



ISSN -PRINT-2231-3613/DNLN2455-8729
International Educational Journal

UGC APPROVAL NO. - 42652

CHETANA

Received on 15th Oct 2017, Revised on 20th Oct 2017; Accepted 30th Oct 2017

RESEARCH PAPER

A Study of Female Students' Attitude towards Distance Education

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Key words: *Female students, Distance Education, Attitude etc.*

Abstract

This study examined female students' attitude towards distance education. Distance education makes its place day by day. In busy and job oriented life, students prefer distance mode for getting degree. In this study to know the attitude of students towards distance education, the researcher collected data from 50 female distance-mode students of Open University and 50 female external students of regular University from Ahmedabad, following random sampling method. The attitude level was measured in eight areas of distance learning, like general, admission procedure, self-learning material, multimedia, assignments, counseling, study centers and evaluation system. Mean, S.D., and t-test used for analyzing data. The findings revealed that female distance students possessed positive attitude towards distance learning and no significant difference was found between the overall attitudes of students from both universities. However, the Open University students exhibited more favorable attitude than regular University students on five areas of attitude towards distance learning, namely admission procedure, assignments, counseling, study center and evaluation system with a significant difference only in assignments area.

INTRODUCTION

Development is a process of structural change in the economic, political, social and cultural domains. It starts with people, their education and their capabilities because people are the primary and ultimate focus of all development. The broader goal of development is to bring the entire population into the mainstream of the national development process, both as contributors and beneficiaries. Development is the development of an individual, each according to his or her potential and in this sense education is a crucial aspect of development. The concept of development and the role of educational systems (both formal

and non-formal) are determined by the socio-political economic feature and cultural patterns of each nation. (Janki, 2006)

'Education is no longer limited to either schooling college, or the production of entrepreneurs, capable of increasing the gross national products, but rather aims at the development of human resources for a wide range of purposes'. (Motilal)

Large increase in population coupled with a growing awareness of the benefits of education is leading governments to explore the possibility of using alternative means to provide education on a large scale; particularly as conventional educational methods are becoming increasingly expensive. One such alternative that countries in the region are considering, is Distance Education.

Distance Education is a global and rapidly growing phenomenon which provides formal learning opportunities to people who would not otherwise have access to schooling or college education. Teachers and students are separated by physical distance and the means by which they communicate range from basic print material and the use of postal services to highly sophisticated communication technologies (Janki, 2006). Distance education may be defined as the family of instructional methods in which the teaching behavior are executed apart from learning behavior, including those that in a contagious situation would be performed in the learners presence, so that communication between the learner and the teacher must be facilitated by print, electronic, mechanical or other devices (Moore, 1973). Trivedi (1989) wrote that Distance Education has a very important role in women's development. Women have constraints of time, space, resources and socio-economic disabilities. Distance education can help them with its outreach to their homes. It enables them to learn at their own pace and take up vocations and skills for economic and individual development. It gives them a second chance to step into the main systems of education, including higher education, enabling them at the same time to earn and learn as well as to fulfilling family responsibilities.

The special characteristic of distance education is that it is endowed with high flexibility and can meet the demands of education for all and 'continuing education' which the conventional education system is unable to meet. Further, distance education takes education to places and people hitherto unreached, transcending social, economic and geographical equality and thereby opens a new vista in our striving towards breaking the barriers of 'opportunity and equality'. Through distance education it is easier to transport knowledge to people than transport people to the people of knowledge. Because of these

special features of distance education, it benefits certain categories of people who for formal qualifications, persons belonging to different age groups, disadvantages groups and employed persons. There are large percentages of women in categories. Thus, women as a category could really take advantage of the provision of distance education in a large measure (Indresan, 1996). Allport (1935) "attitudes are now usually thoughts of us; (a) system with structures, including relationship with one attitude between several objects, relationships, between several attitudes with regards to the same object; and (b) belief systems, that is those involving relationship between several attitudes without necessarily referring to one single object". "Women are more likely than men to have had their education interrupted by child-bearing and child-rearing or by the need to support a spouse through school or to follow him to various provinces or counties through job transfers or changes" (Pym,1992). Sahoo and Bhatt (1987) found that the attitude of families to it is more positive than that of males. Similarly, the employed learners had a more favorable attitude than that of the unemployed. Lenka, S. K. and Ravikant (2012) studied that both male and female learners have similar positive attitude towards distance education and biographical factors i.e. locality, stream, SES and caste plays a vital role to develop positive attitude towards distance education. Collins, K. Osei (2013) studied that student perceptions of distance learning were positive. Respondents indicated that they were satisfied with teaching and learning by distance and also with learner support provided by the host institutes.

THE OBJECTIVE

To study the attitude of Open University and regular University female students towards distance education

HYPOTHESIS OF THE STUDY

There will be no significant difference between the mean scores of attitude of Open University and regular University female students towards distance education.

METHODOLOGY

Survey method was used in this research.

SAMPLE AND POPULATION

The researcher used random Sampling Method for data collection.

The sample comprised with 100 females (50 students from Open University and 50 from regular University) randomly selected from Graduate degree program from Ahmedabad district.

LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

1. Present research was limited to Ahmedabad district only.
2. Only Gujarati medium female students were selected in this study.

TOOL USED IN THE STUDY

The researcher used Attitude Scale, which was developed by Kumar (1999). It consists of 70 statements (30 positive statements and 40 negative) on eight areas of distance education like... "general admission procedures, self-instructional material (SLM), multimedia instructions, assignments, counselling sessions, study centres and evaluation system." The scale was administered on five point continuum like... strongly agree, agree, undecided, disagree and strongly disagree with a scoring of 5,4,3,2 and 1 for positive statements and 1,2,3,4 and 5 for negative statements, respectively with a total score range of 70 to 350.

ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION

Ho.1: There would be no significant difference between the mean scores of attitude of Open University and regular University female students towards distance education.

Eight areas of distance education like... general, admission procedures, self -instructional material (SLM), multimedia instruction, assignments, counselling sessions, study centres and evaluation system were compared. The scale was administered on five point continuum viz., strongly agree, agree undecided, disagree and strongly disagree with a scoring of 5,4,3,2 and 1 for positive statements and 1,2,3,4 and 5 for negative statements, respectively with a total score range of 70 to 350.

Table- 1

Comparison of scores of attitude towards distance education between Open University and regular university female students

Sr. No.	Area	Open university		Regular university		t-value
		Mean	SD	Mean	SD	
1	General	35.14	3.1	36.16	4.1	0.98
2	Admission procedure	16.48	2.4	16.33	2.6	0.15
3	SLM	33.25	4.3	33.68	4.5	0.46
4	Multimedia	25.55	4.4	25.50	3.7	2.59
5	Assignment	33.45	4.9	34.26	3.5	1.54
6	Counselling	33.14	4.5	32.75	4.2	1.77
7	Study centre	27.17	5.0	26.90	4.5	1.67
8	Evaluation system	30.66	4.7	29.08	4.5	1.49

According to the above Table No-1, it is clear that out of 8 aspects of attitude towards distance learning, significant difference was noticed on assignment area. The Open University female students possess significantly higher attitude in assignment area than regular University students. No significant difference was noticed on the remaining 7 aspects, namely general, admission procedure, SLM, multimedia, counselling, study centre and evaluation system.

Out of 8 factors, the means were in favor of Open University students on five factors namely general, admission procedure, assignments, counselling, study-centers and evaluation system. In other words it may be said that the Open University female students' attitude was found to be more favorable in these five aspects as compared to the regular University students. The mean score of rest of the factors were almost the same among both types of universities.

DISCUSSION ON THE RESULTS

Though this study reveals that women distance learners in Ahmedabad had a positive and above average attitude, there is no significant difference between the Open University female student and a regular University female student because it may be that all Open Universities come under Distance Education Council and they follow the same rules and regulation. The Open University of Gujarat learners exhibited more favorable attitude than regular University students on five sub areas of attitude towards distance learning, namely admission procedure, assignment, counseling, study center, evaluation system. It may be because Open University provides a well- organized support system to their students.

The result of this study points towards the support system provided by the State Universities. The Study centres play an important role in distance education system. Study centers serve as a bridge between the supporting organization and students. Holmberg (1989) defines distance education as the guided didactic conversation means in which the learners are separated from the teacher and peer group, and they feel isolated. The distance education institute should take care of this aspect; otherwise the moral of distance learner will be disoriented and disenchanted from distance education. Counselling sessions, workshops, group discussions, orientation program systems of distance education need to be organized regularly to improve the attitude of distance learners. Timely admission process, study materials, notices regarding assignments, declaration of results, better evaluation system, and video- audio and library facilities, in study centre etc. help in nurturing more favourable attitude towards the distance learning. The Distance Education Council has to implement and enforce its rules strictly on private universities to maintain the standards of education so that students under private universities are at par with Open University of Gujarat.

CONCLUSION

Distance Education is an important milestone in the development of higher education and has great potential to equalize opportunities and take higher education to the door steps of female. The attitude of female students in distance education is not significant. Females are necessarily central figures in developing appropriate theory and practice for the growing female students' population.

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