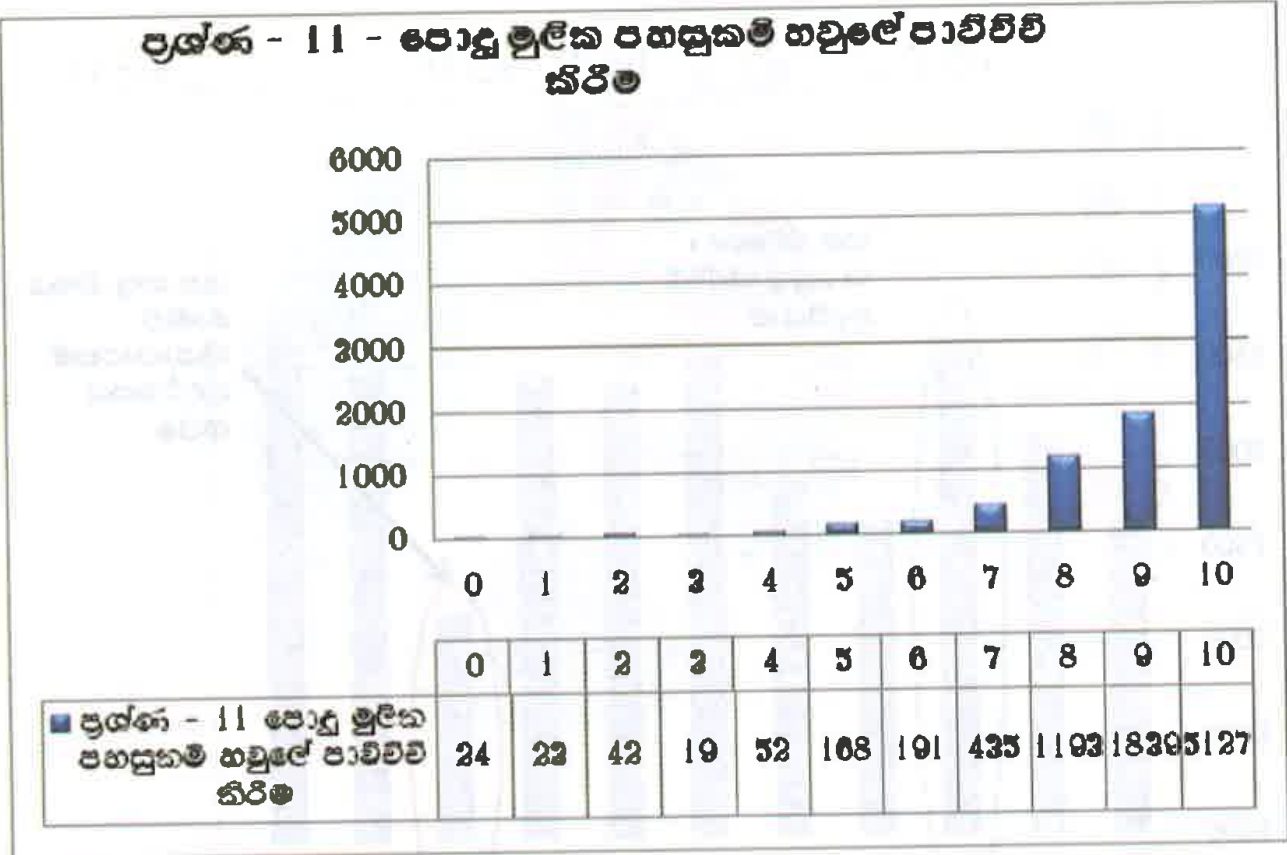
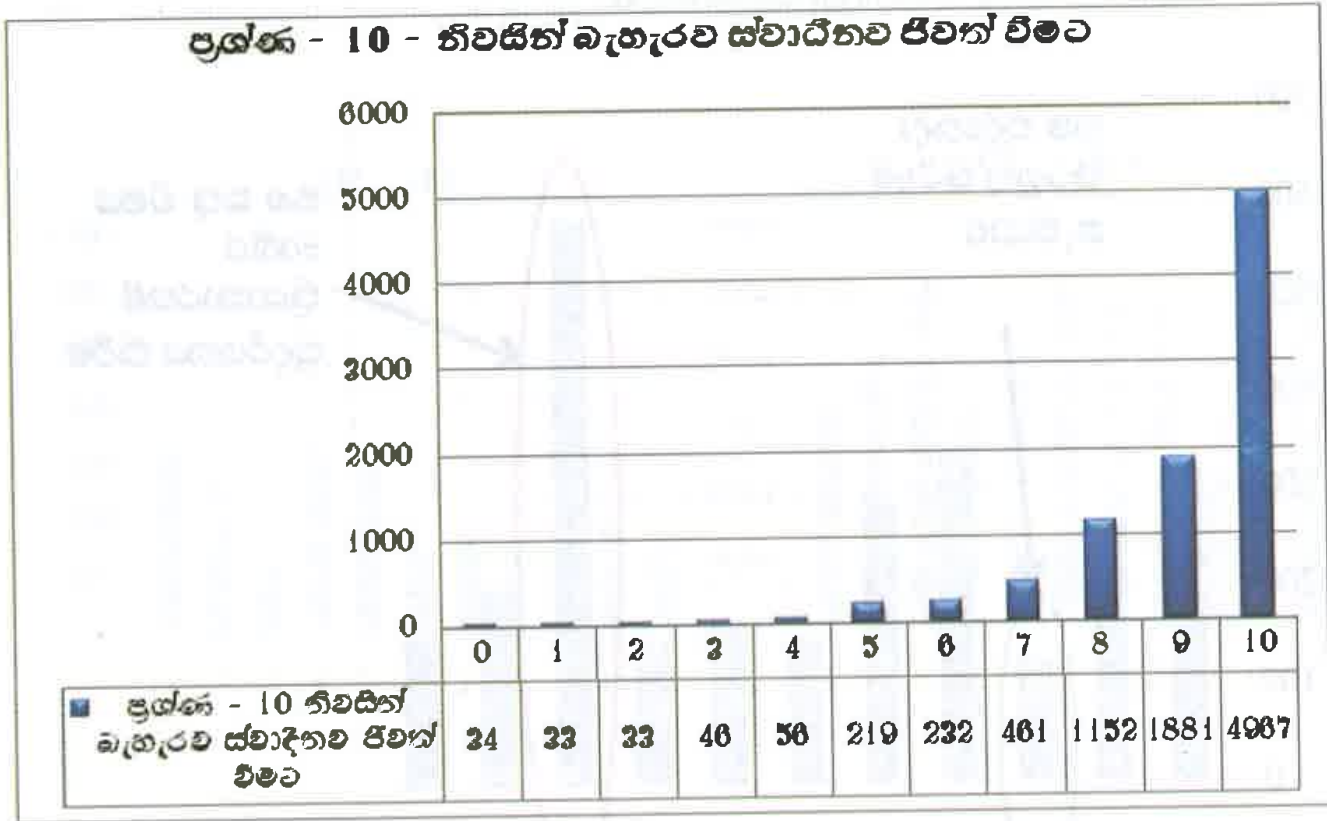


Figure 11

8. Weak and Strong Areas of the Course (0 - 4)

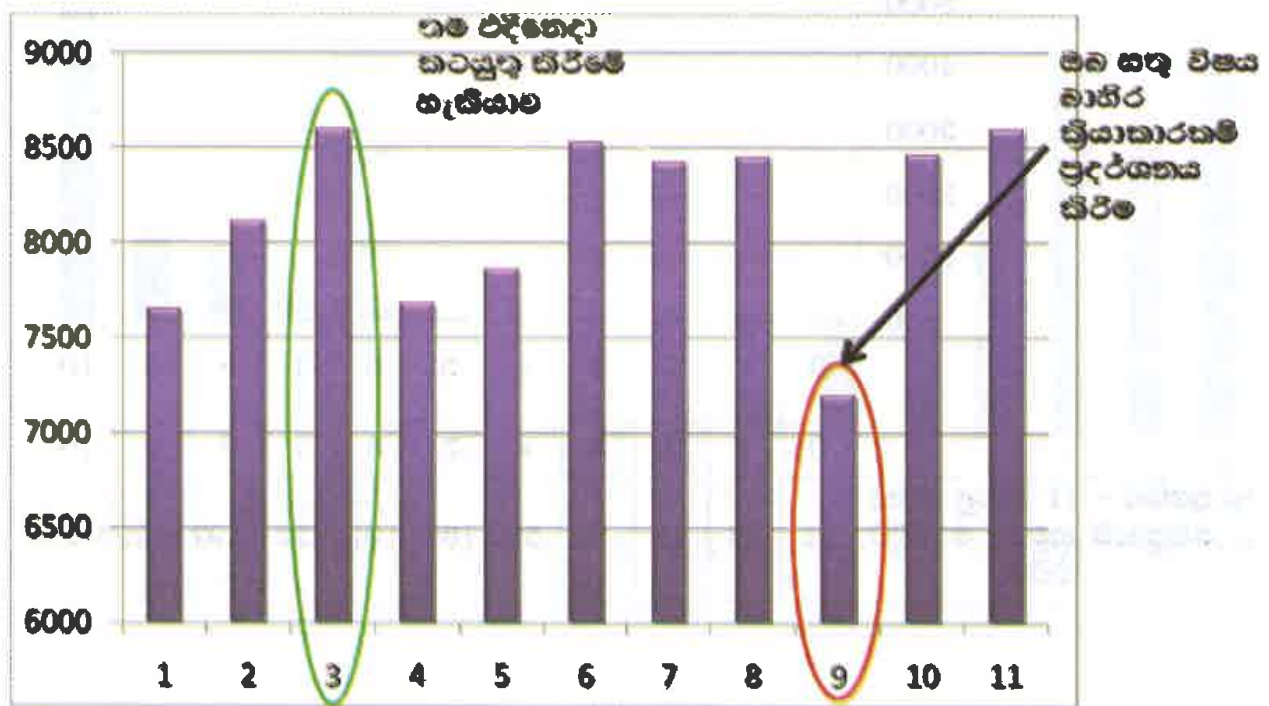
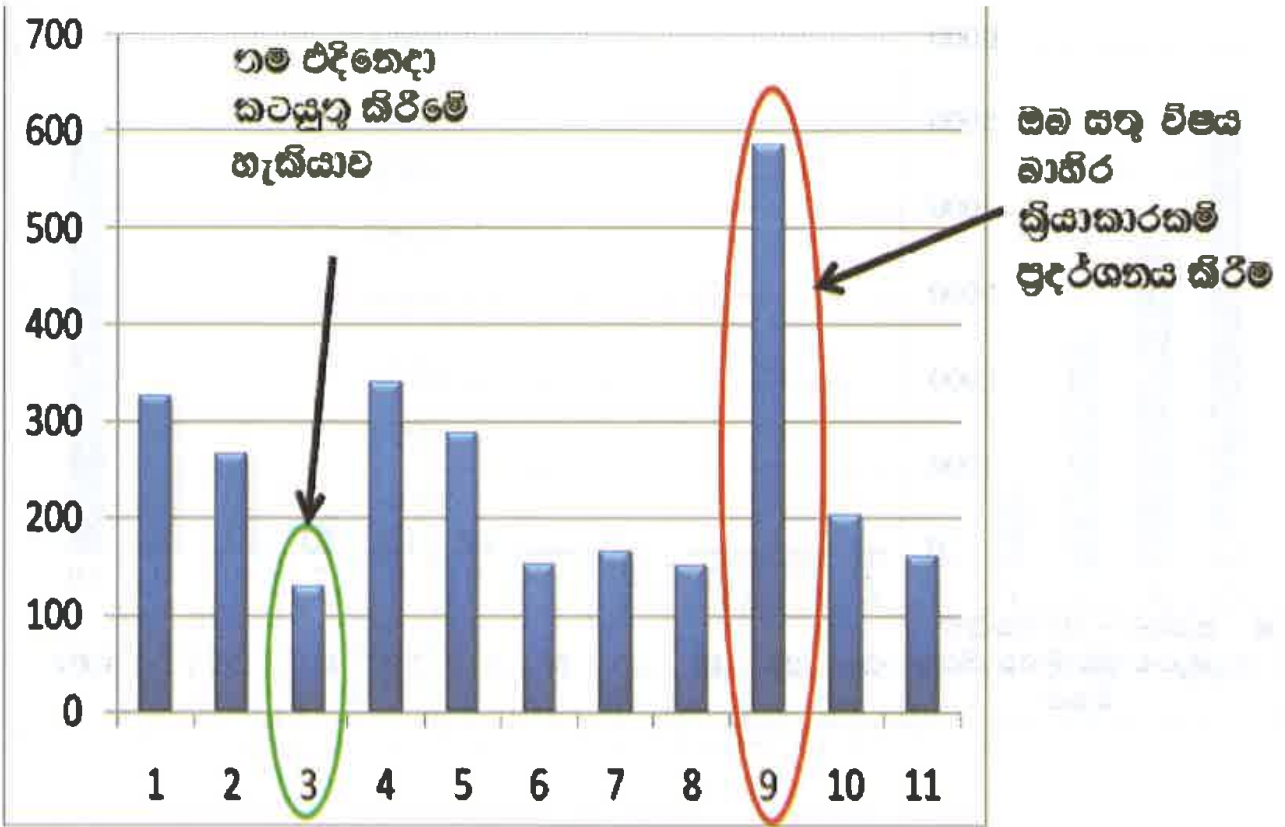
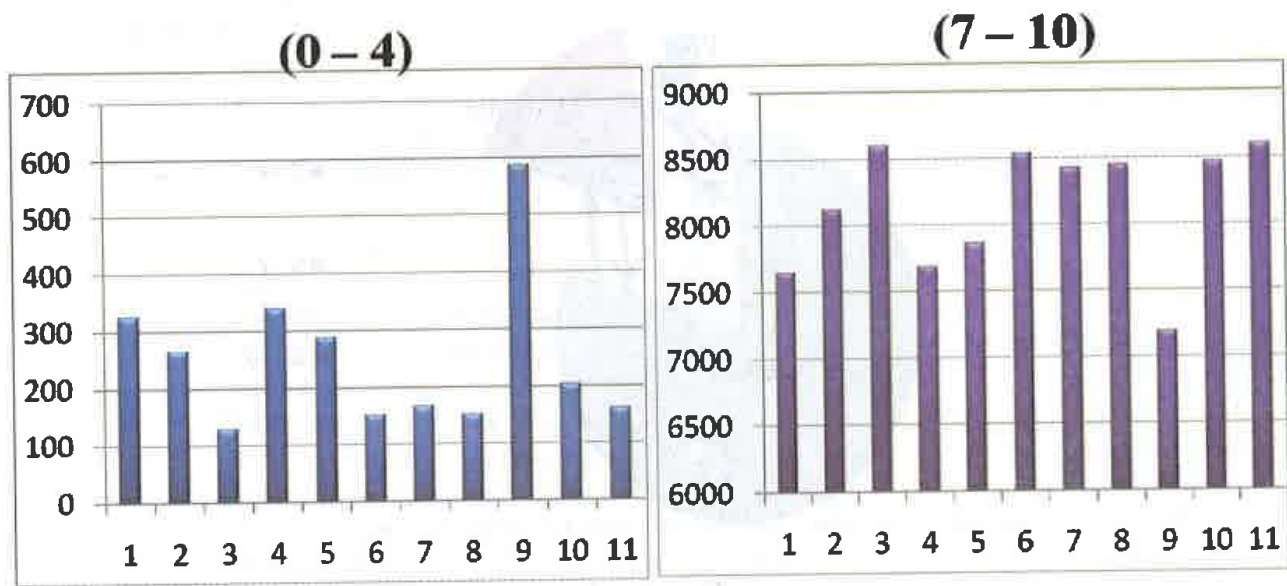


Figure 13

10. Comparison of Weak and Strong Areas of the Course



11. Analysis

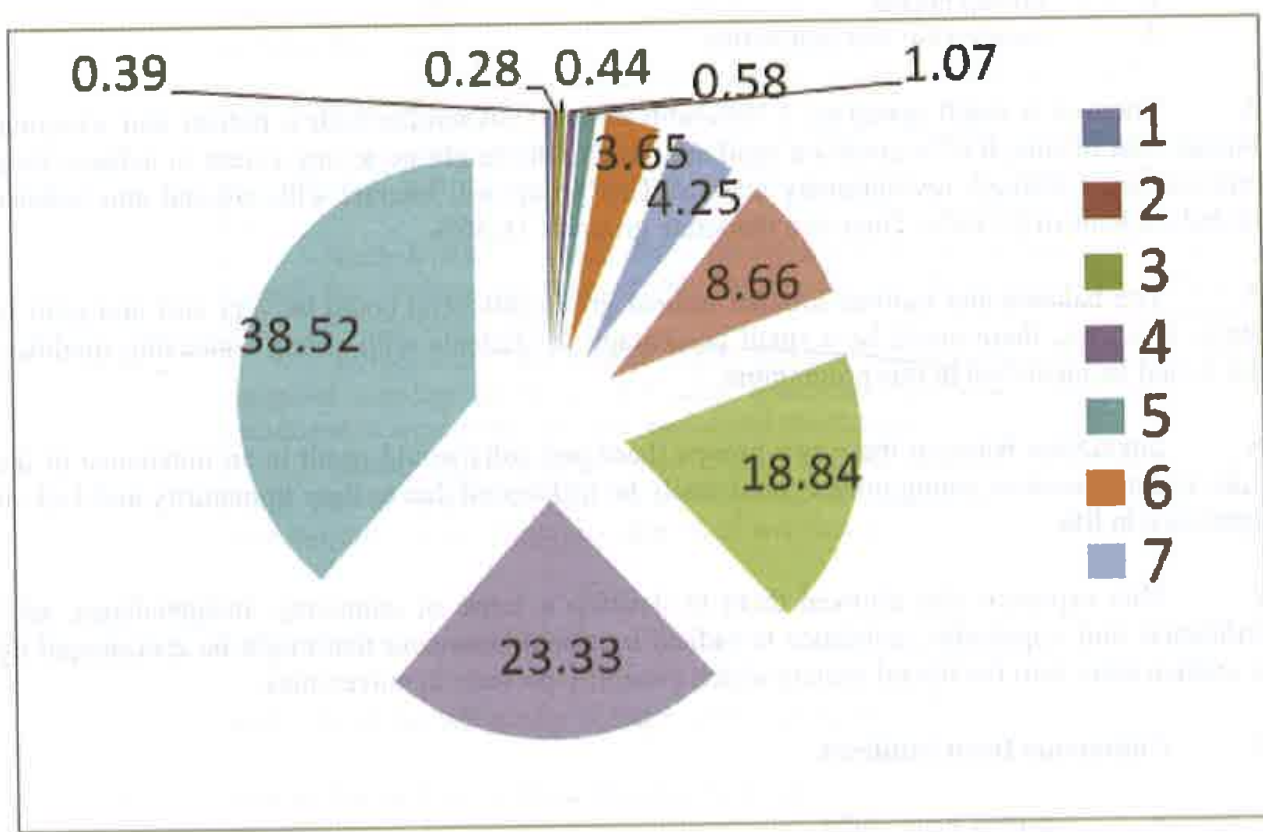


Figure 15

12. Overall Impact

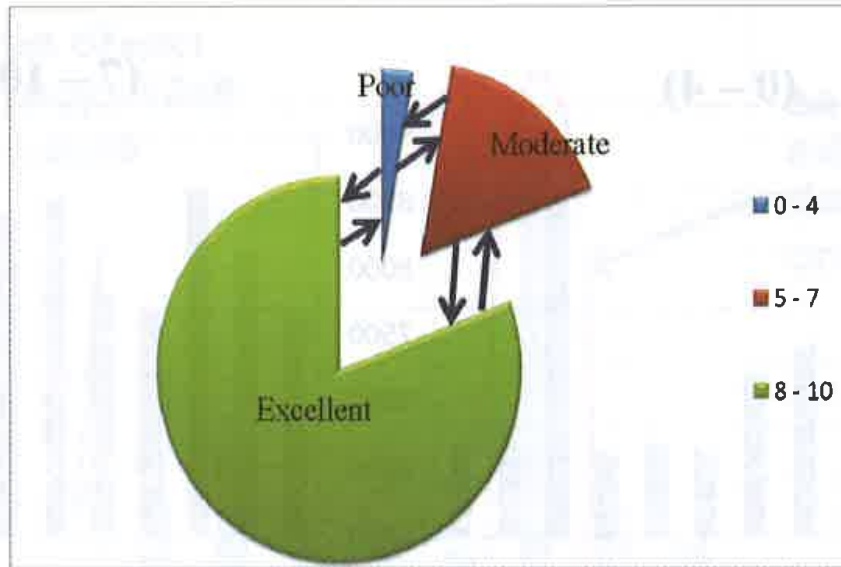


Figure 16

13. Group Dynamics & Mobilization

- a. Group interaction
- b. Group mobilization
- c. Group norms
- d. Leadership and motivation

14. There is a small group of 2.75% who enters Universities with a radical and irrational mindset. Out of this, 0.67% could be rigid and tough who might go to any extent to achieve their aims and goals through revolutionary actions. This group will interact with rational and balance minded students of 80.69%. There is a moderate group of 16.56%.

15. The balance and rational minded student group (80.69%) could be very soft and mild in nature. However, there could be a small percentage of students with strong leadership qualities, who would be identified in this programme.

16. Interaction between these two groups (hard and soft) would result in an imbalance of the entire system, because young minds could easily be influenced due to their immaturity and lack of experience in life.

17. This exposure also allowed them to develop a sense of autonomy, independence, self-confidence, and, especially, resistance to radical irrational behaviour that might be encouraged by the sudden entry into the liberal society which generally prevails in universities.

18. Comments from Students

- කාලය දිස්ස කිරීම
- එක් කණ්ඩායමකට සිටින ලුණුන් ප්‍රමාණය අඩු කිරීම
- වැඩිපුර ක්‍රියාකාරකම් කිරීම සුදුසුයි.

19. සමස්ථ ප්‍රවීණතා - 92.5%

20. සියුම් කිහිප දෙනෙකු ප්‍රශ්න පත්‍රයට ලබාදුන් අදහස් කිහිපයක්

➤ අනාගතයේදී මෙම වැඩසටහන තවත් සාර්ථක කරගැනීමට ඔබේ ඇති යෝජනා මොනවාද?

- එක් කණ්ඩායමක සිටින ලුණු ප්‍රමාණය අඩු කිරීම සුදුසු යයි මම සිතමි. මන්ද කණ්ඩායමක සිටින ලුණු ප්‍රමාණය අඩුවූ විට සහයෝගීතාවය වැඩිවේ.
- සමාජ සාර ධර්ම වර්ධනය කරගැනීමට අවශ්‍ය උපදෙස් ලබාදීම.
- වැඩසටහන් සංවිධානයේදී කාලසටහනේ පෙළගැස්ම අතර විවේකය මඳක් වැඩි කළ යුතුය. මන්ද එසේ නොවීම නිසා අපහසුතාවයන් ඇති වන ප්‍රමාණය වැඩිය. රාත්‍රී වැඩසටහන් යොදා ගැනීම 8.00 පමණ සීමා කළ යුතුය
- ඔබ සඳහා වූ මෙම වැඩසටහන තවත් සතියකින් දීර්ඝ වනවාට ඔබ කැමතිද?
 - 80% පමණ ඔව් යයි සඳහන් කර තිබූ අතර 20 ක් පමණ නැත යයි ප්‍රකාශ කර ඇත.
- මෙම සති තුනේදී ඔබ ලැබූ අත්දැකීම් වල හොඳ/තරක කෙටියෙන් දක්වන්න
 - මෙහිදී විශේෂයෙන් කාල කළමනාකරණය කිරීමට ඉගෙන ගැනීම. එමෙන්ම සමාජයේ අපි නොදන්නා යම් යම් අංශ පිළිබඳව දැනගත හැකි විය.
 - බොහෝ දෙනාගේ මත වලට සාධාරණව ගරු කිරීමට උගත්තෙමි. තවද තනිවම ජීවිතය පවත්වා ගැනීමට, අභියෝග වලට මුහුණ දීමට හුරු වීම සිදුවිය. මේ නිසා ජීවිතය ගැන හොඳ අවබෝධයක් ලැබිණි. එසේම කාල කළමනාකරණයටද හුරු විය.
 - සාමූහිකව ක්‍රියාකිරීම, කාලය උපරිම ප්‍රයෝජන ගැනීම, ශරීර සුවතාවය මෙන්ම දැනුම ප්‍රායෝගිකව ලබාගැනීම මෙම වැඩසටහනේ යහපත් අංශයන් ලෙස පෙන්වා දිය හැකිය.
 - සාමූහිකව ක්‍රියාකිරීමට කාලය කළමනාකරණය කරගනිමින් ක්‍රියාශීලීව ඉක්මනින් ක්‍රියාකිරීමට පුරුදු වූ අතර විවිධ ප්‍රදේශ වල යහලුවන් රැසක් හඳුනාගැනීමට හැකිවිය.
- මෙම වැඩසටහනට සහභාගිවීමට පෙර තිබූ බලාපොරොත්තු/ආකල්ප මෙම කඳවුරේදී සති තුනක් ගත කිරීමෙන් පසු වෙනස්විද? ඒ කෙසේද ? විස්තර කරන්න
 - ඔව්. මෙය හුදෙක් හමුදා පුහුණුවක් යයි සිතුවද එය වැරදි ආකල්පයක් බව මම දැන් දනි. ඔවුන් තුළ ඇති සුහදශීලීත්වය අපට හොඳින් දැකගත හැකි විය.
 - මෙහි පැමිණීමට පෙර මෙය සඳහා බියක් තිබුවද පැමිණීමෙන් පසු එය වෙනස් විය. සනීපාරක්ෂක පහසුකම් පිළිබඳ පිරිසිදුකම ආදිය උසස් තත්වයක තිබිණි. ඒ ගැන සතුටු වෙමි.
 - වෙනස් විය. මෙය හුදෙක් හමුදා පුහුණුවක් යයිම සිතුවත් එය හිතු පරිදි පුහුණුවක් නොවනු බවත් ඒ තුළ සෑම අංශයකම එකතුවක් පැවති බවත් එය පාඨමාලාවට අපූර්වත්වයක් එක් කළ බවත් හෘදයාංගවම දක්වමි.
 - මෙයට පැමිණීමට පෙර මා සිතුවේ එතරම් වැදගත් කමක් නැති අමාරු එකක් ලෙසය. නමුත් ඒ පිළිබඳව දැනගැනීමට මා තුළ කුතුහලයක් තිබුණි. මෙය ඉතා වැදගත් වටිනා පහසු පාඨමාලාවක් බව එය අධ්‍යයනය කිරීමේදී මට සිතුණි.

21. වැඩ සටහන සාර්ථක කර ගැනීමට අදහස්

- බාහිර ක්‍රියාකාරකම් සඳහා වැඩිපුර කාල වේලාව ලබා දීම
- සෑම දේශණයක් අවසානයේ ක්‍රියාකාරකම් කිරීම
- පාඨමාලා කාලය දීර්ඝ කිරීම

CONCLUSION

22. The research provided in depth understanding of students' behavior pattern and their previous exposures at their homes and schools. The analysis provided many openings for further researches. It is very significant that majority of students have not engaged in leadership development activities during the primary and secondary education although they had the desire to engage in such activities. The long term impact of the leadership training programme cannot be evaluated until this group become seniors in their respective Universities. As per the feedback from questionnaires, it is apparent that there has been a significant impact on their life styles. We need to do further research to evaluate the extent to which this course has influenced them in decision-making processes while they are in Universities.