

CHALLENGES AND OPPORTUNITIES FOR WOMEN PARTICIPATING IN OPEN AND DISTANCE LEARNING AT THE ZIMBABWE OPEN UNIVERSITY: A Case of Matabeleland North and Bulawayo Regions

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ABSTRACT

This paper recognizes that women's participation in higher education is very low. Women's marginalization in higher education stems from the traditional patriarchal tendencies, customary law and colonialism. The paper discusses the opportunities and challenges that female students face in trying to access distance education in Zimbabwe. Female students are under-represented at ZOU, the sole open and distance learning institution in Zimbabwe. The female student population is worsened by the fact that a larger proportion of them than male students drop out. The reasons for this are multiple but revolve around women's multiple roles of home keeper, wife and mother. The paper focuses on Matabeleland North and Bulawayo Regions in order to compare a rural and an urban set up. Data was collected from ZOU students and lecturers through in-depth interviews. It is hoped the paper will bring to the fore the various challenges that female students encounter and finally emerge with some possible intervention strategies that could help increase the number of female students' participation in distance education.

The Gender approach to development (GAD) will also guide this study. GAD analysis highlights the incentives and constraints associated with the work of women and men and highlights differences in their roles, workloads, access to resources and decision making opportunities, the impact of interventions on them and the implications for planning and implementation. The gender approach to development advocates for the lessening of social inequalities between men and women. Gender as a policy criterion has been found to reduce poverty, raises farm efficiency and improves natural resources management (Ellis, 2000). It also emphasises participatory approaches as a tool to empower women through their articulation of their needs, rights and capabilities. Communities should be encouraged to embrace the gender approach when focusing on development issues in communities. Once women are empowered and have the social and economic resources the quality of life of their households improves. If women therefore contribute so much to the social well-being of families in particular and communities in general it is therefore necessary for policy makers to develop policies that enable communities to improve women's access to resources like distance education.

Keywords: Zimbabwe Open University, an Open and Distance Learning.

INTRODUCTION

At a time when there is a drive for greater gender representation and participation throughout the Southern African region, it is imperative of education are problematic and this means seeking options to further their that women's access to education be addressed. For many women, access to traditional routes education while still being able

to fulfil their other roles within the family, paid employment and community. Open and Distance Learning (ODL) may fill the gap by affording opportunities to combine study with other areas of responsibility.

However in seeking to combine education with their other roles women face an array of social and physical challenges. The need for support from family, work and the university, through which they are engaged in the learning process, is critical in determining the success and completion of their course of study.

Opportunities Availed To Women Through Participation In Open And Distance Learning

UNESCO (2002) underscores the relationship between education and global economic, social and cultural development. Therefore in a knowledge-based society, economic advantage will accrue to individuals with knowledge, as they will be in a position to apply the knowledge in their work and daily living. At an International Research Conference hosted by Zimbabwe Open University (ZOU) in Harare (2011), knowledge was declared as the new currency in a knowledge-based society. For women in particular, the role of ODL in acquiring this new sought after currency is immense. Some of the opportunities open to women through participation in ODL are:

- More freedom of access, and thereby a wider range of opportunities for learning and qualifications;
- Overcome geographical barriers and other confining circumstances such as personal constraints, cultural and social barriers and lack of educational infrastructure;
- It is often a cheaper alternative to pursuing a course through conventional methods. As a result families (parents/husbands) may be motivated to let their daughters/spouses pursue ODL programmes; and
- Distance education may be combined with work;

The above benefits of ODL open to women all culminate in the empowerment of women. Anderson (1992) discusses empowerment as a policy approach to women in development. She sees this approach as 'focusing on increasing women's control over the choices in their lives'. She further states that, ". . . it seeks to increase their self-reliance and self-confidence so they will become more active players in society. Through increased control over crucial material and non-material resources, women are expected to take steps to influence the direction of social and economic change", (Anderson, 1992: online). Education is probably the key form of non-material resource as it helps instil both greater knowledge and skills that may be applied to help access material resources or to enable them to be used effectively.

Challenges Faced By Women In Open And Distance Learning

Women face challenges of multiple roles that may limit their ability to access traditional mediums of higher education that may mean leaving work, home, or family. Abiom (2008: online) opines that:

Men constitute the first and underlying cause of gender (and perhaps every other form of) inequality. . . . it has become the prevailing custom in many societies that the male, gradually but determinedly acquired and retained decision within the family and other institutes of the society. Making decisions in such private and public matters definitely translates into holding and retaining the power to control most affairs. And little surprise, such decisions of cause, would always be more beneficial to the male.

Abiodun (2008) further argues that women, no matter how educated, do not belong to the Boys'/Men's clubs, where important information is shared and crucial decisions are made. Most of these decisions may result in the marginalisation of women.

Studies by Hochschild (1989 cited by the American Association of University Women accessed Jan 2008) involving research on women's work and family life, introduced the idea of the 'second shift', this being the home shift that women do following formal paid employment. This 'shift' involves tasks traditionally undertaken by women linked to family and community, including housework, and childcare. The American Association of University Women (AAUW) believes education forms a 'third shift', as more and more women see education as key to future opportunity and economic wellbeing and are embarking on distance education, adding study and research to their other roles. While studies by Hochschild and later by AAUW are based on research undertaken in the United States of America their findings are relatively universally applicable. Because of their multiple existing roles women are particularly 'vulnerable to negative effects of adding a new role such as student to their already busy lives' Cragg, Andrusyszyn and Fraser (2005).

For women through much of Africa and the less economically developed world, household and family tasks are particularly time consuming and onerous as they lack the labour saving devices of the U.S.A. or much of Europe, and Australia. Even most urban based Zimbabwean women are expected to play a leading role in household management and childcare, a role that completely outweighs the contribution of men in the same areas. The importance of the 'extended' family in social and traditional aspects of life may add a further facet to the work and caring roles of women. The extended family may provide a supportive role for women by helping spread the household tasks and providing other family members who can assume responsibility for childcare when the mother needs to study.

However the extended family can also place serious demands on the woman, particularly if she is a young, junior wife in a very traditional family with little understanding of the benefits and use of the study she is doing. As many professional women in Africa are rural based teachers, nurses and community based workers, distance education is ideal to allow them access to study and self-development possibilities.

EDUCATIONAL DISPARITIES IN ZIMBABWE

Statistics show that women were educationally disadvantaged in Zimbabwe (see Table:1)

Table: 1
Women Participation in Higher Education 1980-1992

Year	Teacher Education			University Education			Technical Education					
	Female	Total	%	Female	Total	%	Female	Total	%			
1979	1,587	3,084	51.49	508	1,941	26.17	Data for these years is not available					
1980	1,528	2,829	54.01	494	2,240	22.05						
1981	1,726	3,610	47.81	569	2,525	22.53						
1982	2,142	4,873	43.96	680	3,091	22.00						
1983	2,646	6,502	40.70	805	3,620	22.24						
1984	3,177	7,734	41.08	933	4,131	22.59						
1985	2,496	5,513	45.27	1,110	4,742	23.41						
1986	3,607	8,649	41.70	1,400	5,886	23.79						
1987	5,455	14,450	37.75	1,676	6,873	24.39						
1988	7,003	16,167	43.32	699	1,930	25.07						
1989	6,713	16,231	41.36	2,235	9,288	24.06				3595	9385	38.31
1990	7,032	16,179	43.46	2,194	9,017	24.33				2660	10664	24.94
1991	6,037	13,492	44.75	2,140	8,635	24.78				3717	12684	29.30
1992	6,377	14,069	45.33	2,135	8,456	25.25	3277	11846	27.66			
Total	57,526	33,308	44.43	18,809	78,144	23.76	13,249	44,579	30.05			

Source: Statistical Year Book 1993

Analysis of the statistics for Zimbabwe, show a significant concentration of women in Teachers' Training Colleges that require only 5 'O' Level passes for admission into the programme. It also shows a remarkable decline in women's educational presence and achievement as higher levels of education are reached; university education enrolment which requires 'A' Level passes for admission has fewer women.

Also women seem to be interested in traditionally female professions like teaching and nursing and hence they shun from enrolling in Technical Education Colleges. This is because the educational barriers for girls and women appear to increase as they seek to pass to higher levels of the educational pyramid.

Most female students fail to make the jump from 'O' level (form four) to 'A' level (form six) and this explains the 23.7 % enrolment at university level compared to 44.4 % enrolment in Teachers' Training Colleges.

Many women leave school to marry and/or where training takes place it tends to be post-'O' level admission to teacher training or nursing. These groups are potential clients for Open and Distance Learning and it can provide a means to narrow the gender gap and bring more women into the pool of graduates, thereby enabling them to contribute more fully within their professions and within society as a whole. Hence ODL may provide a means to make women more visible within Zimbabwe. The onus is therefore on ODL institutions to make their programmes accessible and gender friendly in order to attract women students.

THE HISTORY AND ROLE OF ZIMBABWE OPEN UNIVERSITY IN DISTANCE EDUCATION FOR WOMEN IN ZIMBABWE

Zimbabwe Open University (ZOU) is an Open and Distance Learning institution which was approved by the government of Zimbabwe through an Act of parliament. It is the only institution of higher learning established by government with a mandate to preserve, advance and transmit knowledge through Open and Distance Learning (ODL) (Nyaruwata, 2010). Its mandate reads: "To provide for research and courses of instruction, suitable to the needs of learners through a distance education system, and to take such other steps as may appear necessary and desirable for the advancement and dissemination of knowledge ..." (Government of Zimbabwe, 1999: 245). The Zimbabwe Open University started as the University of Zimbabwe, Centre for Distance Education in 1993 offering a Bachelor of Education in Educational Policy and Planning. It sought to upgrade those already in senior or administrative posts in the education system. In 1996 it became the University College of Distance Education and two further courses one in English and one in Agriculture were added soon after. In March 1999 it attained university status and started operating separately from the University of Zimbabwe. ZOU currently has four faculties namely, Arts and Education, Social Sciences, Commerce and Law, and Science and Technology. It offers a lot of undergraduate and postgraduate degree programmes. The university has a main central campus in Harare. In addition to this, "there are 10 regional centres conveniently established in each province in order for it to be accessible to every potential student throughout the country" (Benza 2001:18). Of late it has added an 11th region; a Virtual Region which is also coordinated from Harare and caters for students who are abroad. These regions have enabled the university to decentralise and go beyond the traditional boundaries of tertiary education.

Table: 2
Zou Student Enrolment 2005-2011

Year	Male	Female	Total	%age Female
2005	11 997	8 485	20 482	41.4
2006	*	*	17 782	*
2007	*	*	19 694	*
2008	10 305	7 382	17 687	41.7
2009	9 699	6 586	16 295	40.4
2010	9 345	6 778	15 618	43.4
2011	5 196	4 301	9 497	45.6

*Gender Segregated Data not available

Source: ZOU Statistics 2005-2011 compiled by M. Damson

From the onset women were a significant group in the student enrolment. A study of enrolment in the Zimbabwe Open University shows that there is quite a fair percentage of women participating in university education in Zimbabwe today. Table 2 shows enrolment patterns at ZOU by gender from 2005-2011.

Table: 2 shows a significant improvement in the number of women accessing higher education through ODL as compared to 23.76% in the early 90s. In 2006 and 2007 there was no information on gender segregated data.

However, from 2005 there has been a steady increase in women participating in ODL from 41.4% to 43.4%. In 2009 the figures dropped which was a reflection of the general economic environment in Zimbabwe during that time when most people could not afford to pay for ODL education which was then considered a luxury for people who were using their meagre resources to import basic commodities for household consumption.

CONCEPTUALISATION OF OPEN AND DISTANCE LEARNING

Open and distance learning refers to a system and process of connecting students, teachers and learning resources when they are not in the same location' (American Association of University Women (AAUW) accessed 2008). It may take varied forms. In countries such as the United States of America and Canada, distance education is now primarily information technology based with on-line connections to materials, and tutors. In the less economically developed countries it takes a more correspondence approach, being more reliant on hard copies of modules and texts and occasional face-to-face contact between student groups and students and tutors. The growth of Open and Distance Learning in many countries has enabled women to access university education. Studies in both economically developed and less economically developed countries have shown women to be a dominant group in distance study.

In Pakistan Allama Iqbal Open University, female students consistently outnumbered their male colleagues in all Undergraduate and Masters programmes (Bukhush 2007). In a government document by the U.S. Senate (2001 cited in AAUW) the average distance learning student is said to be '34 years old, employed part-time...and is a woman'. Bukhush (2007: online)

Education is regarded as a key factor in overcoming the barriers that women face and the basic tool for empowering women and bringing them into the main stream of development. Education not only provides knowledge and skills to improve health and livelihoods, but it empowers women to take their right place in the society and development process. Education gives status and confidence in decision making. Educating women is the key to reducing poverty.

Education may be seen as a basic tool to empower women and distance education, as the most accessible form of education for women. Empowerment and development may be perceived as going hand in hand.

Table: 3
Bulawayo Region Student Enrolment, January-June 2011

Faculty	Male	Female	Total
Arts & Education	85	138	223
Commerce & Law	195	98	293
Social Science	109	204	313
Science & Technology	64	42	106
Grand	453	482	935

Source: Bulawayo Region 2011 Statistical Records

Table: 4
Mat North Student enrolment, January-June 2011

Faculty	Male	Female	Total
Arts & Education	41	61	102
Commerce & Law	95	63	158
Social Science	67	89	157
Science & Technology	59	35	94
Grand	262	246	508

Source: Matabeleland North Region 2011 Statistical Records

Tables: 3 and 4 demonstrate that current enrolment patterns in the two regions of Matabeleland North and Bulawayo show that a good percentage of women are making use of the opportunities available by ODL.

STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

Open and Distance Learning equalises educational opportunities and breaks geographical barriers to accessing university education. This being the case, what are the challenges being experienced by women in ODL and what are opportunities being enjoyed by women participating in ODL at ZOU Matabeleland North and Bulawayo Regions?

PURPOSE OF THE STUDY

To investigate the opportunities open to women participating in ODL, the challenges being experienced and coming up with recommendations to ameliorate the predicaments of women participating in ODL.

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

- What are the opportunities open to women participating in ODL at ZOU Matabeleland North and Bulawayo Regions?
- What are the challenges being experienced by women participating in ODL at ZOU Matabeleland North and Bulawayo Regions?
- How can the challenges being experienced by women participating in ODL at ZOU be ameliorated?

RESEARCH OBJECTIVES

- To investigate the opportunities open to women participating in ODL at ZOU Matabeleland North and Bulawayo Regions.
- To illuminate the challenges faced by women participating in ODL at ZOU Matabeleland North and Bulawayo Regions.
- To explore possible ways of circumventing the challenges being experienced by women in ODL.

SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

The study's significance is that it will highlight the opportunities open to women participating in ODL, illuminate their challenges and suggest how to surmount the challenges.

If the findings are availed to policy makers and individuals having a say in the running of ODL institutions, may inform the promulgation of gender sensitive rules/regulations and policies in ODL.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The study made use of qualitative methodology, adopting a case study research design. This study was considered apropos since it made it possible for investigators to conduct in-depth interviews and obtain the participants' emic perspectives, instead of reducing participants' view to figures. The study population consisted of ZOU's female students and student management coordinators from Bulawayo and Matabeleland North Regions. Student management coordinators were considered because at regional level, they are responsible for students' affairs, i.e., if students have any problems (academic or social) their first port of call at regional level, is the Students' Affairs office). Researchers felt that this office could provide some insights into challenges experienced by women in ODL.

The study sample consisted of 30 female students (15 from each of the two regions), and two co-ordinators responsible for student management (1 from each of the two regions). Purposive sampling was used. This made it possible to sample data-rich sources to address questions which informed the study. The justification for a predominantly female sample was informed by the realisation that: It is only the person putting on a tight fitting shoe who can explicitly tell you where it pinches most. The study was limited to women studying at ZOU's Bulawayo and Matabeleland North Regions, focusing on opportunities and challenges faced by women participating in ODL at ZOU and to coordinators responsible for student management in the two regions. Due to time factor, it was not possible to triangulate the methodologies as initially envisaged. In order to circumvent this limitation, sources of data were triangulated. This was achieved by conducting in-depth interviews with female students, programme co-ordinators and co-ordinators responsible for student management in the two regions.

Appointments were made with participants, interviews conducted and recorded using a dictaphone, transcribed and partially analysed (field analysis) before the next interviews. This was to ensure that issues arising from the transcripts could be incorporated in the succeeding interviews.

Field notes were kept during fieldwork. Transcribed data was taken back to participants for verification before the major analysis. Once verification was done, data was analysed using the grounded theory. This entailed segmenting, coding, enumeration, and putting the coded data into sub-themes.

ACTUAL RESEARCH FINDINGS

Research Question 1

What are the opportunities open to women participating in ODL at ZOU?

The participants mentioned a number of opportunities. However the frequently mentioned opportunities were that ODL gave women opportunities to:

Further One's Education

Participants pointed out that due to certain circumstances many were not able to pursue their education beyond 'O' Level, therefore could not be enrolled in conventional universities whose entry qualifications are a certain number of points at 'A' Level. Therefore ODL afforded them the opportunity to acquire degrees through mature entry and Accredited Prior Learning (APL) for some.

Access to Intellectual Growth

Women felt that participation in learning activities such as presentations, research and thesis defence was good for their intellectual growth. Some of the women in school management testified that they had become excellent presenters at Heads of Schools' Meetings and Conferences courtesy of opportunities availed to them by ZOU.

Empowerment

Most participants concurred that ZOU, through ODL had empowered them. They pointed out they were capable of performing certain operations at their work places on their own. A good number of participants, pursuing postgraduate studies testified that their employers had recognised their achievements through promotions after acquiring undergraduate degrees at ZOU.

Opportunity to Enjoy Learning, While Holding A Fulltime Job

Participants concurred that ODL made it possible for them to remain gainfully employed, on full salaries, while studying to gain professional and intellectual growth. Most also pointed out that they were able to exploit other opportunities arising in their work places, since they had not taken study leave that would have taken them away from the developments at their work places.

- *Opportunity to enjoy some degree of flexibility:* Participants pointed out that ODL allows them some flexibility in planning their studies. They drew examples from Zimbabwe's economic situation, especially in 2007 and 2008 where the economic climate was unfavourable. Most women students discontinued their studies, only to resurface when the economic climate was conducive.

Research Question 2

What are the challenges being experienced by women participating in ODL at ZOU?

Notwithstanding the opportunities, women in ODL raised a number of challenges that they were encountering in ODL. Below are some of the challenges that occupied the centre stage:

Multiple Roles-Mother, Wife, Employee And Student

Participants unanimously agreed that their multiple roles were a big challenge. This challenge was linked to the wife's traditional role of caring for the home and the family. Participants pointed out that it becomes difficult to concentrate on one's studies ignoring the family. Difficulties were encountered in attending tutorials, consulting tutors and attending discussion groups.

Non-Supportive Spouses

While not prevalent, this challenge is a cause for concern. Some participants mentioned lack of understanding on the part of their spouses; others explained that spouses deny them the opportunity to attend group discussions, and to seek advice and guidance from male tutors. The two coordinators responsible for student management corroborated this issue. One of them cited an occasion where a female student approached him with a torn assignment. The student explained that her husband tore the assignment following some misunderstanding linked to non-performance of house chores and the student's ODL. The other coordinator also related an incident when a female student related to him that she was finding it difficult to revise for examinations, since the husband continuously came from the bedroom to switch off the lights as a way of telling the wife that she had to come to bed. The husband did not understand that the only time when the wife could study was when the children had retired to bed.

Time Constraint

This challenge was linked to the multiple roles of women. After performing all other duties tied to their other roles, women seem to be pressed for time when it came to their university studies.

As a result, some ended up;- missing assignment submission deadlines; failing to submit assignments, submitting sub-standard assignments, failing to attend tutorials and group discussions, obtaining low marks in their assignments, ill prepared for examinations, performing badly in their examinations, forming the greater percentage of student who repeat courses.

Financial Challenges

Participants pointed that it was not always easy to raise money for fees. Women tended to be the last in the families' financial packing order. Priority one was paying fees for the children. For married couples, if the husbands wanted to pursue studies, husbands gave themselves the second priority. In the event that funds were still available, then women were considered. The issue of transport to and from tutorials affected rural women students more than urban students.

Non-Supportive Supervisors

This concern was raised by most rural based women students. They complained that since most tutorials were being conducted on Saturdays, it was not always easy to get permission from their supervisors to leave their duty stations on Friday mornings (Most buses from the rural areas leave early in the morning to urban centres. Therefore if women were to be released after school on Friday, there would be no more transport to urban centres, where tutorials are normally conducted).

Affordability And Accessibility Of ICT

This concern was raised by most rural based participants. It should be appreciated that almost all the rural based ZOU students are government employees (teachers, nurses and agriculture extension workers, among others) salaries are far below the poverty datum line. Therefore, the costs associated with the purchase of ICT gadgets such as laptops are prohibitive).

While most participants had internet compatible cell phones, the cost of procuring data bundles from service providers such as ECONET and TELECEL were beyond their financial capacity. Accessing ICT facilities at ZOU's regional centres also hampered by transport costs and other logistics.

Technophobia

Most urban based participants had access to ZOU's regional centres' ICT facilities, as well as from private internet cafes. However, the challenge seemed to be that most elderly female students lacked skills to manipulate computers in search of information. This was exacerbated by the participants' phobia for ICT.

This argument is premised on the observation that despite the presence of ICT technicians staffing the ICT laboratories at regional centres, elderly women students hardly asked for assistance on how to use computers to access information, even for performing basic operations such as typing of assignments.

Research Question 3

How Can the Challenges Being Experienced By Women Participating In ODL At ZOU Are Ameliorated?

Participants were requested to suggest solutions for the challenges they were experiencing in Open and Distance Learning. Below are some of the solutions that frequently cropped up:

- Being allowed a longer book borrowing period by the University;
- Being given more library pockets than their male counterparts, so that they can borrow more books, since they could not frequent the library at the same rate as their male counterparts;
- Participants suggested that since child-bearing is a national duty, they be allowed to write examinations from hospital in instances where they are due during examinations. Where this is not possible, they suggested that they should be allowed to defer their examinations to the next semester, so that they will be allowed to seat for the examinations without being asked to pay fees and going through the rigour of writing assignments;
- Decentralisation of tutorials to district level;
- Networking ZOU's district offices so that students are able to access ICT; and
- The University must allow spouses to attend orientation programmes for new students.

CONCLUSION

Basing on the findings, it can be concluded that:

- Open and Distance Learning has availed women a host of opportunities, that without it would have remained a pipe dream for most women. It has empowered most participating women and given them a second bite of the cherry.
- The above notwithstanding, there are a number of teething challenges limiting women's students' full exploitation of opportunities availed to them by Open and Distance Learning.

RECOMMENDATIONS

While women are accessing Degree programmes through ZOU there is a need to more consciously target them in course selection and formulation and when looking at the logistical aspects of study with the institution. There are a number of ways in which this may be done through the workings of the government of Zimbabwe and the institution itself, through the role of the institution in raising society's awareness of the advantages of educating women, and through focus on helping students derive maximum benefit from courses that are on offer.

National or Government Recommendations

- Developing constitutional reforms that provide for and guarantee the application of quotas for women as a basis for community, economic, political and educational representation.
- Introducing reforms of educational policies and electoral laws that allow a system that give more room to women.
- Gender sensitisation in schools and tertiary institutions. The school is viewed as one of the primary socialising agents (Haralambos, 1995). The government should introduce courses that are gender sensitive at all levels of the education system. Such would not perpetuate male dominance and female subordination in society (Gudhlanga and Chabaya, 2001).
- National media campaigns that showcase the achievements of female role models.
- Scholarship programmes that particularly target at promoting talented women should be boosted. Such scholarships would act as a realistic and effective means of ensuring that a greater lot of women, especially in rural areas would proceed to tertiary education including University (Makamure, 1996).

Institutional Recommendations

The institution may improve its accessibility and provision of courses for women through:

- Recognising ZOU's unique potential to cater for women students unable to access full time formal education.
- Generating a clear gender policy to operate within the institution. This should encompass policy covering gender issues across the board taking into account needs of staff and students and ensuring gender issues are considered in all facets of university life. Such a gender policy can inculcate some of the recommendations that were suggested by participants.
- Appointing a team that initially formulates policy and later assists in implementing and monitoring gender policies within the institution.
- Reviewing programmes offered and course content to ensure the needs of both female and male students are fully addressed.
- Introducing gender awareness training such as is used by some administrations and NGOs and making this part of the general institutional orientation.
- Recognising that universities can be radical open-minded forces for change but can also contain strongly conservative elements making strong policies necessary before innovation and change can take place.
- Finally, there is need to replicate the study, triangulating methodologies, collecting data from a sample drawn from all ZOU's ten regions. Findings and conclusions from such a major study can then be used to inform University Policy.

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