

STUDY HABITS AND DEMOGRAPHIC CHARACTERISTICS OF WOMEN DISTANCE LEARNERS: A Comparative Study

Suja Stanley GEORGE
Subharti Medical College,
Swami Vivekanand Subharti University,
Meerut, Uttar Pradesh, INDIA

ABSTRACT

This article explores significant difference on demographic characteristics (course, marital, employment, locality, and age) and study habits of women distance learners. This study was conducted in five cities of Uttar Pradesh viz. Gautam Budh Nagar, Baghpat, Ghaziabad, Modinagar, and Meerut and data were collected 220 women distance learners from two Universities viz. IGNOU and SVSU following stratified sampling method. The findings revealed that there was no significant difference observed in overall study habits of demographic characteristics namely course, employment, marital and age wise. Significant difference was observed in overall study habits of locality ie. rural and urban women distance learners. The urban women distance learners were found to have better study habits than rural women distance learners.

It is recommended that the distance learning universities must pay special thrust for rural women distance learners by providing more support through personal contact programmes. Proper Academic and personal counseling help the women distance learners to developing proper and healthy study habits and it helps to develop in them a sense of security and development of self confidence.

Keywords: Study habits, women distance learners, demographic characteristics

INTRODUCTION

Study habit is a tendency of a student to learn in a systematic and efficient way, when opportunity is given. It is defined as the devotion of time and attention to acquire information or knowledge especially from books or in other words it's the pursuit of academic knowledge by a detailed investigation of a subject or situation (Oxford Dictionary & Thesaurus of English Language, 2003).

According to Crow and Crow (1992), 'the effective habits of study include plan/place, a definite time table and taking brief of well organized notes'. Study habits refer to whether students study at the same time each day, whether they shut off radio, television while reading and whether they paraphrase and write down what they have read during the practical instructions. Chastain & Thurbor (1989) describe different types of effective studying techniques. One popular study technique is called the SQ4R method. The "S" and "Q" stand for "Survey" and "Question", and the "4R" stands for "Read", "Recite", "Relate" and "Review". In this study, study habits of the individual cover mainly the reading habits, learning techniques, time schedule, memory, Physical conditions and examinations, evaluation etc as assessed by the study habit inventory developed by Palsane and Sharma

The success of the distance education institutes lies in their ability to extend educational opportunities to all, including the unreached, disadvantaged, underprivileged and the community as a whole, thereby, contributing to the manpower development and growth. Distance learners are heterogeneous background in terms of age, experience, socio-

cultural, educational and occupational backgrounds and they have different methods of learning. They may be employed, unemployed, retired, single, married, house wives, physically disabled having varied social and financial problems. Their learning activity being part time, it takes place in leisure hours, in the evenings, and on holidays; they are irregular in their studies (Sharma, 2008). In distance education adult is able to return to education when he/she feels the needs. Education is therefore changing from institution centered activity to a student centered one. As distance education is learner centered, the Educational Planners, Policy Makers, Distance educators, should be fully aware of the background characteristics of the learners, their needs, attitude towards distance education, interest, motivation expectation, study habits, problem of the learners who are studying in the Open University System (Biswas 1999).

The rural, urban and gender disparities must be kept in mind by policy makers in planning and implementing the higher education system (UGC, 2003). This study is very important because there may be wide range of learning style of heterogeneous background variables of women distance learners.

The distance learner in India, particularly the woman distance learners is no privileged student for devoting her time to study and career interest only; she is surrounded by multiple of academic and non academic concerns (Ramakrishna, 1995). Gaps in educational back ground of women also create problems in study habits. The lack of learning skills is one of the major causes for dropout and failure (Villi, 1999). Maternal responsibilities, family and home chores, and the inadequacy of many homes as the major study base for the home-bound woman are among the barriers that the female distant learner contends with (Effe, 1991), however educating women can help woman's employment potential and an increase in employment potential will promote higher income level and improved their standard of living (Kamla, 1995).

In designing an effective Learner Support System, the Institution should be familiar with the students' home and community environments, community's attitudes to education, availability of peers that can render academic assistance and a lot more other related issues (Nyondo 2003). There exists little difference in outcomes when one considers level of satisfaction it also reports that students are more satisfied with asynchronous distance learning (Computer conference and voice mailing) and students perform better when the structure of instruction matches their preferred learning style (Moore 2007, pp 153).

In this study the investigator tries to find out any significant difference in mean scores in the study habits between the demographic characteristics based on course, locality, marital status, employment status and age wise of woman distance learners.

LITERATURE REVIEW

The studies conducted by researchers in distance education shows that Open University students keep a time schedule for learning (Raja and Rao ,1993). Srivastava et. al (2007) observed that most of the distance learners do not read the relevant study materials before attending counseling sessions and suggested that an induction programme should therefore be made compulsory for all entrants. Goamthi (1982) revealed that there existed a significant relationship between the achievement of M.A, and M.Com distance learners and work on study materials, textbook studies; participation in seminars and contact programmes; radio broadcast programmes, study centre activities and effective role of instructors. Morgan's (1993) work exclusively deals with two approaches of learning i.e. Surface and deep. The approaches are context specific and directly relate to the quality of learning outcomes. Students with surface approach to their learning are concerned with the intention of completing the learning task requirements, students with deep approach to learning are more concerned with the intention to understand the

deeper meaning embedded in the learning tasks and their relationship with their task. Macdonald and Scott (1997) found that undergraduate students find it difficult to read academic texts and this affect their success. Koymen's (1992) study concluded that there are no important differences in terms of learning and study strategies of the students in conventional system compared to an open learning system.

Ahsan (2005) study habits of distance learners reveals Students who do not have competent reading skills and study habits may face problems in the DE system. Distance learners may have to countenance an unfamiliar situation in the events of their lack of pre-joining awareness about the DE system. Villi (1999) emphasized that the learning habits of the distance learners, having such great educational importance deserved careful investigation. Studies reviewed regarding study habits reveal clear picture that study habit is a significant factor of predicting academic performance and there was significant relationship between study habits and academic performance (Ige, 2009; Kumar, 1998, Sahu.S, 2013). Good study habits, learning strategies helped distance learners to successfully complete their studies (Guo, 2012; Nair S, 2012; Richardson J, 2010; Srivastava et. al, 2007). Distance learners study habits include "Recalling silently", "reading when they get time" and studied late at night before the examination (Villi, 1999). Non formal education students were significantly better in study habits than Formal education students (Naeemulla et. al 2011). The study of Asseffa (2006) reveals that environmental variables affect the study habits of distance learners.

METHODOLOGY

The study was undertaken following survey research in the four cities of Uttar Pradesh viz. Gautam Budh Nagar, Ghaziabad, Modinagar, and Meerut. The population selected was the distance learners of graduate and post graduate of Indira Gandhi National Open University (IGNOU), and Swami Vivekanand Subharti University (SVSU).

Using stratified sampling, data were collected from graduate and post graduate women distance learners from IGNOU, and SVSU study centers, thus arriving a total sample of 220. To assess study habits Palsane and Sharma (1989) was used. The scale has 45 items which is broken up into 8 areas such as budgeting time, physical condition, reading ability, note taking, learning motivation, memory, taking examination and health. There are 34 positive items and 11 negative items.

The positive items have a response choice, given as always or mostly, sometimes or never which carries the scores as 2, 1 & 0. Whereas the negative items has a response choice, given as similar to the positive items but the scoring is done as 0, 1, & 2. The total score is the summation of all the positive and negative items score. The minimum score obtained can be 0 and the maximum can be 90. The reliability coefficient is found to be .88 by test retest method with an interval of 4 weeks. The inventory, besides having high face validity, has high validity coefficients with external criterion (similar type of study habits inventories) and the highest value being 0.83. The items of the inventory belong to the eight areas.

OBJECTIVES

- To study significant difference in the study habits of woman distance learners by course wise (graduate and post graduate)
- To study significant difference in the study habits of woman distance learners by marital status wise (married and unmarried)
- To study significant difference in the study habits of woman distance learners by employment wise (employed and unemployed)
- To study significant difference in the study habits of woman distance learners by locality wise (urban and rural)
- To study significant difference in the study habits woman distance learners by age wise (Above 25 and below 25)

RESULTS

Table: 1
Comparison On Study Habits Of Graduate
And Post Graduate Women Distance Learners

Areas of study habits	Course	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean	T-test	Significant
budget	graduate	123	7.76	1.44	0.13	0.180	NS
	post grad	97	7.79	1.62	0.16		
Physical condition	graduate	123	8.12	1.39	0.13	0.274	NS
	post grad	97	8.18	1.46	0.15		
Reading ability	graduate	123	10.77	2.04	0.18	0.942	NS
	post grad	97	10.52	1.98	0.20		
Note taking	graduate	123	4.58	1.31	0.12	0.509	NS
	post grad	97	4.67	1.37	0.14		
Learning motivation	graduate	123	9.70	1.62	0.15	3.257*	S
	post grad	97	8.93	1.83	0.19		
memory	graduate	123	5.14	1.17	0.11	0.252	NS
	post grad	97	5.09	1.44	0.15		
Taking examination	graduate	123	13.77	2.35	0.21	1.134	NS
	post grad	97	14.14	2.47	0.25		
health	graduate	123	4.11	1.07	0.10	0.880	NS
	post grad	97	3.97	1.31	0.13		
Over all study habits	graduate	123	63.95	7.68	0.69	0.573	NS
	post grad	97	63.29	9.13	0.93		

** indicates significant at 0.01 level

* indicates significant at 0.05 level

The result of Table: 1 that graduate and post graduate woman distance learners do not differ significantly on over all study habits and its seven six areas.

Out of eight sub areas of study habits, significant difference is exist in one area i.e. learning motivation. The result leads to that the graduate distance learners have higher learning motivation than post graduate distance learners.

Table: 2
Comparison on Study Habits of Married and Unmarried Women Distance Learners

Areas of study habits	Marital Status	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean	T-test	Significant
budget	married	107	7.68	1.55	0.15	0.857	NS
	unmarried	113	7.86	1.49	0.14		
Physical condition	married	107	8.03	1.42	0.14	1.195	NS
	unmarried	113	8.26	1.42	0.13		
Reading ability	married	107	10.81	2.15	0.21	1.099	NS
	unmarried	113	10.51	1.88	0.18		
Note taking	married	107	4.71	1.29	0.12	0.998	NS
	unmarried	113	4.53	1.38	0.13		
Learning motivation	married	107	9.51	1.72	0.17	1.274	NS
	unmarried	113	9.21	1.79	0.17		
memory	married	107	5.16	1.35	0.13	0.453	NS
	unmarried	113	5.08	1.24	0.12		
Taking examination	married	107	13.79	2.51	0.24	0.850	NS
	unmarried	113	14.07	2.31	0.22		
health	married	107	4.06	1.27	0.12	0.074	NS
	unmarried	113	4.04	1.10	0.10		
Over all study habits	married	107	63.76	8.89	0.86	0.169	NS
	unmarried	113	63.57	7.82	0.74		

The result of Table: 2 reveal that married and unmarried woman distance learners do not differ significantly on over all study habits and its eight areas.

Table: 3
Comparison On Study Habits Of Employed and Unemployed Women Distance Learners

Areas of study habits	Marital Status	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean	T-test	Significant
budget	employed	133	7.66	1.63	0.14	1.401	NS
	unemployed	87	7.94	1.32	0.14		
Physical condition	employed	133	8.21	1.44	0.12	0.847	NS
	unemployed	87	8.05	1.39	0.15		
Reading ability	employed	133	10.67	2.09	0.18	0.093	NS
	unemployed	87	10.64	1.91	0.20		
Note taking	employed	133	4.69	1.32	0.11	1.003	NS
	unemployed	87	4.51	1.36	0.15		
Learning motivation	employed	133	9.44	1.76	0.15	0.803	NS
	unemployed	87	9.24	1.76	0.19		
memory	employed	133	5.03	1.25	0.11	1.236	NS
	unemployed	87	5.25	1.34	0.14		

Table: 3 (Continued)

Taking examination	employed	133	13.89	2.53	0.22	0.326	NS
	unemployed	87	14.00	2.22	0.24		
health	employed	133	4.11	1.18	0.10	0.974	NS
	unemployed	87	3.95	1.18	0.13		
Over all study habits	employed	133	63.71	8.43	0.73	0.105	NS
	unemployed	87	63.59	8.25	0.88		

The result of Table.3 reveal that employed and unemployed woman distance learners do not differ significantly on over all study habits and its eight areas.

Table: 4
Comparisons On Study Habits of Rural And Urban Women Distance Learners

Areas of study habits	Marital Status	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean	T-test	Significant
budget	rural	82	7.79	1.58	0.18	0.147	NS
	urban	138	7.76	1.49	0.13		
Physical condition	rural	82	7.90	1.45	0.16	1.945	NS
	urban	138	8.29	1.38	0.12		
Reading ability	rural	82	10.43	2.04	0.23	1.312	NS
	urban	138	10.80	1.99	0.17		
Note taking	rural	82	4.51	1.33	0.15	0.910	NS
	urban	138	4.68	1.34	0.11		
Learning motivation	rural	82	9.20	1.78	0.20	1.061	NS
	urban	138	9.46	1.74	0.15		
memory	rural	82	4.95	1.24	0.14	1.507	NS
	urban	138	5.22	1.32	0.11		
Taking examination	rural	82	13.44	2.17	0.24	2.476*	S
	urban	138	14.23	2.49	0.21		
health	rural	82	3.90	1.18	0.13	1.429	NS
	urban	138	4.14	1.18	0.10		
Over all study habits	rural	82	62.12	8.26	0.91	2.126*	S
	urban	138	64.57	8.28	0.70		

The result of Table: 4 reveal that rural and urban woman distance learners differ significantly on over all study habits and its one area. The urban distance learners were significantly good study habits than the rural women distance learners.

Similarly the urban women distance learners were significantly higher in the area of taking examination.

That means the urban women distance learners give more importance to taking examination than rural women distance learners.

Out of eight areas, the mean favor of urban women distances learners on seven areas. In

other words it may be said that the urban women distance learners study habits is better than rural woman distance learners in all the areas except budgeting.

Table: 5
Comparison on Study Habits of Women Distance Learners By Age Wise
(Above And Below 25)

Areas of study habits	Age wise	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. ErrorMean	t-value	Significant
budget	Above 25	131	7.81	1.50	0.13	.427	NS
	Below 25	89	7.72	1.56	0.17		
Physical Condition	Above 25	131	8.21	1.40	0.12	.859	NS
	Below 25	89	8.04	1.45	0.15		
Reading ability	Above 25	131	10.79	2.09	0.18	1.158	NS
	Below 25	89	10.47	1.90	0.20		
Note taking	Above 25	131	4.80	1.27	0.11	2.458	S
	Below 25	89	4.35	1.39	0.15		
Learning motivation	Above 25	131	9.62	1.65	0.14	2.632	S
	Below 25	89	8.98	1.85	0.20		
memory	Above 25	131	5.18	1.34	0.12	.923	NS
	Below 25	89	5.02	1.22	0.13		
Taking examination	Above 25	131	13.98	2.43	0.21	.363	NS
	Below 25	89	13.87	2.38	0.25		
health	Above 25	131	4.12	1.21	0.11	1.110	NS
	Below 25	89	3.94	1.14	0.12		
Overall Study habits	Above 25	131	64.52	8.58	0.75	1.899	NS
	Below 25	89	62.39	7.85	0.83		

The result of Table: 5 reveal that above 25 and below 25 woman distance learners do not differ significantly on over all study habits and its six areas. Out of eight areas significant difference were observed in note taking and learning motivation.

The age of above 25 women distance learners were significantly higher in the areas of note taking and learning motivation. This may be because the matured women distance learners are more motivated and interested in note taking than their counterparts rural woman learners.

DISCUSSION

This study reveals that no significance difference was observed in overall study habits and demographic characteristics namely course wise, marital status, employment status, age wise. Contrary the finding observed by (Kumar, 1999) that there was significant difference in study habits of distance learners by marital status, academic stream and employment status of first degree distance learners.

This study supported the age wise of first degree distance learners that there was no

significant difference of study habits in age wise (kumar, 1999). The reason for all these groups equally maintain study habits may be because distance learners are mostly self directed learners and they know how to maintain time schedule to adjust the study periods and other activities.

They may have good vocabulary, speed of reading, comprehension, and independent selection of appropriate material for reading and prepare for examination for achieving good results. The study of Nair P.S (2012) reveals that the skill to do self-learning, better time management and ability to multi-task were the main value-additions stated by successful distance learner. It has been found that significant difference was observed in overall study habits by locality wise. The urban women distance learners have better study habits than rural woman distance learners. By comparing eight areas of study habits and demographic characteristics it has been found that, significant difference was observed in the study habits areas by course wise, locality wise and age wise. Course wise significant difference was observed in the area of learning motivation. The graduate woman distance learners are higher in learning motivation than post graduate distance learners.

The reason may be at post graduate level the courses are difficult than graduate level and post graduates may face difficulties in meeting the challenges posed by new system of learning and teaching due to lack of interaction with the peer group and teachers and the student lose their motivation as most post graduates may be professionals and they have multiple responsibilities like taking care of house, job and study. Locality wise significant difference was observed in the study habit area of taking examination. The urban woman distance learners know better taking examination style than rural women distance learners. Age wise significant difference observed in the areas of study habits namely note taking and learning motivation.

The above 25 years of age women distance learners report a better note taking style and learning motivation than below 25 woman distance learners. The factor of age provides experience and maturity to their study habits may be the reason for the above age 25 women distance learner have better in note taking and learning motivation.

CONCLUSION

The research out come shows that the one of demographic characteristics ie. locality significantly differ in their overall study habits. Remaining four demographic characteristics namely, course, marital status, employment and age wise did not differ significantly in over all study habits. It has been found that the urban woman distance learners have better study habits than rural woman distance learners. Hence distance learning universities must pay special thrust for rural women distance learners by providing more support through personal contact programmes and there is need to inculcate systematic and proper study habits to rural woman distance learners by conducting study skill development program. It can help to rural woman students to improve their study habits.

RECOMMENDATION

- The women distance learners are heterogeneous group they (especially rural women distance learners) join the professional courses without lack of idea about distance learning and self learning habits. To improve distance learners study habits and reading technique, the educational planners should add study skills and SQ3R technique in the module of programs or provide guidance, on use of learning materials, on techniques.

- To enhance and maintain learner's interest, learning motivation, and reduce feeling of isolation in the study, the educational planners should emphasize more implementation of modern technology in distance learning, properly designing of student support services like interaction with the teacher and peer group, good academic counseling and feed back from tutors.
- For rural woman distance learners the distance learning may be new learning situations, hence they should try to understand their own strength and weakness so that they can improve their study habits
- Quality of learning out come from the student approach to learning, the rural women distance learners should follow a deep level approach ie. 'Making connections', 'drawing conclusions', 'getting a clear impression' and getting the point.
- Their study problems must be dealt on individuals basis by telephone, email etc. Academic counselor can help in difficulties faced by students through out their courses. The Academic counselor should be having qualities like warmth, acceptance, genuineness and empathy, to hear the problems patiently and solve the problems of women distance learners
- Proper Academic and personal counseling help the women distance learners to developing proper and healthy study habits and it helps to develop in them a sense of security and development of self confidence.
- With good study habits the women distance learners can spend less time for studying and learn more in given period of time. To inculcate healthy study habits, time to time counseling of students should be done encouraging for them, motivating them for better learning so that it brings about a change in the society towards education of women learners.

BIODATA and CONTACT ADDRESSES of the AUTHOR



Suja Stanely GEORGE is associated with Subharti Medical College, Swami Vivekanand Subharti University as Officer Incharge (Students) and a Ph.D scholar in the same university. Her area of interests are distance learning and human psychology. Author has done Masters in Distance Education and Post Graduate Diploma in Distance Education from IGNOU.

Dr. Suja Stanley GEORGE
Subharti Medical College,
Swami Vivekanand Subharti University,
Meerut, Uttar Pradesh, INDIA
Email: suja.stanley80@yahoo.com

REFERENCES

Ahsan Q. M. G., & Miraj S. M. A. (2005). " Analysing study habits of Distance learners : A case study of Bangladesh Open Univeristy. *Indian Journal of Open learning*, 2005, 59-69.

Asseffa, S. (2006). Determining the Conduciveness of Distance Learning Environment: A Case Study of Eastern Ethiopia, *Indian Journal of Open Learning*, 2006, 15(2), 177- 189.

Biswas, P.K. (1999). Freshers in IGNOU: A study of their awareness, interest and motivation, *Indian journal of open learning*, 8(3) 273-282

Chastain, G., & Thurber, S. (1989). The chameleon effect: The perception-behaviour link and social interaction. *Journal of Personality & Social Psychology*, 76(6), 893-910.

Crow, R. D., & A. Crow, A. (1992). *Educational Psychology*. American Book Co., N.Y., USA.

Gomathi, A. (1982). A critical Study of the participants evaluation of selected post graduate courses of the correspondence education programme of Madhurai Kamaraj University, Unpublished Ph.D Thesis, Education, University of Madras.

Guo, S. (2012). Pedagogical design in built environment in distance education. A critical appraisal of students' learning strategies at postgraduate level, Ph.D Thesis, University of Northumbria at Newcastle.

Ige, N. A. (2009). "Distance Learners' Study Habits in Relation to Their Academic Performance: A Nigerian Investigation" C. G publisher.com IGNOU "Nature and characteristics of distance education, [webserver.ignou.ac.in/ institute/handbook1/section%201.pdf](http://webserver.ignou.ac.in/institute/handbook1/section%201.pdf)

Kamla B.K. (1995). *Women friendly perspectives in distance education: Problems and prospectus with special reference to Indian conditions. Speaking for ourselves, Women and distance education in India*, Manohar 1995.

Koymen U. S. (1992). Comparison of learning and study strategies of traditional and open learning system students in Turkey, *Distance education*, Vol.13, No1, (108-117).

Kumar, A. (1998). An Investigation in to the distance Learners Academic Self Concept, Study Habits and Attitude towards distance Education in Relation to Academic performance at First Degree level. Ph.D Edu. Ch. Charan Singh University, Meerut (Sixth survey education research).

Macdonald, R. M., & Scott, B. (1997). A postal survey of OU students reading skills, *Open learning*, Vol.12. No.2(29-40).

Moore, G. M. (2007). *Hand book of Distance Education*, google book online.

Morgan, A. (1993). *Improving your students Learning*, London: Kogan Page.

Naeemullah, B., Aijaz, A. G, Ghazal S, Muhammad, R. (2011). "A comparative study of the study habits of the students from formal and non-formal systems of education in Pakistan" *International Journal of Business and Social Science* Vol. 2 No. 14 www.ijbssnet.com 175

Nair, P. S. (2012). towards understanding the successful learner: A Case Study of IGNOU *Turkish Online Journal of Distance Education-TOJDE*, April 2012 ISSN 1302-6488 Volume: 13 Number: 2 Article 19.

Nyondo, A. C. (2003). "Open and Distance Learning Practice at the Papua New Guinea University of Technology" www.col.org

Oxford Dictionary & Thesaurus of English Language. (2003). Oxford University Press.

Raja M, C., & Rao P. K. (1993). Study habits of distance learners, *Kakatiya Journal of Distance Education*, 2(2), 39-51.

Ramakrishna, C. P. (1995). *Reaching out of the role of counseling, Speaking about themselves, Women and distance education in India*, Manohar 1995.

Richardson T. E. J. (2010). Conceptions of learning and approaches to studying among White and ethnic minority students in distance education, *British Journal of Educational*

***Psychology*, (2010), 80. S35-556.**

Sahu, S. (2013). Alienation, career maturity and study habits of adolescents in relation to academic achievement, locus of control and socio-economic-status, Ph.D thesis, Maharshi Dayanand University, <http://hdl.handle.net/10603/7928>

Sharma, R. A. (2008). *Distance education*, published by International publishing house, Meerut.

Srivastava, M., & Reddy, V. (2007) . "How did they study at a distance ? Experiences of IGNOU graduates, *International journal of distance education technologies*, Vol.5, issue 3.

Villi, C. (1999). "Learning Habits of Post graduate Learners in Distance Education", *Indian Journal of Open Learning*, 8(2),197-199.