

## **THE SUPPORT SYSTEM IN DISTANCE EDUCATION: Factors Affecting Achievements Among Women Learners**

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### **ABSTRACT**

Distance education has the potential to contribute to the enhancement of women's development by overcoming not only temporal and spatial barriers but familial commitments as well. It brings education to their home and allows women to learn at their individual pace, seek skills for individual development and at the same time, enables them to fulfill family responsibilities. An important element of distance education is the provision of the learner support system that provides students the access to learning resources and means of communication that would facilitate the array of educational activities and exposure to various other guidance and advisories.

This paper reports on the study undertaken to elucidate the dimensions of the support system provided by the School of Distance Education (SDE), Universiti Sains Malaysia (USM) to its women learners that would have significant impact on their achievements. The factorial analysis conducted revealed that the role of the faculty is the main contributing factor affecting these achievements, followed by the provision of the intensive course, the electronic portal, video conferencing and to a much lesser extent, the existence of the regional centres. The implications of this study are discussed with the view of improving the support system provided by the institution and the need to put into action the necessary strategies to further improve the achievement of the women learners.

**Keywords:** Distance education, women learners, Universiti Sains Malaysia, factorial analysis, video conferencing, the support system.