A STUDY IN ATTITUDES AND
STUDY-HABITS OF STUDENTS OF DISTANCE EDUCATION

by

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Abstract

This paper is an attempt to understand the study-
habits, mental-makeup, attitude towards eduation, home-
assignments, examinations, etc., of students of dis-
tance education. The analysis has been carried out
primarily in sex-wise classification, supplemented by
taking into account the marital-status and employment-
status. The study speaks for, in general, a better
attitude of 'female students' than that of 'male
students.'

Introduction   •

In India, the non-formal education through correspon-
dence courses, was formally started as a pilot project in
the University of Delhi. The success of the experiment
unleased a new era of learning through distance education.
Today about 35 universities have adopted this stream of
education and about 4.0* l'ac students, who for some reasons
could not pursue their education in the formal setup, derive
benefit out of it. With the growth and popularity of this
media, there has also been an increase in the curiousity of
researchers and the like towards the media. A close scrutiny

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*   NIEPA: Total Enrolment in Higher Education in India (1989).

of the literature on distance education reveals that most of the efforts are focusses on the structural-functional aspects of the institutions of distance education. Lesson-writing, response-assignments, personal contact programme, etc. dominate the literature on distance education (Sujatha, 1988). Of late, attempts have been made to understand the profiles of the students of distance education, wherein socio-economic geographic aspects of the beneficiaries have been concentrated upon (Mahajan, 1989). Nonetheless, it can be said without any exaggration that these studies tend to highlight the 'exteriority' part of the clientele of distance education whereas the other dimension of the clientele viz its 'interiority' largely remains untalked about (Sahoo, 1987). As a consequence various aspects such as study habits, mental-makeup, attitude towards education, etc., of the students of distance education remains unexplored. The present paper is a mild attempt to study the same.

Objectives

The study has been carried out with the underlying objective of ascertaining the 'study habits and its allied aspects' of various groups and sub-groups, based on sex, marital-status and employment-status, of students of distance education.

Scope

The scope of the present study has been confined to the sample of students doing postgraduation through the Directorate of Correspondence Courses, Punjab University, Chandigarh. As a tool, Mathur's inventory on 'Attitudes and Study Habits' has been used. The inventory tends to provide information on as many as nine aspects, viz (i) attitude towards teachers; (ii) institutional and home environment; (iii) attitude towards education; (iv) study habits; (v) mental conflict; (vi) concentration; (vii) home assignments; (viii) self-confidence; and (ix) attitude towards examinations.

Hypothesis and analysis

The focus of the analysis has been around the statistical null-hypothesis that there is no difference between the students belonging to various 'defined' categories on the nine aspects of Mathur's inventory. Following tables (No. 1, 2 and 3) give relevant information on arithmetic mean

(a.m.), standard deviation, (s.d.) and calculated t-value(t) pertaining to various aspects. Table-1 indicates the results pertaining to the classification based on sex. Table-2 is based on 'sex-wise marital status' classification and Table-3 is based on analysis of means based on combined categorization of sex, marital-status and employment-status. The analysis has been carried out on the properly filled 104 questionnaires from the students.

Table-1

Sex-wise analysis of means

Sr. No.	Aspects	Female $N_f = 40$		Male $N_m = 64$		
		a.m.	s.d.	a.m.	s.d.	t
1.	Attitude towards teachers	1.87	0.75	2.23	1.06	1.845**
2.	Institute and home-environment	2.10	0.95	2.05	0.93	0.259
3.	Attitude towards education	2.70	0.46	2.62	0.65	0.669
4.	Study habits	11.42	2.07	11.80	2.56	0.778
5.	Mental-conflict	2.87	0.91	2.83	1.06	0.194
6.	Concentration	4.52	1.34	4.36	1.43	0.558
7.	Home-assignments	2.40	0.98	2.14	1.15	1.165
8.	Self-confidence	1.50	0.82	1.92	1.04	2.131*
9.	Attitude towards examination	4.50	1.13	3.98	1.03	2.363*

*,** Indicates significant values at 0.05 and 0.10 levels of significance respectively.

N   Indicates the number of students.

Table-2

Analysis of means — based on sex marital status

Sr. No. of aspects	FU $N_a = 31$ (a)	FM $N_b = 49$ (b)	MU $N_c = 46$ (c)	MM $N_d = 18$ (d)	t (a&b)	t (a&c)	t (b&d)	t (c&d)
1. A.M.	1.74 (0.73)	2.33 (0.71)	2.11 (0.87)	2.56 (1.42)	2.093	1.92	0.44	1.51
2. A.M.	2.16 (0.97	1.89 (0.93)	2.28 (0.91)	1.44 (0.70)	0.723	0.545	1.35	3.47
3. A.M.	2.77 (0.42)	2.44 (0.53)	2.67 (0.67)	2.50 (0.62)	1.900	0.73	0.24	0.92
4. A.M.	11.55 (2.03)	11.00 (2.29)	11.50 (2.56)	12.56 (2.48)	0.677	0.09	1.52	1.48
5. A.M.	2.93 (0.81)	2.67 (1.22)	2.76 (.108)	3.00 (1.03)	0.729	0.74	0.71	0.80
6. A.M.	4.29 (1.13)	5.33 (1.73)	4.22 (1.46)	4.72 (1.32)	2.076	0.22	0.98	1.24
7. A.M.	2.48 (1.03)	2.11 (0.78)	2.02 (1.08)	2.44 (1.29)	0.97	1.84	0.68	1.30
8. A.M.	1.45 (0.77)	1.67 (1.00)	1.83 (1.02)	2.17 (1.10)	0.684	1.74	1.10	1.15
9. A.M.	4.64 (1.05)	4.00 (1.32)	3.96 (0.92)	4.06 (1.30)	1.476	2.96	0.11	0.34

Note: (i)   FU – Female unmarried   FM – Female married
            MU – Male unmarried   MM – Male married

(ii)   Figure below Arithmetic Mean (A.M.) in parenthesis indicate the standard deviation.

Table-3

Analysis of means - based on sex, marital-status and employment status

Sr. No. of (aspects)	FUU $N_e = 31$ (e)	FUE $N_f = 49$ (f)	MUU $N_g = 46$ (g)	MUE $N_h = 18$ (h)	t (e&f)	t (e&g)	t (f&h)	t (g&h)
1.	1.75 (0.79)	1.73 (0.65)	1.90 (0.83)	2.28 (0.89)	0.07	0.58	1.79	1.45
2.	2.30 (0.92)	1.91 (1.04)	2.14 (0.96)	2.40 (0.87)	1.04	0.53	1.42	0.94
3.	2.85 (0.37)	2.64 (0.50)	2.42 (0.87)	2.88 (0.33)	1.29	1.95	1.65	2.34
4.	11.40 (2.23)	11.82 (1.66)	11.33 (.282)	11.64 (.238)	0.53	0.09	0.22	0.39
5.	2.90 (0.85)	3.00 (0.77)	2.66 (1.11)	2.84 (1.07)	0.31	0.76	0.42	0.55
6.	4.15 (1.09)	4.55 (1.21)	4.43 (1.10)	4.04 (1.69)	0.91	0.83	0.88	0.89
7.	2.75 (0.91)	2.00 (1.09)	1.90 (1.04)	2.12 (1.13)	1.98	2.71	0.29	0.67
8.	1.35 (0.74)	1.64 (0.81)	1.67 (0.97)	1.96 (1.06)	0.98	1.15	0.87	0.94
9.	4.85 (1.18)	4.27 (0.65)	3.90 (1.09)	4.00 (0.76)	1.46	2.61	1.00	0.36

FUU - Female unmarried unemployed   FME - Female married employed
MUU - Male unmarried unemployed   MME - Male married employed

Results

In all 81 statistical hypothesis have been put to test at 0.05 and 0.10 levels of significance. A few significant results can be discussed as follows:

1.a. The 'male statudents' have shown significantly higher 'self-confidence' than the 'female students' i.e. the 'males' have been more at ease than 'females' in 're- solving their difficulties with their teachers' as also 'in participating in classroom discussions.'

b. At 0.10 level of significance, difference has also been found between 'males' and 'females' over 'attitude towards teachers.' The 'male students' formulated a better 'attitude' than the 'female students' as they, besides appreciating 'teachers critical evaluation on students' answers found them 'more considerate towards students' problems and in extending help to the students to solve the same.'

c. On the other hand, 'female students' have scored significantly higherly than 'male students' over 'attitude towards examinations'—in the sense that 'females' have exhibited a more cautious approach, than 'males,' towards examinations keeping in view 'the role of the examinations' and thereon the modus-operandi (i.e. concentrating on the requirements of the questions asked and possible answers thereon; good handwriting, etc.)

2.a. Among 'female students,' on the basis of 'marital status' significant differences have been observed on their 'attitude towards teachers' and 'concentration' (where concentration is understood in the sense of 'lack of distractions in studies' from radio, TV, gossips and noise; 'not letting lose oneself into an imaginary world,' 'studying at a stretch,' etc.). In both aspects 'married female students' have scored higher (thus exhibited better attitude' and 'concentration') than unmarried female students.'

b. The 'unmarried female students' have scored higher than the 'married female students' at 0.10 level of significance on 'attitude towards education' which measures on aspects such as 'keenness in learning languages,' 'practical-based education,' 'education is worth spending time and money' and the like.

3.a. The 'unmarried female students' have depicted a significantly better 'attitude' than the 'unmarried male students' towards 'examinations.'

b. A 0.10 level of significance, differences have been observed between 'unmarried female students' and 'unmarried male students' and 'attitude towards teachers,' self-confidence and 'home-assignments,' where in the former two aspects 'unmarried males' scored higher than 'unmarried females'. As regard to the 'home-assignments,' the tool devised for self-evaluation and feedback, the 'unmarried female students' have acknowledged its utility in a better way by scoring higher than their 'male counterparts'.

4. Interestingly, there has been no significant difference between 'married female students' and 'married male students' on any of the nine aspects under study.

5. While comparing 'unmarried males students' with 'married male students,' significant difference has been found only in 'institutional and home-environment'. In this case 'unmarried male students' scored more favourably than the 'married male students' towards environment — domestic and otherwise.

6. Within 'unmarried female students' the 'employment status' brings in a significantly better 'attitude towards home-assignments' of unmarried unemployed females' than their 'employed counterparts'.

7. Between 'unmarried unemployed female students' and their male counterparts, significant differences have been observed in their attitudes towards 'education,' 'home-assignments and 'examinations.' In all the cases 'females' have demonstrated better attitude than 'males'.

8. The 'unmarried employed male students' have exhibited a better 'attitude towards education' than their unemployed counterparts.

Conclusion

While comparing the students on the basis of their sex, it has been found that 'female students' have exhibited a better attitude towards examination than 'male students'.

By taking into account the categorisation of students on the basis of the 'marital status' besides the sex, some interesting differences have been observed. While 'unmarried males' and 'unmarried females' conform to the above-mentioned sex-wise pattern, the 'married males' and 'married females' do not differ on any one of the nine aspects under study. However, within 'female students,' 'unmarried females' have scored lower than 'married females' on 'attitude towards teachers' and 'concentration' whereas it is otherwise on 'attitude towards education.'

While simultaneously considering sex, marital status and employment status for categorising the students, two important differences emerge. Firstly, 'unmarried unemployed female students' manifest better attitude towards 'home-assignments' and 'examinations' than their male counterparts

and secondly 'unmarried-employed-male students' have scored in a more favourable way than others towards 'teachers' and 'education'.

Notwithstanding, the limitations emerging out of the limited scope of the study, it can be said that the study reveals certain aspects on which students in various categories differ significantly. In general, the study tends to highlight a better overall attitude of 'female students' than 'male students'. Moreover, the casual attitude of 'male' is still more pronounced amongst the 'unmarried unemployed male students'. However, these differences can be argued in the light of changing 'socio-economic role' of 'female' in the society.

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