

THE IMPACT OF TECHNOLOGY IN BREAKING BARRIERS TOWARDS WOMEN'S LIBERATION IN OPEN DISTANCE LEARNING

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ABSTRACT

Technology has brought about unique changes in education as a whole, how people communicate; research, preference and social interaction. It presents before the society a growing recognition of the recent and wider possibilities in the new era. The proposed study identified the impact of technology in breaking barriers towards women's liberation in Open Distance Learning (ODL) to contribute towards enhancing women empowerment. The two concepts Open Distance Learning (ODL) and Distance Education will interchangeably used in this research because the participants are furthering studies through ODL and DE (ODL/DE).

This paper is qualitative research in nature and an auto-ethnographic approach focused on questions pertaining to how technology breaks barriers towards women's liberation, perseverance, how women integrate the ODL/DE environment into their personal life.

I reflected on my personal journey coming from being a primary school teacher and studied through ODL until I completed my doctoral degree with University of South Africa (Unisa). For this study, 117 women who studied at Unisa an ODL institution were interviewed and 58 women who studied at the University of Pretoria (UP) a Distance Education (DE) Unit. Amongst the 200 participants, there were 25 women who dropped out and they highlighted their attitude towards studying through ODL/DE. Also 110 questionnaires were sent out and 83 were returned. Data were analysed.

The findings suggested that technology improved and liberated women's livelihoods in many respects because of their perseverance and taking extra online modules through ODL/DE. Findings suggested that technology contribute towards enhancing women's empowerment and liberation in. Therefore, women empowerment is an active multi-dimensional process which empowers women to realize their full uniqueness and powers in all walks of life. The paper concludes by recommending that women should be able to live a life without limits and see life in a better perspective.

Keywords: Open Distance Learning, women empowerment, women liberation, barriers to women, perseverance, technology.