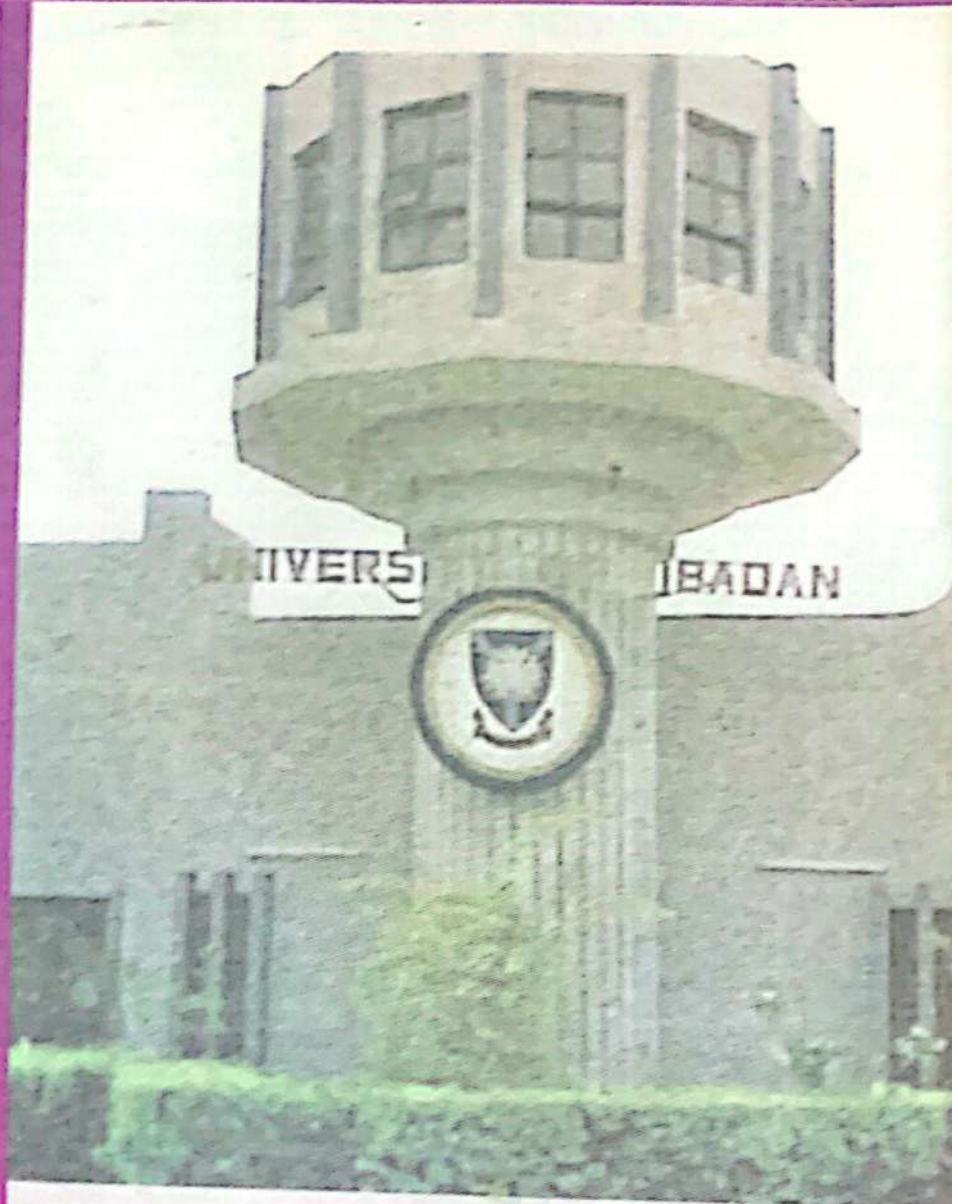




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Factors affecting Adult Learners Enrolment in Open Distance Learning Programmes in Ilorin Metropolis, Kwara State, Nigeria

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Abstract

This study investigated factors affecting adult learners' enrolment in open distance learning programmes in Ilorin metropolis, Kwara State, Nigeria. The descriptive survey design was adopted. The population of the study comprised adult learners participating in distance learning programmes in the metropolis. 105 adult learners were purposively selected through simple random sampling technique. A researcher's self-developed questionnaire on "Factors affecting adult Learners enrolment in Open Distance learning" was used for data collection while the data collected from respondents were analyzed using descriptive statistics together with percentages, mean, mode and frequencies and the reliability of 0.82 was obtained which made the questionnaire reliable enough for the study. Data were analyzed using simple percentages, mean, mode and SPSS. Findings revealed that economic factors (cost of the programme, loan facilities, and cost effectiveness of the programme), learners' characteristic, availability of learning materials (text books, library, conducive and classroom), and affordability of the programme (cost effectiveness, cost of the programme and availability of government funds) are the major factors motivating adult learners to enrol in distance learning programme in the metropolis. The study recommended that provision of learners support services (trained lecturers, qualified counsellors

and support staff) should be made available and that learning materials, provision of soft loans, with lower interest rate should be available for the interest of adult learners in the programme to sustained learners interest in the programme.

Keywords: Adult learners, enrolment, open distance learning and Ilorin Metropolis

Introduction

Distance education is seen as the education that is provided by a mode other than the conventional face-to-face method, but whose goals are similar to and just as noble as those of on-campus full time face-to-face education. UNESCO (2002) referred to open and distance learning as approaches that focus on opening access to education and training provision, freeing learners from the constraints of time and place and offering flexible learning opportunities to individuals and groups of learners. Distance learning as defined by Yusuf (2006) in Fernando (2010) is an educational programme designed for those who could not, may be for family, financial or some other reasons, attend existing educational institutions to acquire learning without necessarily becoming regular students of such institutions. He stressed that distance education is considered as a branch of adult education where the clientele may comprise of those who have no exposure of any kind to formal education, or those who dropped out of the formal school system and those who wish to supplement their formal education. Open distance learning helps the adult learners to increase their access to learning opportunities irrespective of geographical challenges because the flexibility of time, pace and place of study is assured, teaching and learning are individualized, and they can take responsibility for their own learning without being affected by anybody (Saba (2013) and (Zirnkle (2014).

The enrolment of adult learners in Ilorin metropolis need to be examined and there are many factors that is influencing the adult learners enrolment among which includes economic factor, availability of learning materials, affordability of the programme and many more that is influence the enrolment of adult learners in the programme. Adult learners have a duty to take greater responsibility for ensuring that their own skills or needs are met, and they often share in the costs of investment and time so as not to have their own personal responsibilities affected or hindered by their study.

Adult learners need to enrol for open distance programme because of necessity and urgent needs which includes:

- Provision of academic opportunities for adult learners who could not acquire higher education through regular university education system.
- Deliver educational services in a manner that would be more learner-centred and learner-friendly which will make them to realize and motivated that learning is a lifelong affair.
- Allowing for further studies for those even with a regular university education but desiring new knowledge and some specialized skills like computer skill.
- Conducting seminars and workshops for private and government organizations to enhance manpower and productivity.

In order to be more relevant and be more effective and dynamic in life, adult learners need to enrol and bust their morals (UNESCO, (2002) & Abba, A.A et al (2015).

Statement of the problem

It is only through the use of an effective education that a country can develop from a certain level to another. Similarly, the continuous demand for higher education in Nigeria has been on increase that Nigerian Universities cannot accommodate all students who want higher education through regular programme (Okebukola (2013). Although, the provision of free and equal education for the citizens at all levels of education is strictly seen to be the duty and responsibility of the government, however, the increasing number of students putting in for admission at the public and State universities has rendered the universities to become overstretched and unable to accommodate the qualified candidates for admission. In Ilorin metropolis, there has been a high demand for second chance education by the working class and the enrolment trend is not encouraging by the adult learners due to some factors which can be economic, affordability and learner's characteristics. It is on this backdrop that the study seeks to assess the factors affecting the enrolment of adult learners in open distance education in Ilorin Metropolis.

Purpose of the study

The main objective of the study is to establish the factors affecting adult learners' enrolment in open distance learning programmes in Ilorin Metropolis. The specific objectives are to:

1. Determine how adult learners' characteristics (sex, marital status and age) affect learners' enrolment in distance learning in Ilorin metropolis.
2. Find out the extent to which adult learners have access to text books, library and conducive classrooms and how they affect enrolment of adult learners to distance learning in Ilorin metropolis.
3. Investigate the extent to which cost of the programme, loan facilities and cost effectiveness of the programme affect the enrolment of adult learners to distance learning in Ilorin metropolis.
4. Assess the extent to which learners' support services (trained lecturers, qualified counsellors and support staff) affect the enrolment of adult learners into distance learning programmes.

Research Questions

In order to achieve the stated objectives, the research was guided by the following research questions:

1. How does adult learners' characteristic affect learners' enrolment in distance learning in Ilorin metropolis?
2. To what extent does accessibility to learning materials affect enrolment of adult learners to distance learning in Ilorin metropolis?
3. To what extent does an economic factor affect the enrolment of adult learners to distance learning in Ilorin metropolis?
4. To what extent does learners' support service affect the enrolment of adult learners into Distance learning programmes?

Significance of the study

This research will provide vital information to adult education stakeholders as well as institutions of higher learning in Ilorin metropolis on the key factors affecting adult learners' enrolment in open distance learning programmes. It will help in the improvement of open distance learning programmes in Ilorin metropolis. The research findings will also provide important information to universities, the government, parents and others who utilize this information to

improve accessibility into distance learning programme in Ilorin, not only for adult learners but also to all students seeking higher education.

Methodology

Research design adopted is descriptive survey design which was used to obtain information from the respondents. The design is adopted to find out factors affecting adult learners' enrolment in open distance education in Ilorin metropolis. The population of the study comprised all the adult learners undergoing distance education in the four local government areas such as Ilorin West, Ilorin South, Ilorin East and Asa Local Government Areas. The sample comprised 120 adult learners (30 respondents from each of the four local government areas in Ilorin metropolis) were selected through simple random sampling technique. A well-structured questionnaire titled: *Factors Affecting Adult Learners Enrolment in Open Distance Education In Ilorin Metropolis (FAALEODLIM)* and constructed in a four-point Likert rating scale was used to obtain data. Data obtained were analysed using frequency counts and simple percentages.

Findings and Discussion of findings

Research Question One

How do adult learners' characteristics affect learners' enrolment in distance learning in Ilorin metropolis? Tables 1, 2, and 3 show the percentage distribution of the respondents by gender, marital status, and age.

Table 1: Distribution of Respondents by Gender

Gender	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Male	72	69.9
Female	31	30.1
Total	103	100.0

Table 2: Distribution of Respondents by Marital Status

Marital Status	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Married	30	29.1
Single	73	71.9
Total	103	100.0

Table 3: Distribution of Respondents by Age

Age (years)	Frequency	Percentage (%)
18-21	28	27.2
22-25	23	22.3
26-30	29	28.2
31-35	24	23.3
Total	103	100.0

From results obtained in table 1, a common characteristic of respondents in this study which is gender showed that the number of males [72(69.9%)] who enrolled for distance learning Education, was a bit higher than the number of females [31(30.1%)]. Also, results from table 2 revealed that 29.1% of the respondents were married and this shows that distance learning encourages willing adults who have family commitments. Respondents are well represented almost equally in all the age groups between 18 – 35 years as shown in table 3. These imply that distance education has been found to be of help in achieving education regardless of age or family commitment.

Research Question Two

To what extent does accessibility to learning materials affect enrolment of adult learners to distance learning in Ilorin metropolis?

Table 4: Distribution of Respondents' Opinion on the Extent to which Accessibility to Learning Materials Affect the Enrolment of Adult Learners into Distance Learning Programmes

Items	VS F(%)	S F(%)	F F(%)	P F(%)
Availability of Text books	29(28.2)	2(1.9)	11(10.7)	61(59.2)
Availability of chairs and tables	30(29.1)	13(12.6)	27(26.2)	33(32.0)
Availability of library	47(45.6)	4(3.9)	15(14.6)	37(45.6)
Availability of conducive classrooms	38(36.9)	5(4.9)	17(16.75)	43(41.7)
Availability of laboratories	34(33.0)	4(3.9)	30(29.1)	35(34.0)
Availability of audio-visual aids	30(29.1)	35(34.0)	18(17.5)	20(19.4)
Availability of stationeries	15(14.6)	14(13.6)	26(25.2)	48(46.6)

Results from table 4 show that:

Ratings	Frequency	Percentage (%)
VS	31	30.0
S	10	10.0
F	21	20.0
P	41	40.0
Total	103	100.0

Results from table 4 shows that 40% of the respondents are very satisfactory with their accessibility to learning materials and this affects the enrolment of adult learners into distance learning programme. Likewise, 60% of the respondents are not satisfactory with accessibility to learning materials.

Research Question Three

To what extent do economic factors affect the enrolment of adult learners to distance learning in Ilorin metropolis?

Table 5: Distribution of Respondents' Opinion on the Extent to which Economic Factors Affect the Enrolment of Adult Learners into Distance Learning Programmes

Items	SA F(%)	A F(%)	D F(%)	SD F(%)
The cost of the programme is affordable to all	23(22.3)	54(52.4)	14(13.6)	12(11.7)
Loan facilities are available to students for the programme	6(5.8)	32(31.1)	41(39.8)	24(23.3)
Cost effectiveness of the programme makes it attractive to the students.	16(15.5)	52(50.5)	20(19.4)	15(14.6)
There is availability of government funds to the students	1(1.0)	11(10.7)	58(56.3)	33(32.0)

Results from table 5 shows that 52.4% and 50.5% of the respondents agreed that the cost of the programme is affordable to all and cost effectiveness of the programme makes it attractive to the students respectively. Another factor that affect enrolment of adult learners into distance learning program in Ilorin metropolis is availability of loan facilities and government funds to students in which 39.8% and 56.3% of the respondents disagreed to their availability. This factor may not attract adult learners into the programme.

Research Question Four

How does learners' support service affect the enrolment of adult learners into Distance learning programmes?

Table 6: Distribution of Respondents' Opinion on How Learners' Support Services Affect the Enrolment of Adult Learners into Distance Learning Programmes

Items	VS F(%)	S F(%)	F F(%)	P F(%)
Trained lecturers	26(25.2)	62(60.2)	9(8.7)	6(5.8)
Qualified counsellors	32(31.1)	49(47.6)	10(9.7)	12(11.7)
Support staffs	19(18.4)	54(52.4)	18(17.5)	12(11.7)

Results from table 6 shows that 60.2% of the respondents are satisfied with trained lecturers that are present in the programme, this is one of the very important learners' support services. Another important learners' support service is the availability of qualified counsellors, 47.6% of the respondents are also satisfied with their services. These factors improve the enrolment of adult learners into distance learning programme as qualified counsellors are able to guide students on which course to study, also presence of trained lecturers attract more learners to the programme.

Discussion of Findings

It was established from the findings that 30% of the respondents are very satisfactory with their accessibility to learning materials and this affects the enrolment of adult learners into distance learning programme. Likewise, 40% of the respondents are satisfactory with accessibility to learning materials. However, some respondents were dissatisfied with the inadequacy and inaccessibility to learning materials. Saba (2013) argued that provision of learning materials was untimely and irregular, materials provided were outdated and of low-quality forcing students to incur extra expenses by purchasing new relevant study materials. According to Sachanna (2002) in Daniel (2015), distance learners access reading materials in different ways, they use a variety of means such as printed material, manuals mediated by technology using different kinds of media e.g. radio, internet, telephone among others to access learning materials. This was also accompanied by unavailability of steady internet infrastructure in some centres that necessitated the purchase of modems to enable student's access internet.

From the study, most of the respondents agreed that the cost of the programme is affordable to all and cost effectiveness of the programme makes it attractive to the students respectively. This is line with Okebukola (2013) submission that the cost of the programme is avoidable and this should be an encouragement for all to learn. Another factor that affects enrolment of adult learners into distance learning program in Ilorin metropolis is availability of loan facilities and government funds to students in which only few percentages of the respondents disagreed to their availability. Findings also show that most learners depended on sorts cooperatives loans to finance their

studies. The reason was that majority of the adult learners are married and are responsible for their family up keep like education, food, health and shelter, their earnings are not adequate to cater for distance education and they had to struggle to make ends meet in order to finance distance education. Most of the respondents indicated that the government or university does not provide funds in forms of loans or bursary to distance learners which make payment hard on the in most cases. According to Pityan (2014), soft loans which can be of assistance to learners were not available because small percentage of government budget is allotted to education and even to distance education. The study sought to find out the influence of learners' support services on enrolment adult learners into distance learning. The findings established that although the learners' support services provided in the present day are limited, most of the respondents are satisfied with the support services as it improves the interest of the adult learners on the programme and also it makes them have the sense of belonging but still, it is too limited and needs to be improved.

Conclusion

This research work has dug into the factors affecting adult learners' enrollment in open distance education Ilorin metropolis. It is discovered that enrollment into open distance education in Ilorin metropolis by adult learners is improving greatly because of the public notion trending in education sector that Distance Education has become paramount as an alternative method of course delivery being used by tertiary colleges and Universities as they expand access to higher Education at both the National and International level (NUC, (2011) and Msweli (2012). It is also drawn from the findings that distance learning has taken advantage of the growing the Technological advancement and the increasing widespread of ICT infrastructure to increase the interest and enrolment of adult learners in open distance education in Ilorin metropolis.

Also, the improved accessibility to learning materials, the flexibility and affordability of the cost of education, and the provision of adequate learners support services like qualified facilitators and counsellors has also made open distance learning and better option that the adult learners do wants to enrol in for the improvement of their education. This was buttress with some scholars that they will be an incentives and

encouragers to enroll by adult learners for open distance education (Karani, 2007; Adesoye & Amusa, 2011; and NMG (2017).

Recommendations

- (i) Open distance institutions should work towards the provision of effective learning materials to the adult learners so as not to have them discouraged halfway in the programme.
- (ii) Improvement should be made on learner support services as the ones available are too minimal to cater for the different learner characteristics.
- (iii) The government should develop good modality on educational loans to distance learners at lower interest rates than banks or cooperatives. This will allow many to join as the programmes would become more affordable.
- (iv) Since the importance of internet cannot be over-emphasised in the delivery of distance education services, availability of advanced ICT knowledge should be given to the adult learners at the subsidies rate.

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