

# Study on Knowledge, Attitude Perception and Expectations (KAPE) of the Women Learners of Open University

C. VILLI

*State Institute of Rural Management, Maraimlainagar, Kancheepuram, Tamil Nadu*

**Abstract:** *The knowledge, attitude, perception, and expectation of the learners who are undergoing studies in the open university system/distance education deserve careful investigation. Therefore, it is pertinent to conduct study and analyse data through KAPE inventory, so that the investigators, policy makers, distance teachers, and administrators, can get a clearer picture of the situation, and plan for better teaching and learning environment.*

## Introduction

Access to formal higher education is limited due to its inherent rigidities and geographical spread of the country. The tribal population in particular finds it difficult to participate in educational programmes. Moreover, unplanned educational activities have led to non-uniform development and 70% population has no reasonable access. This malady can be rectified by opening the educational structures wider, providing access to hitherto unreached and by counselling the reluctant. In other words, access to educational structures should be increased. (Jayagopal 1992). The open university system is considered by many as a possible answer to the insurmountable problems not met by the conventional and other formal systems. The optimism stems from its potential and promise, dynamism and flexibility capacity and capability to take education to the large segments of our people, who are geographically isolated, socially and economically disadvantaged, physically challenged, and educationally backward.

This is also true for other developing and developed nations, which have found open university system as an alternative strategy to provide education particularly to the socially disadvantaged groups. (James et al., 1985).

Hermann (1988) studied attitude and values in relation to the study of external valuables on the reasons such as upward mobility, job security, requisite reasons, personal development, job satisfaction and study as a habit, initial vocational training, continuing education, and fulfill old dream.

In another similar study conducted by Bartels (1985) found out the attitude of the Distance Learners that the Distance Learners needs the support of one's family members in order to study successfully at a distance and particularly husbands and

fathers could affect the dedication of a large part of learner's free time to studying. The learners were also found to be facing the problem of isolation and availability of study materials.

Jamuar (1961) investigated into some of the psychological factors underlying the learning habits of learners. Brown (1967) confirmed that most of the learners learn by the wasteful process of the trial and error.

### **Importance of the Present Study**

The Educational Planners, Policy Makers, Distance Teachers, are generally confronted with many questions like what are the knowledge levels, Attitudes, Perceptions and Expectations of the learners who are studying in the Open University System. They need complete information on the above factors so that, with the help of this knowledge and information, the Educational planners can take appropriate decisions with regard to the content, contact seminar, teaching methods and suitable administrative processes.

The Knowledge, Attitude, Perception and Expectation of the present day's learners in Distance Education deserves careful investigation. Hence, this study has been undertaken to find out various aspects such Knowledge, Attitude, Perception and Expectation of Post Graduate Women Learners in Open University System.

### **Objectives of the Study**

The present study aims at investigating the Knowledge, Attitude, Perception, and Expectation of the women learners studying in the Open University System of University of Madras. This study especially attempts at finding out the following:

- The reason for choosing the open university system
- The reason for the continuing higher studies
- The reason for the choosing the optional subject
- Source of getting study information
- Opinion about contact seminar
- Expectations and suggestions for improvement
- Opinion about the open university system
- Opinion about entrance test

### **Procedure of the Study**

The survey method was selected to collect the research information for the study. Cluster sampling method was used. In the first stage one contact seminar center was chosen for collection of data. At the Second stage data was collected from those were present during the contact seminars. The total size of sample was 326. Pre tested questionnaire was distributed to the 500 women learners who attended the contact seminars. Finally 326 respondents returned the filled in questionnaires.

### Findings of the Study

The collected data were analysed with the help of frequency distribution and percentages and is presented here accordingly. All the findings are presented in the form of tables followed by interpretation.

#### Opinion towards about Entrance Test

Sl. No.	Description	Frequency	Percentage
1.	Entrance Test is a must	147	45.1
2.	No need of entrance test	85	26.1
3.	Entrance Test is very easy	61	18.7
4.	Questions are very difficult	20	6.1
5.	Unnecessary question in the test	13	4.0

This table corroborates two questions i.e. whether entrance test is necessary or not and other one is whether entrance test is easy or not. Unfortunately the respondent has been given a chance to apt for only one response. Hence it is difficult to get information from all respondents on both these aspects. The available information depicts the difference of opinion among the sample. 45.1% (147) are favour of entrance examination while 18.7% (61) felt that entrance test is easy. 6.1% felt that the entrance test question paper is tough. This indicates the variation of opinions in a sample comprising different groups. The sample selected is a mixed group.

#### Opinion about Open University System

Sl. No.	Description	Frequency	Percentage
1.	Formal Educational System	130	39.9
2.	No difference in the Educational Pattern	83	25.5
3.	No need based syllabus	58	17.8
4.	No Educational Broad Cast	25	7.7
5.	No Innovation	17	5.2
6.	No Response	13	4.00

The table indicate that about 25.5% (83) expressed that Open University System is similar to the other system i.e. that they have not found any change. 39.9% (130) viewed it as a form of formal education. But 17.8 (58) expressed that this education is no way related to their life requirements.

#### Opinion about Contact Seminar

Sl. No.	Description	Frequency	Percentage
1.	Days for Contact Seminar Classes are not enough	99	30.4
2.	Contact Seminary are not learner's need based	67	20.6
3.	Over Crowed in the Seminar	66	20.2
4.	No interaction facilities at seminar	62	19.0
5.	No question & answer session at the seminar	28	8.6
6.	No response	4	1.2

Table present that 30.4 felt that the days for contact class are very meager. 20.6% felt that contact classes conducted were not according to students requirements, 20.2%

felt that the contact classes are overcrowded, i.e. students number is more. 19% felt that teacher students discussion/interaction in the contact classes is missing.

### Source of getting Study Information

Sl. No.	Description	Frequency	Percentage
1.	Through Newspaper	111	34.0
2.	Through Friends	106	32.5
3.	In Person	43	13.2
4.	Through Post	31	9.5
5.	Through Radio	14	4.3
6.	No Response	21	6.4

As evident from the table, it is clear that the source of getting study information through Newspapers and friends is significantly larger 34% and 32.5% respectively. Information through Radio and TV contribute only a meager percentage (4.3%) for knowledge dissemination for Open University System of education.

### Reasons of choosing the O.U.S.

Sl. No.	Description	Frequency	Percentage
1.	In order to secure Higher Education	178	54.6
2.	Low Educational Qualification	52	16.0
3.	Employed	51	15.6
4.	Over Age	27	8.3
5.	Unable to secure seat in Formal System	13	4.0
6.	No Response	5	1.5

The main reason for choosing Open University System seems to be their ambition to get higher education. 54.6% (178) of the sample expressed their desire for higher education as the reason for choosing Open University System. 16% felt that their less qualification leads them to join in the OUS, and 15.6% expressed their current jobs is the reasons for opting to OUS.

### Reason for Continuing Higher Education

Sl. No.	Description	Frequency	Percentage
1.	Interest in Higher Education	176	54.0
2.	Job Promotion	44	13.5
3.	Better Emoluments	35	10.7
4.	Social Status	30	9.2
5.	Self Interest	37	11.3
6.	No Response	4	1.2

As observed from table, it is clear that over 50% of the women had interest in Higher Education from the Open University System. It is further seen that 24.2% of the respondents continued their education for monetary benefits and for securing promotion. 9.2% of them continued their study for acquiring certain social status.

### Reasons for choosing the Optional Subject

Sl. No.	Description	Frequency	Percentage
1.	Easy to pass	118	36.2
2.	Familiar subject	154	47.2
3.	Easy to get job	32	9.8
4.	No competition in this subject for promotion	15	4.6
5.	No response	7	2.1

Above table infers that most of the sample 83.4% chose their optional subject because of their familiarity with the subject or they felt it was easy to pass.

### Expectations and Suggestions

Sl. No.	Description	Frequency	Percentage
1.	Reduction in fees	85	26.1
2.	Need job oriented courses	69	21.2
3.	Quick dispatch of study materials	55	16.9
4.	Free coaching centre	47	14.4
5.	Reduction in syllabus	40	12.3
6.	Use innovative educational technology	20	6.1
7.	Free guidance centre	10	3.1

From the table, 26.1% felt that course fee should be lessened/minimized/decreased to some extent. 21.2% felt that job oriented technical education should be given 16.9% felt that study materials should be dispatched immediately and speedily. 14.4% felt that free training/guidance center should be instituted/formed, 12.3% expected syllabus should be reduced.

### Conclusions of the Study

Identifying the behavioural variables associated with choice of distance education system, the choice process, the post selection evaluation vis-à-vis learner expectation, has been a subject of interest for academics and policy makers, in their bid to understand learner behaviour. This paper represents a preliminary attempt in understanding the learner choice behaviour of women learners of University of Madras and shows that majority of women learners, agree is a necessary requirement. Interestingly quite a significant percentage found the open learning system to be a formal system of study, with not much difference vis-à-vis the conventional system. Newspaper and friends emerge as the primary sources of information about open university programmes. Opinions about the contact seminars indicate the areas of required improvement in the system.

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**Dr. C. Villi**, State Institute of Rural Development, Maraimalainagar, Kancheepuram District, Tamil Nadu.