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From the Editor

Dear readers of int.WOJDE

Welcome to the seventh issue of the Women Online Journal of Distance Education, int.WOJDE as being Volume: 2 Number: 4, for the year of 2013.

In this issue 3 articles are published, by 3 authors from 3 different countries as being Bengaldesh, Malaysia and Nigeria. In addition, very useful and interesting report is published too in this issue. In other hand we placed one success story from Anadolu University.

Our first article, entitled as "Eve Teasing, Tears of The Girls: Bangladesh Open University Towards Women Empowerment", written by Dr. Zobaida AKHTER, from Bangladesh Open University, Bangladesh, Senior Research Fellow, Centre for Civilisational Dialogue, University of Malaya, Kuala Lumpur, MALAYSIA. She mentioned in her article that many young girls of Bangladesh are curtailed from education, which is their basic right due to eve teasing. Parents are afraid of their daughter's honor, family and social prestige, so ensure the safety of the daughters; sometimes they take the decision to withdraw their daughters from schools and colleges. Most of the time this type of occurrence like eve teasing happen when girls were in the way to educational institutions. In our country most of the people are devoid of their basic rights and they are considered as the disadvantaged group. The fruits of technology and modernity are the subject of enjoyment of the privileged class of the society.

So the Open University is the bridge of information among the disadvantaged people based on their needs, culture, environment and economic status. Promoting open and distance learning is a crying needs especially in the context of Bangladesh where more than 60% of total population is illiterate and living below poverty line. Their main objective of BOU is to reach the unreached. From the empirical study, it has been found that women are benefited mostly from BOU. They are other disadvantaged groups of women who are economically, socially, geographically and culturally disadvantaged. The aim of this article is to examine the role that open and distance learning how it plays in providing access to secondary education for girls in Bangladesh giving emphasis on overcoming physical mobility and social security problem of the young girl due to eve teasing.

The second article is from malaysia, on "Female Learner Teancity in Open Distance Learning Success: Life History of Sharan, Fuziah And Aleena As Open Distance Learners", which is written by Associate Professor Hisham DZAKIRIA, from Universiti Utara Malaysia, Sintok, Kedah Darulaman His paper argues about the despite the provision for better access, flexibility, and convenience, Open Distance Learning still remain a challenge to some students.

This article presents the life history of 3 female ODL learners in the state of Perlis, Malaysia in their pursuit to complete their ODL programs. Specifically, the study explored the phenomenon of female learners' tenacity in ODL among female adult learners.

The qualitative research focused on questions pertaining to learners' tenacity and perseverance in ODL and investigated the factors supporting or hindering perseverance that have influenced the learners. Longitudinal interviews with the three participants conducted over 72 months (six years) commencing 2005 revealed the complexity of variables affecting the learners' study completion. Findings suggested that multiple responsibilities, insufficient interaction with course tutors, technology, and coursework

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ranked highest as barriers to female learners' tenacity to ODL success. Strong motivation to complete degrees, engagement in the learning community, and appreciation for the improved accessibility and flexibility of an ODL completion option facilitated the learners' tenacity.

The third article is published on Gender Difference, Administrative Opportunities and Effectiveness of School Principals: Implication for Planners which is written by Sunday O. ADEGBESAN, from Training and Research Fellow, National Institute for Educational Planning, and Administration (NIEPA), Ondo, NIGERIA. Sunday mentioned that in the School Administration and management, like in any other human and social endeavor, human resources are made up of men and women who play the most important role, either as actors or as recipients. For any society to be harmonious and balanced, the gender representation needs to be taken into consideration. It ensures therefore that none of the two sexes should be left behind in the management of the school system.

Gender as we understand does not refer to the biological differences of sex, which are natural. It rather refers to social constructs, created social meanings, norms and practices that regulate the relationships between men and women in a given society and at a given time. Gender relations refer to such cultural elements that are contextually and historically dependent. In the light of this understanding, it follows that nay development process that aims at creating a space for all people, men and women, to realize their potentials and improve the quality of their life in ways that are sustainable and protective of the Earth's life support systems, men and women must be partners in progress in the creation as well as in the enjoyment of rights, duties, services and goods, Men and women should be real partners.

This study looked into gender differences, administrative opportunities and effectiveness of principals in secondary schools in the Ijebu division of Ogun State. The study population consisted of all the principals and teachers of secondary schools, in both urban and rural areas, in the division, from whom a total of 180 respondents were randomly selected as sample. Four null hypotheses were tested using the Principal Questionnaire (PQ) and Teachers Rating of their Principals (TRP) developed and validated by the researcher.

Only one of the null hypotheses was rejected. The remaining three hypotheses were accepted. The results show a significant gender difference in administrative opportunities in secondary schools in both rural and urban areas. However, there was no gender difference in the administrative effectiveness of principals, irrespective of the location of schools whether in rural or urban areas.

Appropriate recommendations and conclusions were drawn based on these findings in order to build an educational system that reflects and projects an equitable, harmonious and gender-balanced Nigerian society.

In this issue, we are publishing a very good and useful research report for you which is conducted anonym on "Building Support for Gender Equality among Young Adolescents in School: Findings from Mumbai, India". Report is mentioned increasing recognition is that to reduce gender inequality — a goal fundamental to improving a country's overall health and development-programs must start with youth. Yet there has been limited engagement of both girls and boys during early adolescence to challenge and shift gender norms that contribute to girls and women having less worth, opportunities and decision-making ability than boys and men.

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Hülya EKER is placed in "Succes story" section in this issue who is working Anadolu University by complete her degrees at Anadolu University and Sakarya (Adapazari) University as being online student. She mentioned that how she was felt herself when she was online student."

Dear intWOJDE readers to receive further information and to send your recommendations and remarks, or to submit articles for consideration, please contact int.WOJDE Secretariat at the below address or e-mail us at **intwojde@gmail.com**

Hope to stay in touch and wishing to meet in our next Issue on 1st of January 2014

Cordially,

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EVE TEASING, TEARS OF THE GIRLS:
Bangladesh Open University towards Women Empowerment

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ABSTRACT

Many Young girls of Bangladesh are curtailed from education, which is their basic right due to eve teasing. Parents are afraid of their daughter's honor, family and social prestige, so ensure the safety of the daughters; sometimes they take the decision to withdraw their daughters from schools and colleges. Most of the time this type of occurrence like eve teasing happen when girls were in the way to educational institutions. In our country most of the people are devoid of their basic rights and they are considered as the disadvantaged group. The fruits of technology and modernity are the subject of enjoyment of the privileged class of the society.

So the Open University is the bridge of information among the disadvantaged people based on their needs, culture, environment and economic status. Promoting open and distance learning is a crying needs especially in the context of Bangladesh where more than 60% of total population is illiterate and living below poverty line. Their main objective of BOU is to reach the unreached. From the empirical study, it has been found that women are benefited mostly from BOU. They are other disadvantaged groups of women who are economically, socially, geographically and culturally disadvantaged.

The aim of this article is to examine the role that open and distance learning how it plays in providing access to secondary education for girls in Bangladesh giving emphasis on overcoming physical mobility and social security problem of the young girl due to eve teasing.

Keywords: Eve teasing, mobility, despair, ODL, empowerment.

INTRODUCTION

Bangladesh as a developing country going through a progress to many important areas related to human welfare should not be undermined. Development in education and economic sectors are turning towards development of the country in general. Apparently it seems that due to the total development of a country, development of both male and female are going in a same direction and a same level of equality. Still there are lots of open and hidden problems are there, which are the responsible of gender unequal position in the society.

The causes of this unequal position are identified by the society but many are not ready to unmask and uncovered the root cause of the unequal gender status because most of the respective person are carrying the flag of patriarchy, it is there power, pride and mechanism to stay above the women and subjugate the position of women in the society.

We know that fifty percent of the total population in Bangladesh is women. If half of the populations are victim of violence in many forms, patterns and style, how a country

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can claim their achievement.

Among these violence some are visible some are invisible, some are named and some are unnamed. Eve Teasing are compose of two words, sometimes not visible and provable, but due to this type of grave violence, young girls of Bangladesh are crying, feeling degrade, confused with their development because in most of the case they have to quite from the educational institution sometimes from job.

Eve teasing has remained a concern since many years, but at present it is strongly identified as a eve teasing, previously it was not named and definition. With the development of the country, people are thinking in a distinctive way, especially the women working in the NGOs and dealing with violence and legal matters brought the issue of eve teasing in a separate entity of violence. Eve teasing has become the burning issue for the country because of its adverse long term effects on the young girls of Bangladesh.

In Bangladesh, almost 90% of girls aged 10-18 are victims of public sexual harassment, according to the Bangladesh National Women Lawyers' Association. Most cases of the sexual harassment are unreported and unpunished due to the young girls' fear of further physical and sexual harm, being socially rebuked, or becoming the subject of local "social gossip. According to another report published by Ain-O-shalish Kendra(ASK) on 13 th December 2010, Sexual harassment against girls and women in Bangladesh is turning deadly , 28 women have committed suicide this year and and another seven attempted it to escape frequent sexual harassment. According to Ain-O-Shalish Kendra (ASK), a human rights organization of Bangladesh one statistics has revealed that during January-July 2008 period only , about 13,000 women became victims of eve teasing of different forms across the country. This figure counted only reported cases. Many occurrences remain unreported as the majority of the victims of eve teasing prefer to ignore this out of fear or not to be disgraced or part of social gossip.

This situation is becoming alarming that, in general, it can be argued that at present no girls have been spared from being a victim of eve teasing in one form or another. Teasing young girls is not a new phenomenon in everywhere. From electronic media to our nearby street, we are almost used to seeing girls subjected to teasing. Even middle age women while go outside of home, they are more likely to become a victim of indecent verbal comments or physical gestures, anytime, anywhere and by anybody. In the contemporary development context, eve teasing is being recognized as formidable challenges to women's mobility as well as to the overall development of the society. Eve teasing causes different unpleasant situations to women at individual and social level. There can be found numerous instances where due to teasing girls being forced to discontinue their education, working women to quit their job.

The Bangladesh education statistics 2011 report said although the dropout rate among girls was higher than their male counterparts. According to the report 46.73 percent of boy dropout in 2011 while it was 56.43 percent among girls, it said. The enrolment rate in primary level had increased tremendously to 9.83 percent though the dropout rate was still high, 39.80 percent in 2011. (BANBEIS director Ahsan Abdullah told in the launching program.

The report was launched by Bangladesh Bureau of Education Information Statistics, BANBEIS, Tuesday, January 1, 2013, The Daily Star).The results of the Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey(MICS) 2009 indicate that girls were more likely to drop-out more of secondary school irrespective of area. In the first two grade of secondary school, boys seemed to more likely drop-out of school. The last grade of secondary

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school(Grade 10) seemed the highest drop-out rate for the girls, it is t 8.6 %(UNICEF 2009) As a result parents feel insecure and early marriages take its role.

The aim of this article is to examine the role that open and distance learning how it plays in providing access to secondary education for girls in Bangladesh giving emphasis on overcoming physical mobility and social security problem of the young girl due to eve teasing. Open schooling provides a flexible and adaptable approach to learning that is compatible with the cultural roles and responsibilities that often restrict and constrain females from continuing secondary education. Education statistics show that there is a significant decline in the number of females enrolled from primary to secondary school (UNESCO, 2000). Primary net enrolment ratio - girls 83% and boys 80%. Here gender gap is 3%. Secondary gross enrolment ratio is boys - 56% and girls - 52%. Here gender gap is 4%. (Sources: Statistical Yearbook 1999). Reasons for this are many and include poverty, early marriage, ill health, pregnancy, and cultural constraints on female education.

The significant impact that education has on girls and their households is well documented. It has been shown that educated mothers are able to contribute more efficiently to enhance the quality of their children's education. (Raj, 1982; Chaudry, 1995). What makes the task of educating girls potentially more difficult is that illiteracy is concentrated in countries with low per capita income. Poverty and illiteracy in general are positively correlated. The poor can ill afford to forego current earnings in favor of education that may possibly lead to higher income later on. In the case of girls from poor households, the choice is even clearer. Given the social construction of gender roles, boys will be given preference over girls in matters of education.

Especially since after marriage, women leave to join their husband's families and, hence are not regarded as being useful to their own families in the long term (Lunnborg, 1994). When resources are limited and opportunity costs are high, the girl is doubly condemned. The second factor that works more directly against education for girl is the dominant social code in some parts of the region that prohibits intermixing of the sexes to restrict violence against women.

Societies often impose physical restrictions on women's mobility. Studies from Bangladesh, India, Nepal and Pakistan have clearly shown that parents refrain from sending their daughters to school not so much because they fear for their daughter's safety, but because they are worried of upsetting traditional gender roles which give girls little choice in matters of education (Kanwar and Taplin, 2001).

EVE TEASING AND THE SITUATION OF THE WOMEN IN BANGLADESH

In Bangladesh the frequency of eve teasing is growing high, but unfortunately there is no specific law against eve teasing. The prevention of Violence against Women and Children Act 2003 does not address eve teasing. There was provision of penalty against offences like" indecent verbal or physical gestures motivated with an illegal sexual intention"(article 10.2) in the original version of the Prevention of Violence against Women and Children Act of 2000. But the act was amended in 2003 where no one can be charged with sexual abuse of a woman until it is physical. And thus those who bother women in public places such as streets, shopping places and buses can no longer be tried under this law.

Defending the amendment, the education. Government has said the provision had been abused to harass rivals. Plaintiffs could not prove any cases of eve teasing. Eve teasing or non-euphemistically sexual harassment or molestation of women in public places is a

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growing concern in Bangladesh and also throughout this sub-continent at present. It is appalling and in some cases an extremely perilous practice. This is something that the women are supposed to either just tolerate or are even accused of bringing it upon themselves. But the fact is that the act of eve teasing is widely condemned and considered a nuisance by the public and is also punishable.

As eve teasing does not involve any physical harassment the law refuses to recognize it as a violent act. What is discerned here is that women becoming victims of eve teasing is not seen seriously even by the police. Yet eve teasing can be as cruel and as violent as physical assaults. In Women and Children repression and Prevention Act-2000 an excellent provision was included in section article 10 that teasing of women like making obscene comments or gestures was an offence covered by it providing for up to seven years of simple imprisonment or meticulous imprisonment for two years. But the act was amended in 2003 where no one can be charged with sexual abuse of a woman until it is physical.

Gender discrimination leading to gender violence is deeply embedded in Bangladeshi social structure; all Bangladeshi social institutions permit, even encourage the demonstration of unequal power relations between the sexes. In other words, violence against women in Bangladesh is culturally accepted, tolerated and 'in certain prescribed forms and given contexts' it is legitimized (Alim, 2011, p. 3). Eve teasing is the result of the unequal status between the sexes.

What is eve-teasing?

Chart: 1
Eve-teasing is normally meant as teasing a girl or woman.
Eve-teasing is normally meant as teasing a girl or woman. "Eve-teasing" refers to public sexual harassment or street harassment to a girl by a boy

Eve-teasing is normally meant as teasing a girl or woman. Eve-teasing is normally meant as teasing a girl or woman. "Eve-teasing" refers to public sexual harassment or street harassment to a girl by a boy, when it turns into a serious issue. Eve-teasing is a very common term in India, Bangladesh, Nepal and Pakistan. Eve teasing is not a new problem in Bangladesh. It is a concern since many years.

Almost every young girl is a victim of teasing, especially by the local young teaser. The most of the people may avoid it as a common matter with young generation. Yes, it is. But it is not every time. It can be tolerated until no girl is being attacked. But when it crosses the line, it will raise as a problem to us. It is surely a social problem. These days, many girls have committed suicide only to safe themselves from eve-teasing. That

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means, eve-teasing in Bangladesh has reached its maximum range. This is against the women rights without any doubt. Those who are involved with this kind of embarrass stuff can be named as a terrorist. The teasers wait in schools, colleges or outside the house gate and as soon as girls walk passed by them they start teasing with ribald comments, smutty jokes, coarse laughter, sly whistles and even indecent exposure.

Eve teasing is a very different form of sexual assault. There are many forms the teaser behaves with the girls in a different manner. It ranges from whistle, catcalls, sexually evocative remarks, brushing in public places to outright groping and sometimes teasing by mobile phone and mobile tracking.

This type of violence has no boundary no definite form, as a hidden way eve teasing is becoming the grave issue for the young girl which throwing to them in the dark world of fear, disrupted education, social stigma which sometimes bound them to commit suicide. Eve teasing is a hidden and most dangerous form of violence which many of the close people of the girls come to know when it is public in the newspaper.

Eve teasing of school girls has many negative outcomes from increased school drop-out rate to many instances of suicide as the only way out. Drop-out rate of adolescent girls are strongly related to the increased prevalence of cultural and social norms that disempowered adolescents girls and make them vulnerable.

One of these causes is child marriage, eve teasing, and sexual harassment. Eve-teasing has no bounds. Every other person on the streets intend to assault women ranging from rich to poor, being literate to being uneducated. It is very sad that, a healthy number of educated boys from reputed families are growing lust towards this practice. According to the report from 'Bangladesh National Women Lawyers Association' (BNWLA) the probable eve-teasers on the streets of Bangladesh are teenage boys, traffic police, rickshaw pullers, bus drivers, supervisors or colleagues of the working women.

Statistics suggests 32% of the eve teasers are students, 33% are middle-aged men while 35% are anti-socials.

A common scenario of defining how girls are sexually harassed would be the fact that these teasers wait in schools mostly, in colleges or they just sit outside the houses and as soon as they cite the girls walk past them they start passing vulgar comments, filthy jokes, sly whistles, uncouth laughter, and sometimes reaching the extreme of indecent exposure. The society blames the women or girls stating that they aggravate the teasers by failing to wear modest clothes. On the contrary, those wearing decent dress are not found to be teased as usual and sometimes to an even greater extent.

Who Are the Teasers?

Eve teasers are any person on the street, in front of schools and colleges, in the bus, train, lift , shopping mall anywhere teases girls in any form of vocabulary, gesture, or directly physical assault. Among the eve teasers from rich to poor, being illiterate to educated, being young to middle age men are included. According to the report from 'Bangladesh National Women Lawyers Association' (BNWLA) the probable eve-teasers on the streets of Bangladesh are teenage boys, traffic police, rickshaw pullers, bus drivers, supervisors or colleagues of the working women. Statistics suggests 32% of the eve teasers are students, 33% are middle-aged men while 35% are anti-socials.

Eve teasing in Various Forms

> ➢ Eve teasing with girl students: most of the eve teasing occurs near girl's school. Adolescent's boys wait there sometimes for particular targeted girl sometimes generally. Normally the boys follow the girls from their

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house when they started for school. Sometimes they pass bad comments; sometimes they throw a letter with bad proposal, sometimes the teaser force and threat the girls to make a relationship with them, sometimes they propose the girl for marry. If any girl refuses, they are threat to be raped or kidnapped.

As a result the girl has to leave the school and forced to do early marriage just to rescue her from the in secured situation sacrificing her total potential life.

➢ **Teasing by Mobile Phone:** With the advancement of technology everyone is enjoying the fruits of modernity. From one side it is an advancement using mobile for communication on the other side, misuse of this mobile practice, girls lives are becoming hell. The teaser sends an SMS in an ornamental, romantic and rhetorical language; as a result the adolescent girls are easily trapped with the false appreciation of the teasers. The girls sometimes take it as a love with the boy and become the victim. The boy capitalizes the innocence of the girl by using mobile camera or video recorder, some intimate moments or dialogue. Sometimes use of technology becomes curse to some people.

➢ **Sexual Abuse through Internet:** In the face book or in chatting young boys and girls are coming closer to each other. Sometimes the boys exploit the girls with some photograph by insert with modern technology, blackmail them , sometimes the boys encourage the girls to watch some restricted side as a result they fall victim of the sexual extreme world. It is a most dangerous form of violence through technology.

Causes Behind the Eve Teasing

There are no specific causes behind eve teasing in Bangladesh. It is a social issue and one of the issues among other forms of violence. Eve teasing is not a recent phenomenon, it was there and it is and it will be but the pattern, definition and intervention are changing. With the advancement of technology the mechanism to tease the girls are changing. The young boys browse many restricted site in internet and learn and adopt many things from there, afterwards out of curiosity they apply the behavior in the form of eve teasing to the young girls of Bangladesh.

Eve teasing mainly occurs due to attitude towards girls, family culture and education and loss of morality. There are laws but eve teasing has no specific law because sometimes it becomes very difficult to judge whether it is eve teasing or not. Eve teasing is very complicated in nature. Sometimes too much restriction and religious fundamentalism not to intermix with the girls make the boys more curious towards the young girls. From experience and common understanding about the causes of eve teasing some causes could be generalize.

➢ **Misuse of technology**
➢ **Influence of electronic media and film**
➢ **Having a curious attraction to opposite sex**
➢ **Time passing because they have no job to do**
➢ **Drug addicted due to frustration or bad company**
➢ **Lack of family education and culture.**
➢ **Attitude towards girls and no respect to them**
➢ **Loss of morality and lack of ethical sense.**
➢ **Lack of social values.**

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Impact of Eve Teasing

> **Drop out from the educational institution: as a result many young girls are depriving from their basic rights to education. And ultimately they are becoming burden to family and society because without economic independence no one could be empowered. They ultimately become parasite in nature.**

> **Reduce the mobility: Due to threat of eve teasing young girls are getting confined within the four walls, devoid of enjoying education, entertainment, outside work. By reducing physical mobility, they are losing their metal mobility also, they are staying within a limited and narrower mental state which ultimately destroy their mental clarity and independent thinking for any development.**

> **Early Marriage: Early marriage destroys the dream and total life of the girls. Due to early pregnancy and too many responsibilities in household work their physical and mental health becomes very week. Neither can she take care of herself, nor to her children and family. Due to early pregnancy mothers and child mortality is higher in Bangladesh.**

> **Psychological Problem: Many girls become psychologically abnormal out of fear and social security. \Sometimes they do not get support from family due to mistrust. All these causes and frustration leads many girls towards committing suicide.**

LAW AND INITIATIVES OF GOVERNMENT

Government of Bangladesh has introduced many strong law to resist violence against women, but due to the proper implementations of the law in due time, violence against women are rising day by day. There are many laws which need genuine and clear evidence of violence against women. In most of the cases, women cannot produce direct evidence due to fear and treat by the oppressors, due to poverty, lack of influential person in their family and mostly due to social prestige not be stigmatized in the society, they do not complain against the oppressor.

Society most often accuse the girls after becoming victim, that she should wear modest dress, should not go outside and should not talk with the male person.
A few of the legal acts are in chronological order:

> **Penal Code, Section 375, 186**
> **The Code of Criminal Procedure, 189The Child Marriage Control Act, 1929**
> **The Dissolution of Muslim Marriage Act, 1939**
> **The Muslim Marriages and Divorces Registration Act, 1974**
> **The Dhaka Metropolitan Police Ordinance (DMPO) of 1976**
> **The Dowry Prohibition Act, 1980**
> **The Family Court Ordinance, 1985**
> **The Legal Aid Provision Act, 2000**
> **The Prevention of Women and Children Repression Act, 2000**
> **The Acid Crime Prevention Act, 2002**
> **The Acid Control Act, 2002**

Interestingly, eve teasing sometimes has nothing to do with any physical harassment and thus the law of our country rejects it to be a violent act because the issue is not provable. . Thus the tragedy lies that the victims of eve teasing are never being taken seriously by the police or the legal authority. Yet facts, report and evidence states that the victims of eve-teasing are brutally affected mentally some of which leads to suicide,

compare to other violence it is the worst form of hidden violence.

As stated above in the Prevention of Women and Children Repression Act, 2000, a remarkable provision was mentioned in article 10 that teasing women through vulgar gestures and comments is offensive and the punishment for such act would be simple imprisonment for seven years or two years of meticulous imprisonment. But then again in 2003, the act was amended stating that no one would be charged of sexual abuse until and unless it is physical.

The women right activists struggled to change the law. Finally the law has change, when harassment of women has increased in Bangladesh tremendously. But one can enforce her right under section 509 of the Penal code where it is clearly stated that if anybody intending to insult the modesty of any women, utters any word, make any sound or gesture or exhibits any object, intending that such word or sound shall be heard, or that such gesture or object shall be seen, by such women, or intrudes upon the privacy of such women, shall be punished with simple imprisonment for a term which may extend to one year or with fine or with both. But in most of the cases , eve teasers are not identified and eve teasing also has no proof, in that cases most of the teasers those who disturb the girls in mall, bus and train no longer fall under the law.

Under the 1972 Constitution of Bangladesh, women`s rights are protected under the broad and universal principles of equality and participation.

> ➢ These principles are found in the following Articles in the Constitution:
> ➢ Article 10 of the Constitution provides that steps shall be taken to ensure participation of women in all spheres of national life.
> ➢ Article 19 (1) provides that the State shall endeavor to ensure equality of opportunity to all citizens.

Article 27 specifies that all citizens are equal before the law and are entitled to equal protection of the law. Moreover, Article 28 (1) provides that the State shall not discriminate against any citizen on grounds only of religion, race, caste, sex, or place of birth. Article 28 (2) more directly and categorically says that women shall have equal rights with men in all spheres of the State and of public life.

Theoretically our constitution are completely in favor of equal right and equity between male and female, laws are also there, but unfortunately implementation is very rare. Bangladesh Government is committed to reduce violence and eve teasing from the society. In Bangladesh Prime minister, opposition party leader, Speaker and most important ministers are female, so it is expected that women and girls would be in a safe and secured environment. Government alone cannot stop violence by enforcing law, attitude, mind set and family education is needed to curb the violence and eve teasing from the society.

ROLE OF BANGLADESH OPEN UNIVERSITY

One of the most adverse consequences of eve-teasing is the rise in drop-out rate of girls from formal school. Some parents withdraw their daughters from formal schooling to protect their daughters from not losing their respect and also keep them safe, parents keep their daughters at home, ultimately in most of the cases it turns to child marriage. As a result girls are becoming the victims of violence to be married at childhood. It destroys their social life, childhood life and educational life. When they are becoming mother in a very early age, it has a tremendous negative impact on their physical and mental health and in their intellectual development. Despite of being innocent, the girls of Bangladesh are bearing the punishment of child marriage, suicide, homicide, without

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expected the punishment of the teasers.

Distance education overcomes many of the obstacles faced by the girls and women in Bangladesh because, in distance education time, needs and places of the students are regulated according to their convenience. In this article the main concern is to highlight the use of distance education through some of case studies of young girls who left formal schooling due to eve teasing and take admission in the Bangladesh Open University, and to identify some of the common problems and solutions in strengthening secondary education through open and distance learning.

The Open School is part of the Bangladesh Open University (BOU), and it offers secondary education through two formal programs – the Senior Secondary Certificate (SSC) and the Higher Secondary Certificate (HSC).

This paper is concerned with the former. BOU was established on 20th October 1992 by an act of the parliament with the objective of transforming the vast human resources into an educated and trained work force. The University is composed of six academic Schools (faculties), and the Open School accounts for roughly 40% of the student enrollment.

The Senior Secondary Certificate (SSC) exam is the first public examination; the minimum entrance requirement is 8 years of schooling. There is a great demand for admission into the SSC course and students are allowed up to five years to complete their course. The following table shows enrolment for the last seven years and the percentage of males and females. Bangladesh open University was set up to serve most who were excluded from the traditional system and those who had dropped out. (Shamsher ali)

The case for formal education is well documented. Education is seen as an indispensable agent to bring about a qualitative change between what we are and what we want to be. In this context the role of distance education is not an option but an unavoidable imperative for many of us (Dhanarajan, 1998). It has been demonstrated categorically in a wide range of studies that an informed and educated mother can cater for the health and nutritional requirements of the child in a much better way than an uneducated mother can. The significant impact that education has on women and their households is well documented. It has been shown that educated mothers are able to contribute more efficiently to enhance the quality of their children's education. (Raj, 1982; Chaudry, 1995).

What makes the task of educating women potentially more difficult is that illiteracy is concentrated in countries with low per capita income. Poverty and illiteracy in general are positively correlated. The poor can ill afford to forego current earnings in favor of education that may possibly lead to higher income later on. In the case of girls from poor households, the choice is even clearer. Given the social construction of gender roles, boys will be given preference over girls in matters of education. Especially since after marriage, women leave to join their husband's families and, hence are not regarded as being useful to their own families in the long term (Lunnborg, 1994).

When resources are limited and opportunity costs are high, the girl is doubly condemned. The second factor that works more directly against education for women is the dominant social code in some parts of the region that prohibits intermixing of the sexes.

Societies often impose physical restrictions on women's mobility. Studies from Bangladesh, India, Nepal and Pakistan have clearly shown that parents refrain from sending their daughters to school not so much because they fear for their daughter's safety, but because they are wary of upsetting traditional gender roles which give girls little choice in matters of education (Kanwar and Taplin, 2001).

The impact of cultural norms on women's education is clearly visible. The only way to increase literacy levels among women and young girls is to generate the demand for literacy, implying thereby that it is not lack of resources but the absence of demand, which is the constraining factor. We know that attitudes are difficult to change, but changes are needed in those attitudes of men, that are derogatory or patronizing to women. The lives of Bangladeshi women are very complex, and no simple solution is possible to their problems.

It is impractical, in the present context of the Bangladesh scenario to suggest any overnight or radical changes. One must, therefore, find out the ways that are acceptable. Through education, a woman can become self-reliant, more aware of the changes in the surroundings, and have better self-esteem.

The importance of education is aptly reflected by the various forms of discrimination against women based on their social and economic dependence on men in a male-dominated society.

In order to improve their situation, women must have wider access to education, which can be possible through distance education. Distance education overcomes many of the obstacles faced by the girls and women in Bangladesh because, in distance education time, needs and places of the students are regulated according to their convenience.

The Senior Secondary Certificate (SSC) exam is the first public examination; the minimum entrance requirement is 8 years of schooling. There is a great demand for admission into the SSC course and students are allowed up to five years to complete their course. The following table shows enrolment for the last seven years and the percentage of males and females.

Enrolment for the Secondary School Certificate

Table: 1
Enrolment for the Secondary School Certificate

YEAR	TOTAL NO. STUDENTS	MALE	%	FEMALE	%
2001	16199	8938	55.18	7261	44.82
2002	12855	7082	55.09	5773	44.91
2003	15881	8352	52.59	7529	47.41
2004	16281	8866	54.46	7415	45.54
2005	23854	13413	56.23	10441	43.77
2006	25694	14132	55.00	11562	45.00
2007	31783	17481	55.00	14302	45.00
Total	142547	78264	55.00	64283	45.00

(Source: Examination Division, BOU)

The table above shows the total number of students enrolled in the Secondary School Certificate program over the past seven years. Interestingly, the gender ratio is 55% male and 45% female. This is an encouraging way forward in bridging the gender gap.

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RESEARCH AREA

> ➢ **What are the causes of the female students' dropout from formal schooling? As an answer to the above question I got to know that, in our country maximum female students cannot continue their study due to poverty eve teasing and social insecurity. There are other reasons too. In our society poor parents always try to educate their son not their daughter and they are just like their burden and early marriage take place.**
>
> ➢ **How many of them are victimize of eve teasing?**
>
> ➢ **After studying I was able to find out almost 67% women from formal schooling are victimize of eve   teasing. In Bangladesh eve teasing is not a new phenomenon. From electronic media to the nearby street, school and college premises, in working places, especially in the garments factory, we are used to see that the girls are subjected to teasing.**
>
> **Due to eve teasing, parents feel insecure and early marriage get importance and girls being forced to discontinue their education.**
>
> ➢ **How they came to know about BOU and how Open and distance learning is helping them?**

Amongst the respondent majority people said that they came to know about BOU from media or their family members who are also get benefit from BOU. I came to know that Open and distance learning is actually helping the women very effectively.

The Open School is part of the Bangladesh Open University (BOU), and it offers secondary education through two formal programs – the Senior Secondary Certificate (SSC) and the Higher Secondary Certificate (HSC).Distance education helped them to overcome fears and worries about being a student after a break. In distance learning women don't need to move too much because they have few tutorial classes. It helps them to continue their study without any fear and make them educated people:

> ➢ **Are female students of BOU are still facing problems? From my the study it was found that female students of BOU are still facing some problems but the problems are not that much major and these can be solved easily. Amongst the respondents' majority said that they face accommodation problem from the point of security and money matter, other said about security problem. Some female students are still facing some security problem inside BOU. There are few male students pass offensive comments, few stuff take the chance to take bribe. So these are some problems that the female students are facing.**
>
> ➢ **What are the necessary solutions in strengthening basic education through open and distance learning in Bangladesh?**
>
> ➢ **Distance learning institution like BOU can minimize the physical mobility so that women don't have to move that much, testimonial giving procedure should be decentralized. Tuition fees could be reduced in a case of female students. Female students who are still facing security problem inside BOU that should be reduced and BOU authority should take necessary steps for that. There should be code of conduct ensuring gender balance and justice within the institutional process**

HYPOTHESIS

The hypothesis to prove that, as follows:

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> ➢ **H$_0$:** **Open and Distance Learning is helping towards Women Empowerment through Mobility and Social Security**
> ➢ **H$_1$:** **Open and Distance Learning is not helping towards Women Empowerment through Mobility and Social Security**

METHODOLOGY

Data were collected using a qualitative and quantitative data. Questionnaires (a combination of open-ended and coded) were distributed to over 30 female students, but some were returned incomplete.

For this paper we have only considered the completed questionnaires. In addition to the questionnaires, we conducted in-depth interviews and case studies with a small range of female learners & the secondary data were collected from articles and publications.

Primary Data Analysis

Table: 2
Respondents According To Age

SIZE	FREQUENCY	%
16-20	37	37%
20-22	33	33%
22-25	12	12%
25-30	10	10%
30 above	08	8%
Total	100	100

There was a wide age range of the respondents; the age varied from 16-30 years above. The majority (37%) were aged 16-20 years.

Reasons for low female enrolment in secondary education are well documented (dropping out of formal schooling and a variety of reasons were given). The most common reasons in our study included poverty 20%; early marriage 10%, religion 5%, social security 42%, and other cause 23% for dropout from formal schooling.

CAUSES OF RESPONDENTS DROPOUT FROM FORMAL SCHOOLING

- Poverty
- Early Marriage
- Religion
- Social insecurity
- Others
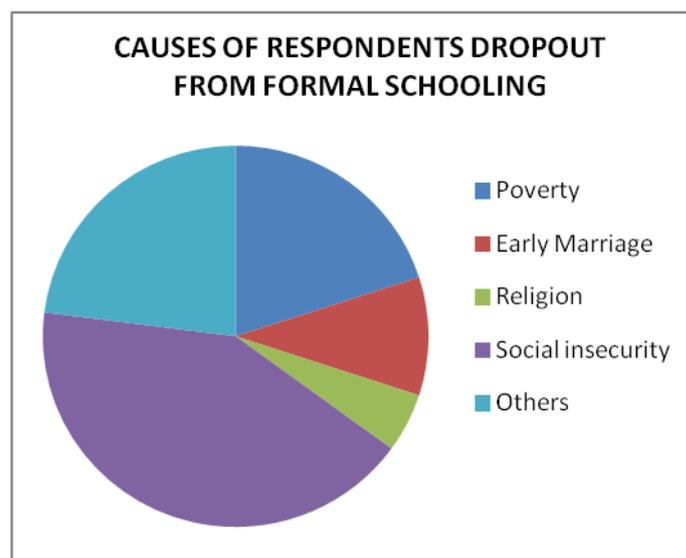
Postulated are the various reasons why women have to drop out of formal schooling. In formal terms the reasons behind the low enrollment of women in secondary education has been highlighted here. It's deciphered that the prime reason for women to drop out is social security followed up by poverty, religion etc. Eve Teasing, Frequent Experience for Women in Public Sphere

Table: 3
Table name

Respondents	%
Eve Teasing is a frequent experience	67
Eve teasing is rare	33
Total	100

67% respondents experienced frequent eve teasing and 33% said that eve teasing is rare
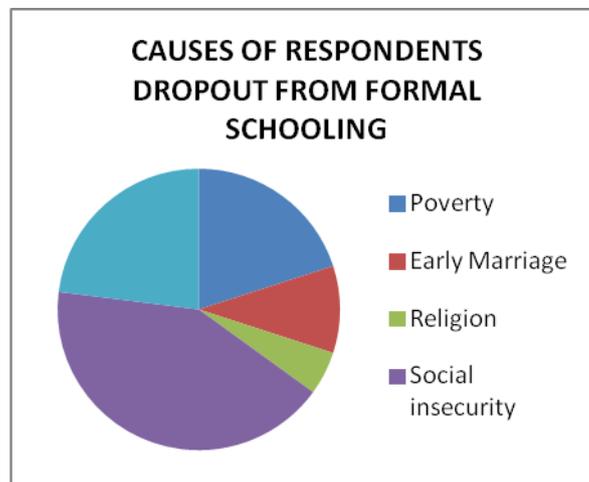
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13
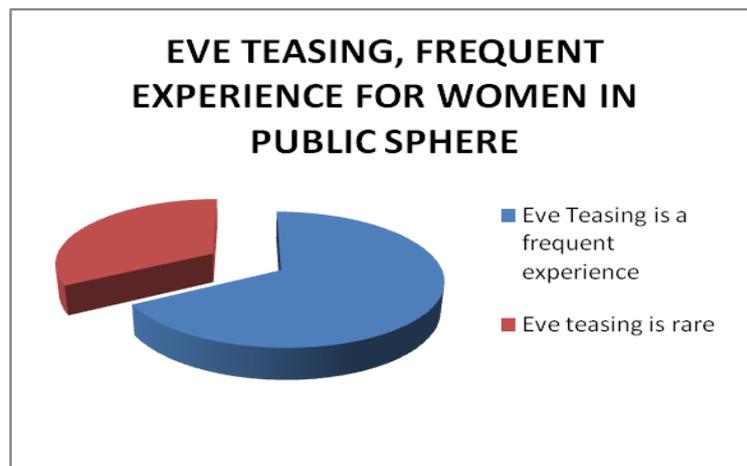
Here we have the respondents reply to the experience of eve teasing. It's crystal clear from the graphical representation that 67% of the respondents do experience it. On the contrary 33% do not. To them it's a rare scenario. The reason depicted behind this could be their belonging to wealthier families where they are brought up in such a fashion that they never have to experience such vile acts.

Table: 4
Responsible Person for Eve Teasing

Causes	%
Young men associated with friends	58
Middle aged person	33
Old aged Person	09
Total	100

The question regarding responsible person for eve teasing sometimes elicited multiple responses. 58% said that young men are responsible for eve teasing, 33% said about middle aged person, 9% said about old aged person.

 Now asked the question of the people responsible behind eve teasing the survey shows staggering results. It has even been seen that the old and the wise engage themselves in eve teasing, albeit the percentage being really less (9%). Other than that it has been observed that it is the nimble teenagers who resort to such acts (58%) with middle aged men filling up the pie with a share of 33%.

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Table: 5
Eve Teasing is a Weapon to Detain Women in the Domestic Spheres

Yes	73%
No	27%
Total	100

Given the respondents that I had 73% actually agreed to the fact that it is a weapon to detain women. This is completely attributable to the orthodox institutional and social structure that we have. 23% said that it is not a weapon. These I believe are the ones with the post modernistic views.

Table: 6
institutional and social structure that they have.

If yes mention the causes	%
Lack of social security and limited mobility	33%
Fear of social stigma	18%
Fear of kidnapping and acid throwing	20%
Panic to face eve teasing	29%
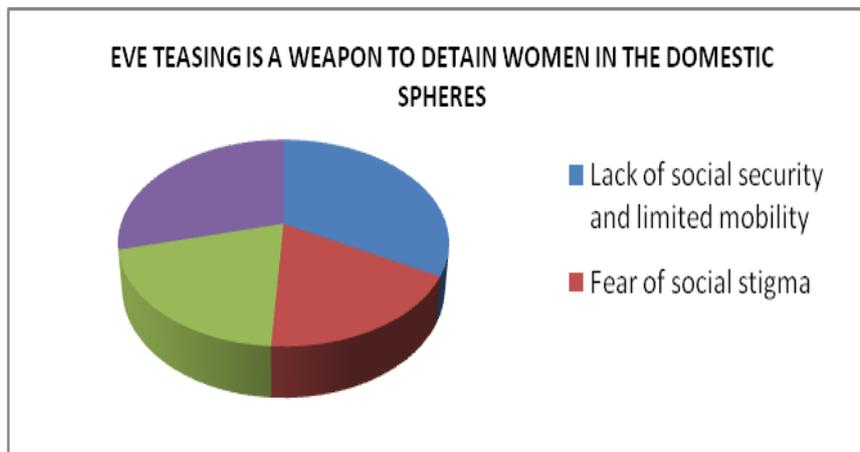
Asked the respondents about the repugnant reason behind this stigma, they replied that the lack of social security and limited mobility is to be blamed for this, with its toll reaching up to 33%.

Fears of social stigma, kidnapping and acid throwing had their share as well. Women also get petrified of the thought of having to face eve teasing again. This accounts for 29% of the respondents.

Table: 7
How Did You Get the Information of BOU

Sources	%
Media	32
Family Members	43
Friends or Neighbors	25
Total	100

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Amongst the respondent 32% said that they got the information from media, 43% from family members, and 25% from friends or neighbors.

Table: 8
Do You Face Any Verbal or Physical Violence in BOU

Yes	11%
No	89%
Total	100

11% agree that directly or indirectly they faced violence when they visited different place regarding their study in BOU and 89% said that they did not face any unpleasant situation.

Table: 9
Responds that they often get offensive comments from their colleagues

If yes mention the causes	%
Some staff take the chance of bribe to give certificate and mark sheet	25%
Pass offensive comments regarding our appearance	52%
Try to get mobile numbers	23%
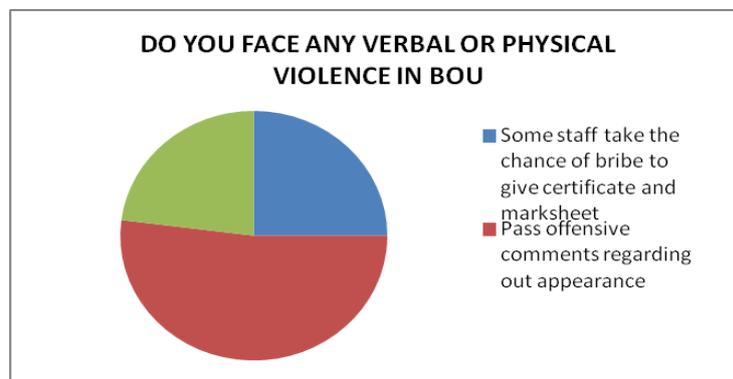
Almost more than half of the pie responds that they often get offensive comments from their colleagues, fellow mates etc. due to their appearance.

Although the chances of bribery and asking of mobile phone numbers plays its part as well.

Table: 10
Do You Need the Accompany Of the Male Person To Visit In

Yes	92%
No	8%
Total	100%

Most of the respondents come from other district and villages to BOU. So they need male person to accompany them. 92% respondents said that male person have to accompany them and only 8% told that they do not need.

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Table: 11
Why is it needed for them to be accompanied by the opposite sex

If yes mention the causes	%
Lack of social security	41%
Male person is the symbol of strength in our society	22%
We have to come from the remote areas to collect our certificates and mark sheets.	37%
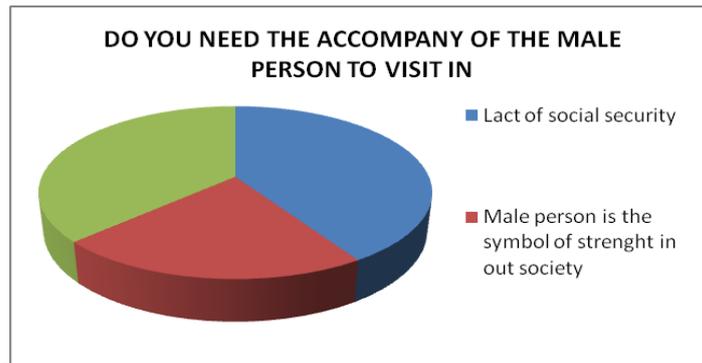
Asked the question of why is it needed for them to be accompanied by the opposite sex the results reveal that lack of social security and the lack of proper knowledge regarding the collection of certificates and mark sheets appears to be the driving force with a share of 41% and 37% respectively.

The symbolic attribute of men which is presumed to be strength fills the pie with its share of 22%.

Table 12
Do You Agree That BOU Need To Minimize Physical Mobility
To Ensure Women Security? If No mention the cause

Yes	11%
No	89%
Total	100%

89% respondents agree with the above statement and 11% disagree with the statement.

Cause: The people who said NO it was asked them the reason and majority said that BOU does not require attending classes that much, only twice in a month they need to attend tutorial classes which are optional.

So there is no need to minimize physical mobility as they have already given them the facility.

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Table: 13
Problems Face When the Female Students Visit To BOU

Causes	%
Accommodation	49
Security	17
Transport	14
Monetary	22
All	08

Amongst the respondents 49% said that they face accommodation problem from the point of security and money matter, 17% said about security problem, 14% said about transport problem, 8% said about money problem because to stay in other district is costly. 8% respondents said that they face all types of problems.
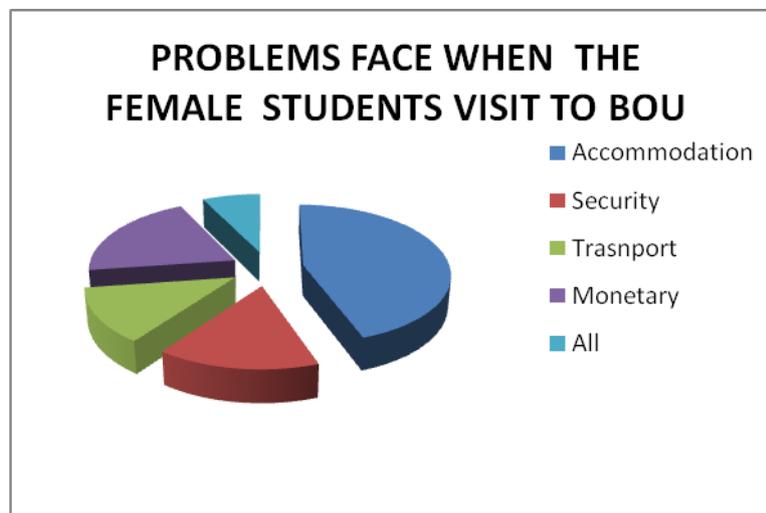
Table: 14
Suggestions for BOU to Minimize Physical Mobility of the Female Students

Causes	%
Tutorial center near to house	11
Information collect from Media or Local center	23
Testimonial Collected from Local center	52
All	14

Secondary Data Analysis
Despair To Hope for Empowerment
A girl named Tahera, she is now 27. She got married when she was only 16 years old. After two years of marriage her husband went to Middle East for job. After going few months he did not keep the relation and communication with Tahera. After five or six years she came to know that her husband died in road accident. Tahera was so unfortunate that she could not give her higher secondary school certificate program

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because she became pregnant just after her marriage; her son is now 10 years old.

When her son became five years old she again started to think for her studies. But their brother did not allow her to carry her schooling in the formal institution. Where she lived in old Dhaka, and the young men of that locality used to disturb the girl in a very bad manner. She very often fall victim to eve teasing, which compelled their helpless parents to marry them off at a tender age says 16-year-old Tahera living in a slum at Chankharpul, in the old part of Dhaka. She was a regular victim of "eve teasing" (verbal sexual abuse) on her way to school . One day she was was walking into the bus counter and went to have her ticket stamped at the machine, a guy behind her was too close, so she turned around and said 'what happened?' and he backed off, then two minutes later, as she was walking towards bus, she realized he was right behind her again! She went and stood with other women in the bus he just stood there on the side, arms crossed, staring at her!!! This is such a load of bullshit when she got on the bus. She got so scared; heart beating becomes so fast that she felt very unwell and scared.

 Therefore her brothers thought that she should stay in the house. She was staying at her parents' house though her father was not alive. At present, five of her brother is doing small business and agricultural work; fortunately they were taking care of Tahera and her son.

One of her brother passed Higher Secondary School Certificate program from Bangladesh Open University , so he encouraged her sister to get admit in the HSC program of Bangladesh Open University.

Tahera got admitted at the BOU and passed HSC exam successfully. After that she got a job in Madrasa (Religious school). Her family had a pressure to work in religious institution because they are dogmatic believer of religion. She is not allowed to work in any public office due religious belief. She wear veil and covered her body with over garment. She is now getting only 1000 taka per month.

At present she is studying at BOU in the Degree program and expecting that after passing the exam she will get better job in Govt. Madrasa. When she was talking she said if there were not the opportunity or access to Bangladesh Open University she could never carry her study with a big family load and a burden of poverty.

Though the money she income is very low, she think herself independent person and empowered in the sense that she is becoming capable of earning her own. She is completely satisfied with the service and quality of Bangladesh Open University. She was so emotional when she was talking about her life history.

She will marry again if she get suitable person who wants to marry her with her son. The degree of BOU gives her strong feeling to decide about her future and enhance her social prestige and value to her family.

Coming Out Of the Mute Life
Parveen is a lively and pleasant girl of 14 years. She was supposed to appear the SSC examination of 2005. She is the eldest among three siblings. Her father is a garment worker and mother is housewife. Mithu, a distant cousin lived nearby. He used to visit their house.

One day she met Mithu on her way to school. He proposed her to marry him, but she refused to marry him. After that Mithu threatened her to kidnap Parveen and to marry her forcefully. Mithu also demanded three lac taka and threat them that otherwise they would kill her. Her helpless family went to another place to get relieve from Mithu.

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Her family was shifted to another area for their betterment. She got admitted to the Bangladesh Open University for the safety of her own and family. Unsecured physical mobility compelled her to drop out from formal schooling.

She is now happy with the learning process of BOU. She has been able to overcome the difficult situation in the name of eve teasing. BOU has opened the door of empowerment through education.

Some of the Commonalities That Are Derived From The Cases Show That

> Most of the girls are from the lower middle class.
> Most of them have experience of eve teasing
> Most of them have cultural and social barriers.
> Almost all girls dropped out of schooling because of eve teasing and social security.
> Bangladesh Open University has given them second chance for education.
> They received cooperation from their tutors and course mates.
> They could continue their study without hampering their stereotype role.
> Distance education helped them to overcome fears and worries about being a
> Student after a break.
> It seems difficult to them in collecting testimonial from the main campus of BOU.
> Finally, it enlightened their soul with dignity and self-respect.

RECOMMENDATIONS TO COMBAT EVE TEASING FROM SOCIETY

> Education policy should ensure equality and equity between girls and boys.
> Curriculum has a strong role to take initiatives to portray girls and boys equal
> In the textbook, moral education should be included immediately and should have a chapter on the violence against women by giving emphasis to establish eve teasing as a social curse.
> Healthy family atmosphere and progressive family education and the trust between the members of the family are necessary.
> Teachers in the class should be aware of treating both boys and girls equally. They should talk about morality about violence to make them understand the gravity of violence on total humankind.
> Law should be implemented
> Local police and school security should play a strong role
> From government level, an award could be announced for the person who could resist eve teaser.
> Electronic media and printing media should aware about the consequence and negative impact of eve teasing
> Journalist should get training on gender issues, so that they could handle the issues very carefully. Some news in the newspaper due to the week presentation of the newspaper makes the girl vulnerable and the boys as a hero.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR BANGLADESH OPEN UNIVERSITY

> The access of audio-visual facilities should be provided in RRCs and in tutorial Centers.
> Tuition fees could be reduced in case of female students.

> ➤ **Some financial incentives could be given to the female students.**
> ➤ **There is a need for girl's education below secondary level. They can be uplifted**
> ➤ **through distance education.**
> ➤ **To empower women and bringing them under the umbrella of BOU, it needs more advertisement by distributing booklets.**
> ➤ **Testimonial giving procedure should be decentralized.**
> ➤ **Media of BOU can play a vital role for public awareness campaign to resist eve**
> ➤ **teasing towards women empowerment through distance education.**
> ➤ **There should be code of conduct ensuring gender balance and justice within the**
> ➤ **institutional process.**
> ➤ **BOU should have a Counseling cell for empowering women and should go for further Research.**

CONCLUSION

Violence against women is a social evil, and must be faced socially. Social action is probably the most effective shield against it. Social mobilization must, therefore, be attained to curb violence. There are several pre-conditions to ensure a social movement. First, society must know the extent and gravity of the problem, and harmful effects should be brought home to them.

People must be made to feel the harm, the loss, the agony, and the cruelty that they or their near and dear ones may suffer from unabated violence. Everyone must know that he himself may be victim one day.

The results from the questionnaires and the case studies show how women were able to overcome social and religious barriers by their own willpower and with emotional support from kin groups. It is very encouraging that through distance education, women are becoming an asset of the family.

In the urban areas and also in some rural areas. The younger, generally are more affluent urban, educated women may not live as the past generation did. With wider contact, the growing necessity for both partners to earn and other contemporary changes in the everyday lives of the people, many urban and some rural women are becoming aware of their need to become independent.

Our national dailies regularly publish reports like "Papia is afraid to go to school "or "Parents are afraid to send their girls to schools. "If we consider those stories, we will realize sadder dimensions to the incidents, such as "Parents security concern forces papia to marry off early. As a result, these girls are forced to go back their traditional household roles. Women are forced to go back to their traditional child bearing roles, the family members remain helpless, and the society has to pay huge.

This paper shows that open schooling can provide an adaptable and flexible approach as an alternative to formal schooling for Bangladeshi women. It is proved that Open and Distance Learning is the best affordable place for the disadvantaged people of Bangladesh. It really reached to the unreached

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Dr Akhter also worked as Social and Gender Development Specialist (National Consultant) for Public Awareness Campaign of Multi-Sectoral Programme on Violence Against Women in Bangladesh (MSP-VAW), Ministry of Women and Children Affairs; as Female Education Specialist for Female Secondary School Assistance Project (FSSAP-II), Ministry of Education and as Gender and Development Specialist for Second Primary Education Program (PEDP-II), Ministry of Primary and Mass Education, Government of Bangladesh, Secondary Education Sector Development Program (SESDP-11). She has many articles in National and International journals , her most of the writings on gender issues. She always gives emphasis on socio-cultural impact on women against any mal practice.

Dr Akhter presented papers in many International Conference on Gender issues towards women empowerment. In international platform, she always takes the opportunity to raise the voice on behalf of women in Bangladesh. She is also a member of "Women for Women" which is one of the largest research organization of Bangladesh.

Dr Zobaida Akhter did her Ph.D. in "Women and Equality: The Context of Bangladesh" from the University of Dhaka and completed Post-Graduation course on Gender and Body Language from the University of Hannover, Germany. In Ph.D. dissertation she explained how education and culture affects women's lives. She established in her thesis that mistaken education are the real cause behind women disempowerment. She did research based on case study on women empowerment in collaboration with International Research Foundation of Open Learning(Cambridge) . She loves to teach, to build awareness and do research. She believes that research is the most essential and important vehicle for any educationist to enrich one's own knowledge and she strongly believes that sharing that knowledge in international platform could enhance the experience of the researcher in a maximum level

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FEMALE LEARNER TENACITY
IN OPEN DISTANCE LEARNING SUCCESS:
Life History of Sharan, Fuziah and Aleena
as Open Distance Learnersa

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ABSTRACT

Despite the provision for better access, flexibility, and convenience, Open Distance Learning still remain a challenge to some students. This article presents the life history of 3 female ODL learners in the state of Perlis, Malaysia in their pursuit to complete their ODL programs. Specifically, the study explored the phenomenon of female learners' tenacity in ODL among female adult learners.

The qualitative research focused on questions pertaining to learners' tenacity and perseverance in ODL and investigated the factors supporting or hindering perseverance that have influenced the learners. Longitudinal interviews with the three participants conducted over 72 months (six years) commencing 2005 revealed the complexity of variables affecting the learners' study completion. Findings suggested that multiple responsibilities, insufficient interaction with course tutors, technology, and coursework ranked highest as barriers to female learners' tenacity to ODL success. Strong motivation to complete degrees, engagement in the learning community, and appreciation for the improved accessibility and flexibility of an ODL completion option facilitated the learners' tenacity.

Keywords: Open Distance Learning; adult learners; female learners; persistence; perseverance; life history methodology; perseverance; barriers to tenacity

INTRODUCTION

Despite the provision for better access, flexibility, and convenience, Open Distance Learning (ODL) still remains a challenge to some students. For many adult learners, career, family, and other types of commitment (i.e. community work) often do not allow them to enroll in higher education programs. However, convenient access, and greater flexibility to ODL courses has offered better alternative to higher education providing them with education and training they desired which was not possible with the conventional or traditional university education. ODL promise learners access, flexibility, and convenience. Enrollment of ODL learners have grown grew 10 folds in Malaysia, and more women are pursuing higher education today than before. However, although women tend to outnumber men in ODL, they struggle to succeed in ODL programs (Dzakiria, 2004; Wong, et.al.,2005; Oblinger and Rush, 1997; Ibrahim & Silong, 2002; Omar et.al. 2012) due to multiple commitments in women's lives.

The problem is that although adult female learners enroll in ODL programs in increasing numbers, we may not understand well the factors or variables that contribute to and inhibit their tenacity and persistence. This study was undertaken to investigate the female learners' tenacity in ODL study completion.

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TENACITY, PERSEVERANCE AND RETENTION RATES IN ODL

Evidence suggests that retention rates in ODL courses in Malaysia are lower than in traditional classes (Dzakiria, 2004, 2008; Palmer, 2005; Saw, et.al., 1999). Many studies have addressed learner retention in ODL (Tresman, 2002; Moore, Bartkovich, Fetzner & Ison, 2003; Martinez, P.,1997). There have been many factors or variables that support students' completion rate and success in ODL. One important factor is the level of tenacity.

Tenacity, perseverance or persistence (Tinto, 1993; Tresman, 2002; Schwartz and Peterson, 1993) can be defined persistent in maintaining, adhering to, or seeking something valued or desired as continuous or intermittent program attendance until learners reach their educational goals (i.e., the completion of a course, certificate program, or degree). Generally, it can be assumed that the less integrated students are academically and socially, the more likely they (the students) are to withdraw or drop put from courses and programs.

Based on literature, researchers have also focused on other aspects of students' dropout or non-completion rate such as institutional characteristics, environmental influences, gender differences; ICT competencies and motivation (Barefoot, 2004; Kemp, 2002; Oblinger and Lai, 1997; Wong et.al.,2005).

While some researchers have focused on pre-entry learner variables such as grade point average and number of ODL courses previously taken (Dupin-Bryant, 2004; Morris, Wu, & Finnegan, 2005), others have studied learner needs such as ICT competencies (Wong et.al. 2005; Oblinger and Rush, 1997; Savery, 2002) and the need for interaction and support (Furst-Bowe & Dittmann, 200; Dzakiria, 2012). Simpson (2003) examined retention strategies. Garland (1993) investigated barriers to retention and added an epistemological dimension such as lack of prior content knowledge or discourse style, and mismatch between learner and course expectations to Cross' (1981) situational, institutional, and dispositional barriers that had the potential to impede adult persistence. Most research has focused on men and women without disaggregating data by gender although some studies have identified the barriers female learners undergo when they enroll in ODL (Burge, 1998; Burke, 2001; Furst-Bowe & Dittmann, 2001). Feelings of isolation, lost, lack of family and institutional support, time limitations, and concerns for cost are among the many hurdles many female ODL learners encounter (Furst-Bowe & Dittmann, 2001; Kramarae, 2003). Nevertheless, "few researchers have studied the ways female learners handle the multiple responsibilities of income provider, parent, and student" (Kramarae, 2001, p. 31), and how ODL can further the learners educational goals.

More research is therefore needed to elicit a better understanding on the factors or variables that support or hinder female learner's completion of their pursuit of ODL, and their tenacity and perseverance to succeed. Educators who understand the complexity of adult female learner's balancing of diverse roles can more effectively advise and prepare the learners to be successful in ODL. Similarly, educational institutions that recognize these learners' professional, social, and academic needs are better prepared to create policies and services that address those needs.

RESEARCH SYNOPSIS

The purpose of this life history study was to gain an in-depth understanding of factors that influence the female learners' tenacity in their ODL undertaking.

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This study focused on female learners' perspectives and experiences of ODL. This study seeks knowledge to generate insights into how, why, when and where ODLs interact with their learning. It presents the female learners' voice and perspectives on factors that contributed to their ODL completion.

RESEARCH SETTING

This research focused on ODL learning experiences of a small number of learners residing in the state of Perlis, Malaysia who have successfully completed and graduated their ODL programs offered by various ODL institutions in Malaysia.

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

The research questions were based on substantial literature review on the issue of female learners' tenacity-perseverance and persistence in ODL. The questions were then refined and grounded from the discourse and discussions with the research respondents. The research questions were subsequently revised to function as interpretative questions. This research addressed the following research questions:

What are the *Pull* and *Push* factors affecting the female learners' tenacity to successfully completing their ODL programs?

RESEARCH OBJECTIVES

The information needed for this study was individual, detailed and contextual. Finding out about the circumstances under which the female learners' study, the practicalities of studying and getting into their mind frame were important elements of this study. This research was based on the following epistemological attitudes adopted from by Segall (1998):

Metaphysical
What is the story-exploring how the female learners address causality, intention, existence and truth about open distance learning as they experienced it while attending open distance learning;

Historical Search for understanding of how learning barriers and challenges began. How or what causes the learning barriers that the female learners face in pursue of worthy educational experience?

Institutional
What improvements can the respective institution make to support the female learners' educational experience in ODL and enhance their chances of successful completion rate?

RESEARCH COLLABORATORS

A purposive sample of three female participants was selected as research informants. The three female learners were selected on the basis of voluntary participation and ability to share their ODL experiences and perspectives with much openness. All the respondents were working adults' age between 33 and 47 years old.

They come from various educational and economic background, are presently working in various sectors in Perlis. Following is a brief profile of Sharon, Fuziah and Eleena (the names here are fictitious to protect the actual identity of the research informant as pre agreed in the research contract).

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Interestingly, for all these three female learners, at one point or another thought to withdraw and quit the ODL program was so strong and genuine. It was the maturity, tenacity and motivation to finish what they have started kept them going.

Sharon

Sharon is half Chinese, and half Indian. She works as senior clerk at local Municipality Department in Kangar Perlis and work full time from Monday to Friday. She is married and blessed with 5 girls whose age range from six to nineteen. Sharon is 47 years of age and has 12 more years of service to complete before she retires. She enrolled into HE because she wanted to become a role model to her children and gain new knowledge. She believes her tenacity in her pursuit of a degree will send positive message on the important of education to all her 5 girls.

Fuziah

Fuziah has a Malay ethnic background with 38 years of age, and married with four children. She has two boys and two girls. During her years of learning in ODL, she worked as a Telco Executive in DIGI fulltime. Amongst her responsibilities were to educate, promote and market DIGI products and services. Her job sometimes requires a lot of travelling. Fuziah is married to Malaysia army captain who sometimes have to travel extensively as per required by his commanding officers. Fuziah's motivation pursuing her ODL degree is for promotion, or better position at other organizations. At the completion of this research, Fuziah has just reported duty as a manager in MAXIS and is delighted with her accomplishments.

Eleena

Eleena is a 33 year old teacher teaching science in a secondary school in Kangar, Perlis. Like Sharon and Fuziah, Eleena is also married with three children whose age range from 3 months to 8 years old. She has a daughter and two sons. Eleena is married to a bank executive who normally works from 8:30am to 8:00pm. Life is a routine that normally starts with her normal routine-waking up at 5:30am, preparing breakfast, sending her children to schools, working, fetching her children from school, and nursery, cooking and cleaning, besides being a house wife, and an active community centre secretary.

RESEARCH SETTING

The research was based on a self-funded research initiative. The research was conducted in the northern part of Malaysia - in the state of Perlis where the respondents reside and work. Interviews were conducted at several locations depending on the respondents' availability. Some of the interviews were conducted at the respondents' work place; others were at the respondents' home, kopi-tiam cafes, and other outlets. Over the years of data collection, various new media were used to capture the collaborators thoughts, comments, insights, stories at particular point of time in their life as female open distance learners.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

An instrumental qualitative life history (Stake 1995) approach was employed so as to understand the experience of the female research collaborators as they progressed through their ODL career. The method was chosen as an empirical inquiry that investigated the phenomenon of tenacity within its real-life context of ODL (Yin, 2003). Interview was the primary instrument used in this study. All the female learners involved in this study were interviewed on a one-to-one basis, and this was the basis of the data

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reported in this paper. Most of the interviews were conducted in Bahasa Malaysia, and English language was only used when necessary and possible.

The interviews were then transcribed, translated and profiled. Besides face to face interviews, the respondents also engaged and probed into more questions through e-mail, SKYPE, Blackberry messages (BBM) and chat interviews which all contributed to a substantial amount of data for the research.

STUDY DESIGN

The design of the study was premised on an interpretive approach that assumed the research collaborators gave meaning to their tenacity and perseverance in ODL through interactions with the researcher and other learners.

DATA ANALYSIS AND FINDINGS

The data analysis gave rise to two primary themes for discussion:

> ➢ **Barriers and**
> ➢ **factors facilitating tenacity. Respondents' experiences in their ODL were mapped against the two themes above.**

Overall, facilitating factors outweighed barriers to persistence. Despite obstacles to their academic progress, the female learners interviewed found greater importance in the positive aspects of their ODL experiences.

Respondents valued being engaged in a challenging community that provided the opportunity to learn from classmates and Fellow tutors. They commented positively on their personal growth and appreciated the convenience of the ODL course option to complete their degrees. ODL was frequently stressful and accompanied by various problems and issues (i.e. limited learning time, family, work, technological barriers, delayed response, etc.). More than half of the women felt overwhelmed by the demands of the coursework. A majority remarked on struggling to balance the multiple demands of their families and jobs. All the learners interviewed had full-time job, and all three had children in daycare or school. The learners reported having spouses.

One of the husband, however, were frequently absent (e.g., in the military, engaged as a military), and others did not appear to help much with children or housework due to their work schedule.

FEMALE LEARNER TENACITY IN ODL

From an analysis of the study's data, patterns or themes emerged that revealed the complexity of factors affecting female learners' tenacity and persistence. Community responsibilities and work and experiencing personal growth were major themes in support of persistence. The convenience of ODL degree-completion option and a variety of motivating factors were also key themes. Finally, taking advantage of support systems provided by the ODL institutions, tutors, family and spouse was a significant theme. The following sections describe the major themes and provide supporting discourse from the female learners:

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Learning Interaction

Similar to other research findings (Anderson, 2003; Dzakiria, 2012), results from this study showed that meaningful interaction with content, fellow tutors, and peers was an important aspect of ODL learning communities. When content was relevant to their professional contexts, all three respondents felt interested and engaged:

> I love it when the course assignment allows you to capture and share your own experience from work. You get to reflect in a way that you understand it, and that is great learning I think...(Sharan)

> Overall, my experiences in ODL have been good. I think the system, the tutors (most of them) understand that we are not young like the undergraduate students.....we are mature students with working experiences...and if such experiences is taking into our learning, it just make our learning better (Eleena)

> The learning is engaging because we are required to share our working experiences in completing the course task and assignments (Fuziah)

Consequently, this research also reports similar findings that show female learners prefer learning by forming or initiating personal connections (Motteram & Forrester; Hayes & Flannery, 2002; Rovai & Baker, 2005; Rovai et.al., 2007). This can be seen in the following discourses:

> Friends and your course classmates are crucial to your learning. The learning forums in LMS help me to interact. Subsequently, some of us become good learning friends and have generated opportunities for us to ask, share and learn together....that is part of a great learning experience.... (Sharan)

> Being who I am with a lot of responsibilities, I needed fellow classmates...group work is fun, joyful...but most important of all it helps me to manage my learning better...(Fuziah)

> It is sometimes ironic...being in ODL programs one would think that all you need is you, the content, and technology , but what I find most important in my successful completion is the role that learning interaction and interactivity have...without these, I don't think I could have learned effectively and complete...(Eleena)

Evidently, the analysis of the above discourse seems to suggest that much of the female learner's sense of satisfaction came from interactions with their classmates and instructors. All three learners felt positive about their asynchronous and synchronous online discussions.

Personal Growth

The themes of personal challenge and growth are consistent with Mezirow's (2000) concept of transformational learning and play a significant role in the learners' tenacity in

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completing their ODL experiences. The ODL experience initially was new to the female learners and offered unique challenges as shown by Sharan:

> I expected some change, but did not expect to be that apart from the teacher. The tutor's role to just facilitate your learning initially trouble me....they do not give and summarize the content for you anymore like they use to do when I was in school....

Eleena also inserted similar thoughts:

> The 4 f2f meeting is so little of actual face time....I think that was the most difficult aspect to accept initially. So little time to learn and ask from the physical teacher.....I do not like to communicate with people through computers....

Nevertheless, as the learners progress through their study, they found learning how to navigate and use technology effectively. Subsequently, they found their increased academic and technical expertise the most valuable aspect of their experience:

> Within the 6 years, I learned so much....I am much a better person today than before...you won't believe how good I have become with computers, and others. (Sharan)

> I am glad that ODL has taught me to improve my computer and research skills....to some extent my computer knowledge is at par with my children, but my research skills certainly have improved greatly. Fuziah)

Eleena concluded:

> Learning is good...and I am proud of it. In part, I think the support system offered to us has been sufficient, and that help me learn and maneuver my learning accordingly...

Fuziah further inserted her own reflection of her development as a student:

> Over the years I became to be a progressive learner. Only become better from one semester to the next. All this is because I followed directions from the tutors, course content and curriculum, and most important of all able to lead my own learning ...and continuously reflecting on it...

The later comment that Fuziah made above is particularly important because research have shown that learners who continuously reflect their learning progress were more likely to continue and complete their studies (Berge, 2002; Dzakiria, 2004). Sharon, Fuziah and Eleena recognized that their ODL coursework challenged them and helped them develop the learning apparatuses needed to survive ODL. Fuziah remarked:

> All the technology use in ODL, particularly for our learning is for our learning benefit...it provides knowledge ..... I think as a learner, we just have to be quick adapting the new way of learning....feeling ashamed of not knowing basic computer skills initially compared to my children knowledge was dreadful....but it forced me to learn...Alhamdulillah.

In addition to stronger analytical abilities, the research collaborators gained independence, skills, and confidence, all three agreed in general that their tenacity to

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ODL completion and requirement is attributed to self-discipline, and management of one's learning.

Enhanced Flexibility

Sharon, Fuziah and Eleena had a positive experience during their face to face (f2f) interaction. Aleena summarized common feelings:

> *Generally, the f2f was good....great time to learn, meet the tutors and peers real time..with the physical being....I truly enjoyed it. No matter what people say about technology and all,*

> *I still find the physical teacher much more attractive to learn from....you see it all....the voice, eye contact, facial expressions, life jokes....and sincerity...*

Despite a preference for a traditional class experience, all three respondents appreciated the convenience of ODL that met the scheduling needs of their busy lives:

> *Of course time have changed....and consider myself lucky that the world has ODL to offer people like me another opportunity to higher education...most notable, I like the flexibility and accessibility of working on my ODL courses around my busy schedule and routines- this I treasured the most . . .Two thumbs up... ODL (Sharon)*

> *A lot of times I worked in early mornings, and at night time....best thing is learning could be anytime, anywhere.... (Fuziah)*

Learning Support System

According to various researches (Anderson, 2003; Kemp, 2002; Richardson & King, 1998; Richardson & Swan, 2003; Rovai & Baker, 2005; Dzakiria, 2004; Dzakiria, 2012), fostering social relationships with peers and instructors provides a key support system for ODL learners. Sharon ranked high in importance the relations they built with ODL classmates:

You need your friends, and peers to learn together...have a sense of togetherness
Fuziah found communicating with classmates informative and motivating:

> *Learning in ODL sometimes is like my yoga class. Doing myself I might procrastinate or just don't do it, but when you have a Yoga buddy that reminds you of a Yoga class that we have to go together....it just kept you going....I am in great shape because of my Yoga friends...Being successful in ODL for that matter partly, beside my effort is also attributed a lot by my course mates....we help and remind each other.*

Because of a family crisis, Eleena considered abandoning her studies. She stopped out and did not plan on re-enrolling. With a classmate's encouragement, however, she continued her courses the following term:

> *Life is never perfect...I almost dropout due to personal problems I had...but having close, very close female friend that help you to learn, and fast to notice the changes in me...have prompted her to*

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> *support, check on my work, calling me and fetching me for discussions, and really being there....if not for her I would have withdrawn from the ODL program 3 years ago...*

Similar to the importance of classmates' support, tutors' availability through email, telephone, or online chat, the timeliness of their replies, as well as their words of encouragement were viewed as critical to respondents' academic success. Sharon found that tutor reminders and advise made abandoning her ODL studies not an option:

It was the constant email...pings in BBM and reminders from my course tutors that help me to continue, and continue...
Sharaon, Fuziah and Eleena held their tutors in high regard. Aleena posited:

> *My tutors were very responsive... She did get back to us fast....in a timely fashion, and she was just simply a great teacher with many hats- motivator, facilitator, cheerleader, clown, friend, counselor.... She was there to help us if we needed it, so that was a very inviting and satisfactory experience*

Fuziah commented:

> *I think the tutors were well trained....they understand that we are all adult learners, and cannot be treated as similar to the younger learners on campus doing their degree full time...*

KEY BARRIERS

Balancing multiple responsibilities was a significant theme that emerged as a potential barrier to female learners' tenacity and perseverance in ODL. A second theme was disappointment in tutors' response time to learners. Interestingly all three learners preferred a traditional classroom setting, having a face-to-face preference was not as important a barrier as the emotional hurdles of feeling anxious, frustrated, and overwhelmed. In addition to that, the female learners also mentioned technology problems. However, similar to all the barriers to persistence the female learners faced, Internet access, email, or software problems did not pose overwhelming problems for them.

Balancing Responsibilities

There is a consensus among the research collaborators confirming the learners' utmost struggles in ODL completion was attributed by to managing their responsibilities as parents and professionals or work related issues. Adult female learners often felt burdened by taking care of children and other family members at the same time as working and continuing their education:

> *Like many of my female friends who are studying here, I am also a working mother . . . studying and taking course is a sacrifice, of course, because, you know, some days you may not be able to do it, having other chores to do, and more...*

Eleena was overwhelmed by the demands of her young children and her work as a secondary school teacher teaching science subject:

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> *Sometimes I questioned whether my timing to return to higher education was the right time...having 3 children, with the eldest is 8 and youngest is 3 years old and a six year old is tough....children, family, and my job each consumed a lot of my time and energy.....if I was not determined, I would have failed big time.....nobody knows except my hubby that I constantly cry just to cope.....tough, my husband job demands him to be at the bank almost 12 hours each day...that only means that I have to take care matters pertaining to our children, their activities and all..*

However, things started to change for better when Eleena's husband was able to join one of the local universities in the northern state of Malaysia. With his new job specification as a tutor, Eleena husband was able to help Eleena with children and other demanding activities. Eleena further commented:

> *When studying or pursuing a degree, you need all kinds of support. The closest to you is your spouse...and when my husband quit his job at the bank and became a tutor, it was a great change....of a sudden I had much more time to study, read and be more focus.....my heart seems to be beating at a normal rate if you know what I mean....and so that pushes me to work harder to complete my study......I love my husband and children*

With her husband taking over some childcare duties, she was able to complete her degree. Nevertheless, she thought that finishing her degree might have been easier had her children been older.

It was found that Sharon and Fuziah also struggled with family obligations and increasing professional responsibilities. They had administrative roles in addition to being a senor clerk and executives. In summary, all three learners had lots of responsibilities and daily routines that they have to undertake almost each day on top of the cores and challenges they have to perform and endure as ODL students. In most cases, they all reported that their tenacity is also attributed to wanting a better life for themselves, children and family. That in part kept them going.

Frustration with Course Tutors

According to research, ODL learners rank tutor presence as significantly important (Dzakiria, 2003, 2004; Ibrahim & Silong, 2002; Keller, 1987; Walker, 2002). When faculty interaction is infrequent, the rate of learner satisfaction is low (Herbert, 2006). All respondents found that tutors' limited interaction hindered their ability to understand course expectations, and sometimes frustrating:

> *Interaction is core to our success...and if you have a tutor that delays or never reply your emails...it's frustrating " (Fuziah)*

In another remark, Sharon suggested that insufficient feedback or responds on assignments weakened learners' potential to learn:

> *I think as students feedback is paramount...how do you know whether you have performed or did something wrong....feedback equals learning...*

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Though all three learners interviewed had overall positive experiences with their ODL course tutors, they felt some instructors had low expectations:

> *Generally the tutors are great, but not perfect...quite often you have one or two that just do not have the best qualities in them...not caring, not sincere and hopeless as a tutor...* **(Fuziah)**

> *There are tutors who just don't care about you....they come, teach and go...what can you do? (Eleena)*

In summary, in any ODL institutions, there are many good, effective tutors. But, there are also those that need continue training to enhance their teaching and facilitating skills in ODL. Tutors play an important role to students' learning, and must continue to improve the role they play. This study elicited that there are tutors who are disengaged, and caused frustrations among learners. Such negative experiences must be minimized.

Consistent with other research (Furst-Bowe & Dittmann, 2001; Kramarae, 2001), all three learners found traditional classroom setting preferable to their ODL context because in-class learning allowed for more social interaction and almost immediate feedback.
A surprising finding of this study was that a strong face-to-face preference appeared negligible when compared to other barriers. Participants did not think their preference was a significant obstacle. Feelings of frustration, anxiety, or disappointment were perceived as greater impediments to their education.

Emotional Impediments

Pursuing ODL was a novel experience to all three learners, but one that comes with many emotional anecdotes. Sharon, Fuziah and Eleena all have reported of having emotion swings in their pursuit of study completion. There have been many great moments and equally so they have been moments that just frustrate them as ODL students. Quite often, being female adult learners naturally they were concerned about being able to manage the demands of their ODL coursework and felt overwhelmed by the number of assignments, tests, and all the other responsibilities in their lives and communities. Sharon for example inserted the following in the conversation:

> *There have been many occasion that I just do not know where to start and what to do first....I needed to be calm, think, reflect....but what was most important is I needed to be good in managing time and my hectic schedules...*

Between all three learners, similar consensus was felt and they all seemed to agree that scheduling or structuring they lives well around their students' demands is vital to their tenacity and success.

Technology Is Not a Silver Bullet

Sharon, Fuziah and Eleena also found technology to be a major challenge. Sometimes, the learners could not always gain access to the Internet:

> *Internet access is important....and when I could not get into the internet again and again, there is this feeling of great frustration*

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> *because you simply cannot learn or be interactive with your friends or tutors (Fuziah)*

> *Some regards Perlis and Kedah as kampong (rural)...in many ways they are wrong, but in terms of technology infrastructure that may be correct....unless you have a strong and working internet or Wi-Fi services in your home, there are not many those modern coffee shops you can go to like in KL or Petaling Jaya or Penang (Eleena)*

With persistence, all three learners were able to gain access to the Internet. Some technical problems, however, were less well defined and therefore less easy to solve:

> You just cannot trust technology 100%....they work, they can also fail you....then we will find ourselves in trouble.....familiar? (Sharon)
> The thing with ODL and technology...and be alone in your learning...sometimes it's getting the message. The right understanding is difficult...the interpretation of facts and knowledge... (Fuziah)

Sharon later posited:

> *To start with...I just don't like things with buttons, and keyboards...they frightened me....and I do that....making mistakes ....and that makes learning or even registering for new course I had to do it carefully....,*

In many ways, higher education has evolved and continues to change. The advancements of technology have dominated higher education and its deliverables. All stakeholders in HE must be willing to adopt change and re-learn the new skills and know-how to function effectively in ODL (Dzakiria & Walker, 2003). The same goes to ODL students as suggested by Eleena:

> I have seen many of my female friends who drop put because they were scared with the new ways of learning...even hearing all these technical abbreviations like LMS, and others just make them nervous...I think we all have to admit that in order to learn in ODL we cannot wait for people or institution to change or educate us in how to learn...but we must ourselves make effort to learn, re-learn....and to ask. That I think is the way forward...

This was also supported by Sharon:

> I think....but I am not sure if everybody agree, our ODL system is good. It caters for all students....imagine if the institution use all on-line and all-technology....I think some or many of us may like it, or dislike it....but when they have the e-learning component, then they have the f2f, then they also have the hard modules...so we are ok....As long as such flexibility is around, all type of learners...male or female can learn....

In many instances, technology is useful and has helped the learners to learn. However, technology as evident in this study could be a possible barrier to learner. It is an

enabler to learning, but certainly not a total solution to learning. It requires training, learning and skills.

CONCLUSION

Findings suggested that variables supporting the female learners' continued enrollment played a greater role than those impeding persistence. The female adult learners generally seemed to take a pragmatic view of the positive and negative factors affecting their ODL. It is possible that the relative brevity of their program shaped their positive perspective and the continuous motivation to complete their ODL pursuit. Often times; the three learners also experience a higher level of appreciation, and of frustration with their ODL experience. Results from this study and the literature indicate that further research is needed to investigate to what extent other factors may support or hinder ODL tenacity of female learners who have full-time jobs, as well as family and community responsibilities. Future research could explore both institutional and demographic variables that may significantly influence adult female learners ODL success in higher education in Malaysia. Additional research could investigate how disparities in professional and economic status affect adult female learner's ability to pursue higher education degree via ODL in Malaysia and other countries for comparative studies.

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GENDER DIFFERENCE, ADMINISTRATIVE OPPORTUNITIES AND EFFECTIVENESS OF SCHOOL PRINCIPALS:
Implication for Planners

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ABSTRACT

In the School Administration and management, like in any other human and social endeavour, human resources are made up of men and women who play the most important role, either as actors or as recipients. For any society to be harmonious and balanced, the gender representation needs to be taken into consideration. It ensures therefore that none of the two sexes should be left behind in the management of the school system.

Gender as we understand does not refer to the biological differences of sex, which are natural. It rather refers to social constructs, created social meanings, norms and practices that regulate the relationships between men and women in a given society and at a given time. Gender relations refer to such cultural elements that are contextually and historically dependent. In the light of this understanding, it follows that nay development process that aims at creating a space for all people, men and women, to realize their potentials and improve the quality of their life in ways that are sustainable and protective of the Earth's life support systems, men and women must be partners in progress in the creation as well as in the enjoyment of rights, duties, services and goods, Men and women should be real partners.

This study looked into gender differences, administrative opportunities and effectiveness of principals in secondary schools in the Ijebu division of Ogun State. The study population consisted of all the principals and teachers of secondary schools, in both urban and rural areas, in the division, from whom a total of 180 respondents were randomly selected as sample.

Four null hypotheses were tested using the Principal Questionnaire (PQ) and Teachers Rating of their Principals (TRP) developed and validated by the researcher. Only one of the null hypotheses was rejected. The remaining three hypotheses were accepted. The results show a significant gender difference in administrative opportunities in secondary schools in both rural and urban areas. However, there was no gender difference in the administrative effectiveness of principals, irrespective of the location of schools whether in rural or urban areas. Appropriate recommendations and conclusions were drawn based on these findings in order to build an educational system that reflects and projects an equitable, harmonious and gender-balanced Nigerian society.

Keywords: Gender Difference, Administrative Opportunities, Effectiveness, Principals, Secondary Schools.

INTRODUCTION

The school like all other social institutions in made up of both the physical structures and the human resources. Often, the latter determines the existence and health of the

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institution since it is the latter that puts the former into effective use. It is therefore only natural that the human resources component be composed of both sexes. This is in no small measure true of the school system, especially in the contemporary era. Even where the school is single-sex, it is not unlikely to see a mixture of the two sexes among the staff members.

It follows from the above therefore that administrative opportunities that are available need to be shared by competent persons drawn from the two sexes. However, this situation is rarely true, both in history and in contemporary times. It seems the age-long stereotype, sex-role identity remains in full force as far as administration of schools is concerned. Oketa and Tobi (1999) noted that the discrimination against women in the distribution of privileged positions is not only common but continue to re-occur in political and social discourses. Educational institutions constitute no exception. Another issue that is also of major concern is the notion that one sex is more effective than the other when it comes to handling administrative positions. Some people have the belief that only men can perform well in administration positions. They believe that administration functions are essentially masculine in nature. But, Wendy (1994) asserts that it is people who define certain characteristics and activities as masculine or feminine. It is also the same people who define and articulate rules and norms to regulate the relationships between men and women in the society.

In other words, some functions might have been wrongly designated as their performance may have nothing to do with the biological and natural sex differences. They were simply socially constructed. Their validity and usefulness should be historically and contextually appreciated. Hence, this study tries to look into the issue of gender difference, administrative opportunities and effectiveness of principals in secondary schools.

Many people have been culturally conditioned to believe that leaders who are male are bound to do better than their female counterparts. Some others have now come to hold the belief that female leaders are more effective and often perform better than their, male counterparts (Okwor, 2000). Leadership involves the ability to influence or motivate others to do certain things or to work towards achieving certain goals. It also involves the ability to organize and tap the resources in the personal relationship that exist between the leader and the followers in the pursuit of some collective, goals (Salawu, 2002).

According to Abdulkadir (2000), the principal is the head of a school, the manager of the school system, the school father/mother, adviser, school administrator, chief executive, public relation officer, policy maker, communicator, school authority, an educator and a school philosopher. In school, a school principal is an all-encompassing personality within the school and the immediate community. Hence, he/she has to initiate, motivate and direct the actions of other members of staff and students positively in order to achieve the goals of education in a given community/society.

Ahmed (2002) says that the leadership role of the principal makes him/her to build a cohesive and effective work force and social environment in which everyone pulls resources together to achieve an optimal teaching and learning experience. If done properly, the total school environment and functions are harmonized with everyone working hard to define, interpret and establish the school goals. A school manager of today must be aware of the complex nature of the school system in the areas such as: numerous teachers with various qualifications, students from various backgrounds, the inadequate facilities which make tasks to become more complex and difficult to manage and the growing turbulent social environment in which schools operates.

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Short Berger (1992) observes that secondary school administration involves male and female teachers. It has been observed that the administration of a school is not different from the administration involved in other organizations. Adeniji (2002) also points to the pressure being put upon secondary school organization to respond to social problems and to account more adequately for their resources to plan their own development and in general, to manage their own affairs so that they are like any other type of organization.

STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

It is often argued that when we talk of gender, male and female are complimentary. Without one, the other cannot exist. They often serve as helpers for one another. This is no less true when it comes to the efficiency of social institutions, especially educational institutions. This is why members of the two sexes form the teaching and non-teaching force which jointly gives meaning to the life of a school. Even where the school is a mixed one, both boys and girls sit down together in the same classroom for the purpose of learning. Both boys and girls outperform each other in their school performance.

If such is the situation between boys and girls while in school, how then do we explain the disparity found between men and women when it comes to school administration? How do we explain the generally held belief that male school managers perform better than their female counterparts?

These questions motivated us to look into the gender gap as far as the management of secondary schools is concerned by looking into the involvement and efficiency of either of the gender in the administration of schools. We investigated the gender difference, administrative opportunities and efficiency of principals in secondary schools in Ogun East Senatorial District of Ogun State.

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

This study sought answers to the following research questions:

> * Does gender difference affect the choice of secondary school administrators?
> * Is there any difference in the administrative behavior of male and female principals?
> * Is there any difference in the administrative effectiveness of male and female principals?
> * Is there any difference in the administrative effectiveness of male and female principals in highly populated (big) schools?
> * Is there any difference in the administrative effectiveness of male and female principals in low populated (small)-schools?
> * Is there any difference in the administrative opportunities of male and female principals in secondary schools?

RESEARCH HYPOTHESES

The following null hypotheses were formulated for testing in the study:

> * There is no significant difference in the administrative opportunities available for male and female secondary school principals.
> * There is no significant difference in the administrative effectiveness of male and female secondary school principals.

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> ➢ There is no significant difference in the administrative effectiveness of male and female principals in urban secondary schools.
> ➢ There is no significant difference in the administrative effectiveness of male and female principals in rural secondary schools.

PURPOSE OF THE STUDY

This study tried to investigate gender difference, administrative opportunities and effectiveness of principals in secondary schools. Specially, the study investigated the seemingly gender imbalance in the distribution of administrative opportunities for principal ship in secondary schools.

Another major focus of the study is an assessment of the administrative effectiveness of male and female secondary school principals. This work tried to find out if there is any difference in the administrative effectiveness of male and female principals and whether such difference was as a result of gender difference.

The study also investigated the difference in the administrative effectiveness of male and female principals in highly populated secondary schools in both rural and urban areas. This was done with a view to determining which of the two groups would be best fit to administer highly populated secondary schools.

Finally, the study examined the difference in the administrative effectiveness of male and female principals in low populated secondary schools. Here also, our inquiry was carried out with a view to verifying the usual assumption that low populated secondary schools are best administered by the female principals. Such population throws less administrative challenges compared with the urban school with high population.

SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

A successful completion of this study is expected to be of immense benefits to broad categories of people including officials of the state ministry of education, the ministry of Women Affairs, Youth and Social Development, the teaching service commission and other agencies that have to do with the provision and administration of secondary education in the state as well as the promotion of gender equity towards the achievement of millennium development goals. These categories of people will find this study a sound basis upon which vital decisions and policy statements could be made. The study will not only be useful in the process of appointing principals, it will also be a useful guide in the posting of principals to large and small schools in both rural and urban areas.

The study will also benefit secondary school principals, teachers and students themselves. These groups of people who are directly concerned about happening in secondary school would come to appreciate the importance of gender-balancing and cooperation with all principals irrespective of their biological sex. After all, they all stand proxy to the effectiveness or otherwise of school administration.

Surely, this study will be of a great benefit to parents, the old students and all other bodies who are concerned with the running of secondary schools. In recent times, these groups of people have been deeply involved in the appointment of secondary school principals. The Parents Teachers' Associations and the old Students often express their concern for the type of principals they prefer for their schools. This often goes a long way to influence such appointments. A study like this will provide them with a sound informational base upon which they can base their recommendations.

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METHODOLOGY

This chapter highlights the research methodology employed in this study. The chapter discusses the Research Design, Population, Sample and Sampling Techniques, Instrument, Psychometric properties of the instrument, procedure for the administration of the instrument, scoring and method of data analysis. The study employs the descriptive research design. This design involves an objective, unbiased and thorough description of an event, phenomenon or relationship. This design is appropriate for this study because it empowers the researcher to select a good representative as sample, make use of the questionnaire and have the opportunity to draw inferences from the results of findings which can be generalized on the entire study population.

The population for the study consists of all the Principals and Teachers of public secondary schools in the Ijebu-Division of Ogun State. The statistics of 2002 are the basis of our study consisting of 82 public secondary schools with 81 principals and 1,849 teachers in the division (Ogun State Education Handbook, 2002).

NO OF SCHOOLS AND TEACHERS IN IJEBU DISTRICT OF OGUN STATE AS AT 2002

Table 1

NO OF LOCAL GOVERNMENT	NO OF SCHOOLS/PRINCIPALS	NO OF TEACHERS
1. Odogbolu	17	345
2. Ijebu-Ode	15	578
3. Ijebu-North East Zone	9	150
4. Ogun Water side	12	142
5. Ijebu-North	19	372
6. Ijebu-East zone	10	362
TOTAL:	82	1,849

Adapted from Ogun State Educational Handbook 2003
A total of 36 principals and 189 teachers representing 44.0 and 10.0 percent of the population respectively constitute the sample for this study. This means that 6 schools were selected fro each Local Government and interviewing 5 teacher per school.

The proportional random sampling technique was used in selecting the samples. This was to allow for an equal representation of the two sexes in the sample. Hence, schools that are headed by male and female principals were selected in equal proportion to participate in the study. This means that in a local government where 5 principals were interviewed at least two were female principals. The study made use of two sets of questionnaires designed and validated by the researcher. The first questionnaire titled Principals Information Questionnaire' (PIQ) consists of two sections. Section 1 seeks some demographic information while section II contains some items measuring gender influence on administrative opportunities and effectiveness in secondary schools.

The second questionnaire titled "Teachers Rating of their Principals" (TRP) also contains two sections. Section A is to collect demographic information while section B contains items measuring Principals' administrative performance.

VALIDITY, RELIABILITY, AND ADMINISTRATION OF INSTRUMENT

The researcher subjected the two instruments to due processes in order to establish their validity and reliability level.

Validity: This refers to the ability of the instrument to measure accurately what it has to measure. A test blue print showing the various constructs such as administrative opportunities, gender balance and administrative effectiveness in the study was first developed. Thus, ensuring the content validity of the instruments. The instrument was also scrutinized and corrected appropriately by the supervisor and some other experts in test construction. **Reliability:** - This implies the consistency of an instrument to measure repeatedly what it has to measure.

The test-re-test reliability level was employed in order to establish the reliability level. Some draft copies of the instrument were administered twice on a set of respondents who were not members of the original sample within a time interval of two-weeks. The two sets of scores were analyses using Pearson Product Moment correlation co-efficient and a co-efficient of 0.68 was obtained showing a high reliability level. The researcher personally visited all the selected schools, enlisted the support and cooperation of the Principals and the teachers through persuasion and good rapport. They were encouraged to give honest responses as the instruments were meant for research purposes only. The were assure that all their responses enjoyed utmost confidentiality.

They were given enough time to complete the instruments while the researcher cheerfully gave explanations on any question raised. The made it possible for the researcher to get all the instruments back without any one of them getting lost.
RESULT

RESEARCH QUESTION I

Do gender differences affect the choice of secondary school administrators?

Table: 1
Gender Differences and choice of School Administrators

S/N	Items	Agreed	X	%	Disagreed	X	%
1.	Principalship is often Reserved for males	12	3.33	3.33	24	6.66	66.7
2.	Females are more Favour with Principalship post	14	3.9	38.9	22	6.11	61.1
3.	Male and female teachers are given equal opportunities of becoming a school Principal	25	6.9	69.4	11	3.1	30.6
4.	Male Principals are more than female principals in Ijebu Zone	21	5.8	58.2	15	4.2	41.7
5.	Female principals are more than male	10	2.8	27.8	26	7.2	72.2

Table I above shows that majority of the respondents disagreed that principalship is often reserved for males. 24 respondents, that is 66.7 (x...... = 6.7) disagreed with the statement. Only 12 respondents, 33.3% (x = 3.3) upheld the view that principalship is reserved for males. In the same vein, 22 respondents, 61.1% rejected the idea that female are more favoured with principalship post. Only 4 respondents 38.9% thought otherwise.

A look at the responses to item 3 of the PIQ also shows that 25 respondents that is69.4% agreed with the notion that male and female teachers are given equal opportunities of

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becoming school principals. Only 11 respondents 30.6% thought otherwise. However, the item based on the enumeration of principals in the zone shows that male principals are more than female principals. This, of course might have been as a result of the variation in teachers years of teaching experience and grade levels which are some of the yardsticks used in appointing school principals.

RESEARCH QUESTION II

Is there any difference in the administrative behavior of male and female principals

Table: 2
GENDER DIFFERENCES IN ADMINISTRATIVE BEHAVIOUR

S/N	Item %	Agreed	X	%	Disagreed	X	%
6	The position of principalship is better occupied by males	16	4.4	44.4	20	5.6	55.6
10	Schools that are headed by female principals are more disciplined and progressive than those headed by male principals	20	5.6	55.6	16	4.4	44.4

Table II: shows that only 16 respondents representing 44.4% agreed that the position of principalship is better occupied by males. 20 respondent 55.6% disagreed with this view. However, analysis of item 10 of the PIQ shows that 20 respondents, 55.6% believed that schools headed by the female principals are more disciplined and progressive than those headed by male principals. 16 respondents, 44.4% however disagreed with this view.

Research Question III: Is there any difference in the administrative effectiveness of male and female principals?

Table: 3
Gender Differences in Administrative Effectiveness.

S/N	ITEM	Agreed	X	%	Disagreed	X	%
7	Female Principals are more effective than male principals	9	2.5	25	27	7.5	75
8	Administrative effectiveness is not a function of gender.	24	6.7	66.7	12	3.3	33.3
9.	The tasks of principalship are masculine in nature	8	8	2.2	22.2	28	7.8
10.	Both male and female principals in this zone are up to the task	21	5.8	58.3	15	4.2	41.7

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Table III: shows that 9 respondents representing 25% agreed that female principals are more effective than male principals. 27 respondents representing 75% disagreed with this view. Infact, a whole 24 respondent representing 66.7% agreed that administrative effectiveness is not a function of gender. Similarly, 28 respondents representing 77.8% disagreed with the notion that the tasks of principalship are masculine in nature. Only 8 respondents (22.2%) agreed with this view. In fact, 21 respondents representing 58.3% believed that both male and female principals are effective while only 15 respondents (41.7 % disagreed.)

A further look at the tables shows that 12 representing 33.3% agreed with the view that principal ship is often reserved for males while 24 (66.7%) of the respondents disagreed with this view. The impulse of this is that in principle and as a policy matter, males are not given preference in the choice of principals. However, responses to item 4 of the PIQ show that male principals are more than female principals in this zone. Responses to the item shows that 69.4% i.e. 25 principals are male while only 11 i.e. 30.6% are female principals. This disparity shows that in practice male principals are more than female. Given the age long assumption that teaching is often preferred by women than men, one would have expected that female principals would out number male principals.

Several factors may be responsible for the situation whereby male principals are the majority. Perhaps, many of the male teachers commenced their teaching career with a higher qualification i.e. first degree, which makes them to start their career on grade level 08 as against mist of their female counterparts who started with NCE on grade level 07. This disparity at the beginning of career places those who started with degrees to remain ahead of their colleagues. It is also possible that in this era of keen competition as a result of the fact that senior teachers who qualified for the position of principals are far more than the available vacancies, women find it difficult to offer all it takes to become a principal. The fact is that the era of receiving duty post via posted letters from the teaching service commission has become a thing of the past. The process now involves a lot of lobbying and sacrifices.

It is therefore hoped that necessary policies would be enacted to ensure equal administrative opportunities for both males and females in secondary schools. Responses to items 10 and 11 also show that both male and female principals are effective in the running of secondary schools under their care. 20 respondents representing 55.6% and 21 respondents representing 58.3% agreed that both male and female principals in the zone are exhibiting the same level of administrative effectiveness. Only 16 respondents i.e. 44.4% and 15 respondents i.e. 41.7% disagreed with the fact that both male and female principals as contained in term 10 and 11 respectively are effective. This shows that given equal opportunities and the same working facilities and conditions both male and female principals can perform effectively in the running of secondary schools.

It would therefore be out of place to favour either of the sexes when it comes to the appointment of principals. Instead, both male and female should be given equal opportunities, and appointment of principals should be based on merit and not certain gender preference.

The data generated one each of the four null hypotheses were scored, collated and analysed using the t-test. The results are presented in table below;

HO[1]: There is no significant difference in the administrative opportunities available for male and female secondary school Principals:

Table: 4
Gender Difference in secondary School Administrative Opportunities

Group	N	X	SD	t-cal	t-cri	df	Remark
Male Principals	24	41.3	3.3	2.86	2.02	38	
							Significance
Female Principals	16	40.2	5.1				

P<0.0.5

Table: 4 above shows t-calculated = 2.86 which is greater than the t-critical value at 0.05 level of significance. Therefore, the null hypotheses which states that there is no significant difference in the administrative opportunities given to male and female secondary school principals is rejected in favour of the alternative hypotheses. This means that administrative opportunities available to male and female principals differ significantly.

HO_2: There is no significant difference in the administrative effectiveness of male and female secondary school principals.

Table: 5
Gender Difference in Principals' Administrative Effectiveness

Group	N	X	SD	t-cal	t-cri	df	Remark
Male Principals	80	43.1	5.6		1.96	158	Not
Female Principals	80	4.3.2	5.7	1.84			Significance

P<0.05

It is clear from table V above that the t-calculated =1.84 which is less than the t-critical=1.96 at 0.05 level. Therefore, the null hypothesis, which states that 'there is no significant difference in the administrative effectiveness of male and female principals', is accepted. This implies that administrative effectiveness of secondary schools principals is not dependent on their gender. Any of the two genders can be effective administratively since gender difference does not affect administrative effectiveness'.

$H0_3$: There is no significant difference in the administrative effectiveness of male and female principals in urban secondary schools.

Table: 6
Gender Difference in Principals Administrative Effectiveness in Urban Schools

Group	N	X	SD	t-cal	t-cri	df	Remark
Male Principals	75	41.4	4.8				Not
Female	85	42.1	4.6	1.72	1.96	158	Significance

P<0.05

Table 6: shows that the t-calculated = 1.72 which is less than the t-critical = 1.96 at 0.05 level. Therefore, the null hypothesis, which states that there is no significant difference in the administrative effectiveness of male and female principals in urban secondary schools, is accepted. This implies that both male and female principals can be effective administratively in urban secondary schools.

HO_4: There is no significant difference in the administrative effectiveness of male and female principals in rural secondary schools.

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Table: 7G
Gender Difference in Principal Administrative Effectiveness in Rural Secondary Schools.

Group	N	X	SD	t-cal	t-cri	df	Remark
Female Principals	81	44.1	4.8	1.83	1.93	258	Not Significant
Male Principals	79	43.6	4.4				

P<0.05

Table VII depicts t-calculated value= 1.83 which is less than the t-critical value= 1.96 at 0.05 level. Therefore, the null hypothesis, which states that there is no significant difference in the administrative effectiveness of male and female principals in rural secondary schools, is accepted. This means that principals of both sexes can be effective administratively in rural secondary schools.

DISCUSSION

The first hypothesis which states that "there is no significant difference in the administrative opportunities available for male and female secondary schools principals" was rejected. This implies that the administrative opportunities given to male and female gender in secondary schools differ significantly.

This result brings into fore the age long disparity in the opportunities between the two sexes in the society. It confirms the observation of Oketa and Tobi (1999) who noted that the discrimination against the female sex in the distribution of privileged positions is not only uncommon but continue to re-occur in political and social discourses.

This result also corroborates the findings of some feminist researchers who found that male dominance and power differentials have shaped the role and interests of women. The present study is consistent with feminist theory that postulates that males enjoy more privileged positions than women in the society. It is also plausible to note that the difference in the administrative opportunities given to male and female genders in secondary schools is not unconnected with the age long, sex-roll stereo-typed which sees leadership as essentially masculine.

But, Wendy (1994) asserts that it is people who define certain characteristics as masculine or feminine activities and norms to regulate relationships between men and women. The present study shows that this wrong definition has some influence especially where it comes to distribution of administrative opportunities secondary schools. Hence, the male gender enjoys more favours over the female gender.

The second hypothesis which states that there is no significant difference in the administrative effectiveness of male and female secondary school principals was accepted. This implies that gender differences do not influence administrative effectiveness of secondary schools principals. This finding is at variance with the opinion of Moir and Jesse (1991) who found out that men were superior to women in terms of spatial ability and administrative roles. The present study shows that administrative effectiveness is not dependent on gender difference of administrators. The findings however lend credence to that of Adeniji (2002) who found that male and female principals did not differ in terms of administrative performance. The plausibility of this result is found in the fact that both male and female principals attend similar institutions

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for training; they hold the same qualifications, have their teaching experience in similar schools and operate as principals under the same working conditions. It therefore stands to reasons that, given the same conditions of work, male female principals would exhibit the same level of administrative effectiveness in schools.

The third hypothesis which states that 'there is no significant differences in the administrative effectiveness of male and female principals in urban secondary schools' was also accepted. This implies that both male female principals are effective in administering secondary schools in the urban area. Again this result is understandable based on the fact that most of our male and female principals started their teaching career in the schools they now head. They therefore understand the tradition and discipline tones of these schools and are aware of the challenges facing schools in the urban area. This finding negates that Angulo (1995) significant difference between male and female principals in terms of their administrative performance in schools located in high-populated areas. The present study shows that gender difference of principals does not affect their effectiveness in such schools.

The fourth hypothesis which states that 'there is no significant difference in the administrative effectiveness of male and female principals in rural secondary schools' was also accepted. This implies that both male and female principals are effective in the management of secondary schools in the rural areas. Schools in the rural areas often lowly populated, lacking in basic materials and pose some administrative challenges. Yet, this finding shows that both male and female principals are effective in managing these schools. This finding supports that of Ahmed (2002) who found that male female principals are the same in terms of administrative performance in secondary schools irrespective of the location and size of the school. The result of this finding is that the appointment of principals of either sex to schools will not be determined by the location of the schools in rural or urban center. Giving the same working condition. This finding shows that both male and female principals can effectively administer schools in the rural areas.

CONCLUSION

This study has helped to discover that there is a significant gender difference in the administrative opportunities in secondary schools. The administrative opportunities are there is gender imbalance in the distribution of such opportunities.

The study also has helped us to draw other conclusions including the discovery that gender difference does not affect principals' administrative effectiveness in secondary schools, irrespective of location of the schools in rural or urban areas. It is based on these startling discoveries that appropriate recommendations were drawn.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the findings of this study, the following recommendations are proffered:
Gender discrimination is a social construct and the educational system helps to reproduce such a system that ultimately hurts all members of the society. We therefore recommend that gender education should be made part of the education curriculum at the primary, secondary and tertiary levels to allow the youth grow in gender conscious and balanced society.

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Teachers of either sexes who are qualified for principal ship should not allow any form of prejudice on the basis of their gender whenever they have such opportunities. The female gender specially needs to be more assertive.

The principals and teachers of secondary schools should endeavor to work together irrespective of the gender of the school head in order to move the secondary schools system forward. After all, the effectiveness of the principals depends largely on all the stakeholders.

The old students, the parent teachers associations and all other bodies who exert some influence on the appointment of secondary school principals should endeavor and to encourage gender imbalance through unnecessary influences. Instead, they should make effort to make the influences positive and not negative.

The government at all levels should also formulate policies that would encourage gender balancing. The two genders should be given equal administrative opportunities.

Government should consider the number of women trained at all levels and the number of women in the field when promoting to the principalship positions. Government should consider some of the International conventions like the Beijing documents which specify the number of male and women when appointing school principals.

IMPLICATION FOR POLICY

The impart of the findings of this study for policy and practice include the need to formulate policy statements discrediting any form of gender bias in the appointment of principals of secondary schools in the state. It is important that the state government comes up with policies encouraging gender equality, especially in the appointment of school administrators. In Practice, it would not be out of place to consider equal representation of the two sexes in the top management of the school system as much as possible. Such a policy consideration will go a long way in mainstreaming gender equity in public policy and public administration. Examples abound in Africa where gender equality has entered public policy. Nigeria cannot afford to lag behind in view of the prominent role the country is playing on the African continent.

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Building Support for Gender Equality among Young Adolescents in School: Findings from Mumbai, India

There is increasing recognition that to reduce gender inequality – a goal fundamental to improving a country's overall health and development – programs must start with youth. Yet there has been limited engagement of both girls and boys during early adolescence to challenge and shift gender norms that contribute to girls and women having less worth, opportunities and decision-making ability than boys and men. Such inequitable gender norms can have a host of harmful consequences for girls and boys during childhood and beyond, including poor sexual and reproductive health (SRH) outcomes, violence and school drop out.

In the last few years a growing body of evidence has emerged in numerous settings, including India, linking individual attitudes around gender to SRH behaviors and the use and experience of violence (Barker, et al., 2007; Barker, et al., 2011; Haberland & Rogow, 2007; Karim, et al., 2003; Pulerwitz, et al., 2006; Verma, et al., 2008). Because gender socialization of both boys and girls begins early in India, it is important to initiate change processes at a young age to shape attitudes and transform behaviors.

In response, the International Center for Research on Women (ICRW), in partnership with the Committee of Resource Organizations for Literacy (CORO) and the Tata Institute for Social Sciences (TISS), developed a school-based program entitled "Gender Equity Movement in Schools," or GEMS, for students in Grades VI and VII. GEMS promotes gender equality by encouraging equal relationships between girls and boys, examining the social norms that define men's and women's roles, and questioning the use of violence.

This report summarizes the key findings from the first phase of the program, which was implemented in Mumbai public schools across two academic years (2008-09 and 2009-10), reaching more than 8000 girls and boys ages 12-14. In the second phase currently underway, GEMS is being scaled up to over 250 schools in Mumbai.

Why a School-based Program to Promote Gender Equality?

The public education system is uniquely placed to influence and shape children's thinking and understanding of gender stereotypes and roles as well as around violence. The United Nations Secretary-General's Report on Violence against Children (2006) notes that "children spend more time in the care of adults in places of learning than they do anywhere else outside of their homes." The report also emphasizes the role that education can play in "encouraging children to learn self-respect, respect for others and how to express their feelings and negotiate for what they want without resorting to violence." Despite high level acknowledgment of schools' potential to shape norms and behaviors, educational institutions more often than not reinforce gender stereotypes and do little to change patterns of violence. The GEMS program offers a game-changing model for schools in the fight against gender inequality and violence.

Figure 1 - GEMS Project Design

	Grades	Year 1 (2008-09)			Year 2 (2009-10)	
		Baseline survey sample	Intervention 1st round total participants	1st Follow-up survey sample	Intervention 2nd round total participants	2nd Follow-up survey sample
GEA+ Campaign (15 schools)	Grade VI	G-448 B-465	GEA-2300 Campaign ~4500	G-378 B-292	GEA-1200 Campaign ~4500 ^	G-151 B-101
	Grade VII					
Only Campaign (15 schools)	Grade VI	G-437 B-450	Campaign ~3500	G- 298 B-271	Campaign ~3500 ^	G-124 B-93
	Grade VII					
Control (15 schools)	Grade VI	G-579 B-517		G- 424 B-372		G-151 B-134
	Grade VII					

^ Campaign was open to all students in grades V, VI & VII in both intervention rounds
G = girls, B = boys

Methods

The study used a quasi-experimental design to assess the outcomes of the program on the students (see Figure 1). It was carried out in a randomly selected sample of 45 Brihanmumbai Municipal Corporation (BMC) schools.[1] The schools were randomly and equally distributed across three arms – two intervention arms and one control arm.

During the 2008-09 academic year, students in Grades VI and VII in one of the intervention arms participated in group education activities (GEA) and a school-based campaign. In the other intervention arm, students were only exposed to the campaign. There was no intervention in the control schools. A total of 2035 students (1100 girls and 935 boys) across the three arms completed a self-administered survey before the intervention as well as a second survey at the end of the intervention period six months later (1st follow up). The students and their parents provided consent prior to enrollment of the students in the study.

In the next academic year (2009-10), the students in Grades VI had graduated to Grade VII (the previous Grade VII students had moved on to different schools). The students now in Grade VII in the GEA+campaign arm participated in an enhanced intervention. In the other intervention arm, a second round of the campaign was mounted. Again there was no intervention in the control schools. A total of 754 students in Grade VII (426 girls and 328 boys) across the three arms completed a third survey (similar to the other two) after a seven-month intervention period (2nd follow up). All of the surveys covered three broad areas: gender roles, violence and SRH. In addition, a small sample of students participated in in-depth interviews to better understand the nature of the changes they experienced and their views about GEMS.

To analyze the outcome data from the surveys, the research team used a difference-in-differences approach[2] and multivariate analyses. These analytical methods enabled the team to answer the following questions:

- What effects did each intervention (GEA+campaign and campaign only) have on the students during the first academic year compared to the control group?
- Was one intervention more effective than the other?
- Did the students who participated in the intervention over two academic years sustain or improve upon any positive outcomes realized after only one academic year?

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[1] The schools were located in M-East, M-West, R-North, R-Central and R-South wards, field areas of the implementing partners, CORO and TISS.

[2] This method compares the difference in outcomes in the different arms before and after the interventions. It accounts for external factors that may have influenced study outcomes in all arms over time as well as any pre-existing differences between the different arms at baseline.

GEMS Project

GEMS builds on successful efforts in India to foster more gender equitable attitudes and behaviors among youth, such as *Yari Dosti* for young men and *Sakhi-Saheli* for young women. The main components of GEMS and its predecessors are GEA and a campaign. The GEA use participatory methodologies such as role plays, games, debates and discussions to engage students in meaningful and relevant interactions and reflection about key issues. In the case of GEMS, the GEA were conducted by trained facilitators from CORO and TISS and held during the regular school day. Each

session lasted about 45 minutes. The first year covered three themes: gender, the body and violence. The sessions in year 2 focused on deepening students' understanding of gender and building skills to respond positively to discrimination and violence (see Table 1 for a list of the GEA sessions for each academic year).

The GEMS school campaign was a week-long series of events designed in consultation with the students and involved games, competitions, debates and short plays. Both the GEA and the campaign were developed based on findings from formative research.

Table 1: Group Education Activities Conducted in Academic Years 1 and 2

Academic Year 1: Activities conducted over a 6-month period (Oct. 2008-March 2009)[3]	Academic Year 2: Activities conducted over a 7-month period (Aug 2009-Feb 2010)
Students in Grades VI and VII	**Students in Grade VII only (in Grade VI during academic year 1)**

Introduction & ground rules
Gender
  1. What is gender?
  2. Division of work
 	
Body
  3. Body and hygiene
  4. Changing body and changing mind
  5. Respecting one's own and others' bodies
 	
Violence
  6. What is violence?
  7. Is it violence?
  8. Cycle of violence
  9. From violence to understanding
  10. Labeling violence
	Introduction & ground rules
	Gender
	  1. Gender recap
	  2. Privileges and restrictions
	  3. Gender and power
	  4. GEMS Diary[4]
	
	Relationships
	  5. What is a relationship?
	  6. Expectations and responsibilities in a relationship
	  7. Conflict resolution
	  8. GEMS Diary
	
	Emotions
	  9. What is emotion?
	  10. Expressing emotions
	
	Violence
	  11. What is violence?
	  12. Communication around violence
	  13. Assertive communication
	  14. Collective response to violence
	  15. GEMS Diary

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[3] In year 1, sessions were conducted separately for girls and boys, keeping in mind their relative ease and comfort in discussing these issues. The second year sessions were conducted in mixed groups in response to requests from the students.

[4] The GEMS diary is a workbook with games, comic strips, stories, information and space for students to express their reflections on gender roles, relationships and violence. The content of the diary draws from the first year's implementation experience.

A Group Education Session on Labeling

There were about 40 boys in the classroom, who at the beginning were noisy and restless. The facilitator announced that the topic for the day was 'Labeling.' He asked the boys if they were familiar with *nava thevna,* the Marathi word for labeling and to write a label they knew of or use on the board. Gasps of surprise and peals of laughter followed the writing of each word. Slowly the board filled up. There was a variety of responses, including those that focused on physical appearance, such as *sukdi* (malnourished) and *takli* (a girl who is bald) and those with sexual innuendos like *pataka* (fire cracker), *raand* (a woman who is having sex with many men), *gulballi* (girl with whims and attitude) and *bayalya* (a feminine boy).

The facilitator then asked the boys to close their eyes and imagine for a moment that one of these terms was being shouted at them. They were then asked how they felt being at the receiving end. The responses that came out included: "bad," "like hitting someone," "very angry," "felt hurt" and "wanting to ask 'what did I do wrong?'" The facilitator next said that many of the labels were directed toward girls. The boys agreed that this was definitely so and that girls were more on the receiving end when teasing occurred.

The facilitator asked the children if the labels felt so bad, was there a way to deal with them and stop the labels. Some boys said that while one felt bad being on the receiving end of the label, it felt good when one lashes out at another by speaking in these derogatory terms. The facilitator elaborated that one word can hurt so much and we indulge in many such words all the time. It was time to rethink what we do and why we do it.

The discussion then was guided toward what can be done to curb this labeling which creates more harm than good. Some suggestions were to speak to a teacher, parent or elder and report it to the police. The last question asked was "Is labeling a form of violence?" The entire classroom fell silent. After a while the hands started rising slowly. Most of the class concurred that it was, indeed, violence.

Source: Observer's notes of a GEMS classroom session

Measuring Gender Attitudes

The research team developed a scale for measuring students' attitudes toward gender equality. On the questionnaire the students indicated whether they agreed, disagreed or were not sure about 15 statements that clustered around three themes (see box). Those who agreed with a statement, indicating support for gender inequality, received a score of 0. Those who were not sure, received a score of 1 and those who disagreed, received a score of 2, indicating support for gender equality. Total scores ranged from a low of 0 (highly gender inequitable) to a high of 30 (highly gender equitable). The students were categorized into three categories for further analysis: 1) those with low equality scores of 0-10, 2) moderate equality scores of 11-20, and 3) high equality scores of 21 to 30.

Gender Equitable Measurement (GEM) Scale - Items

Role/Privileges/Restrictions
1. Only men should work outside the home.
2. Giving the kids a bath and feeding the kids are the mother's responsibility.
3. A wife should always obey her husband.
4. Men need more care as they work harder than women.
5. Since girls have to get married, they should not be sent for higher education.
6. It is necessary to give dowry.

Attributes
7. Girls cannot do well in math and science.
8. Boys are naturally better at math and science than girls.
9. Boys are naturally better than girls in sports.

Violence
10. It is a girl's fault if a male student or teacher sexually harasses her.
11. There are times when a boy needs to beat his girlfriend.
12. A woman should tolerate violence in order to keep her family together.
13. There are times when a woman deserves to be beaten.
14. Girls like to be teased by boys.
15. Girls provoke boys with short dresses.

Key Findings

While more girls than boys had high gender equality scores at baseline, only a minority of students overall were highly gender equitable.

Before the intervention, only 10 percent of the boys had high gender equality scores while 72 percent had moderate gender equality scores. Though the pattern was similar among girls, a greater proportion had high gender equality scores at baseline (24%) compared to the boys.

Violence is an integral part of the lives of young adolescents at school, particularly boys.

In the baseline survey, students were asked about their experiences of physical and emotional violence at school (both as victims and perpetrators). Physical violence consisted of being beaten, slapped, kicked, pushed, hit with an object, or threatened with a weapon. Emotional violence included being insulted, shouted at, derided via abusive language (*gali*), and locked in a room or toilet.

Two-thirds of boys said they experienced at least one form of violence in the last three months at school. Physical violence and emotional violence were common, affecting 61% and 49% of boys, respectively. Although fewer girls than boys reported experiencing any form of violence (42%), the rates for physical and emotional violence were still of concern (38% and 26%, respectively). For boys the main perpetrators were male classmates followed by older boys, male teachers and female classmates. For girls the most common perpetrators were female classmates, male and female teachers and male classmates. While students – both boys and girls – also reported being perpetrators of violence at school, the figures were somewhat lower than what they reported as victims.

After the first round of the intervention, there was a positive shift in students' attitudes toward gender equality.

At the 1st follow up there was a significant increase in the proportion of boys and girls with high gender equality scores in the two intervention arms compared to the control arm. As shown in Figure 2, the proportion of both boys and girls in the high gender equality category more than doubled in both intervention arms. There was some reported increase in the control arm but, unlike the intervention arms, this change was significantly lower. For girls, the GEA+ intervention was more effective than the campaign alone.

Boys and girls demonstrated the greatest improvements in the gender roles/privileges/

Figure 2 : Percentage of students with high gender equality scores by study arm
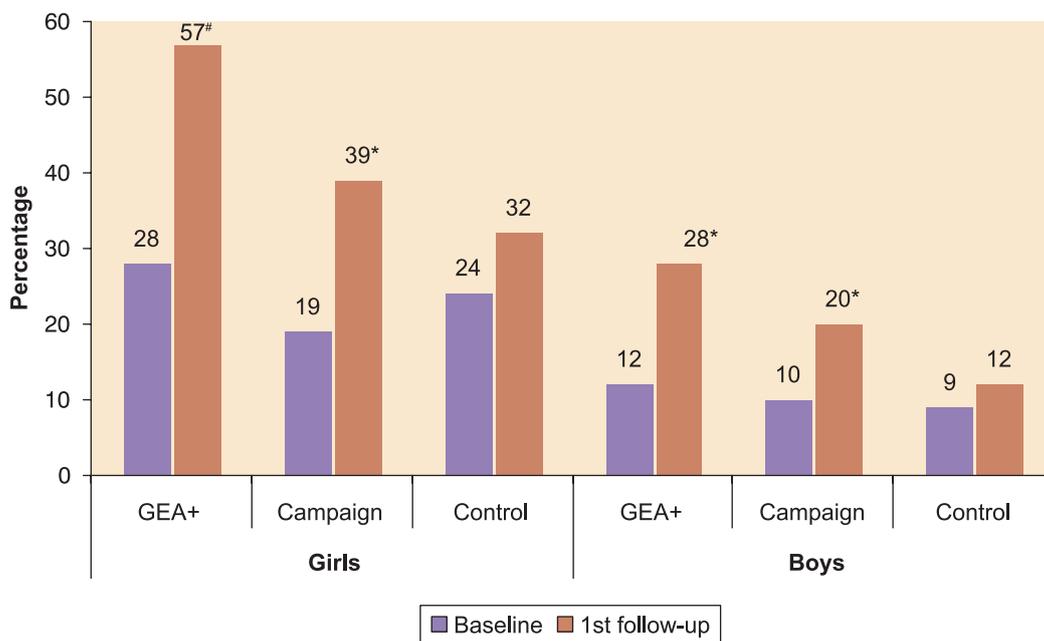
*Diff sig. at $p<0.05$ compared to control; #Diff. sig. at $p<0.05$ compared to other two arms

restrictions domain, which was integrated into many of the GEA discussions as well as the campaign's messages. In the GEA+ arm there was a significant increase in the number of boys disagreeing with five out of the six statements; for girls it was six out of six. Overall, there were fewer positive changes in the violence domain, perhaps because their responses at baseline reflected more gender equitable attitudes (i.e. less tolerance for gender-based violence) compared to those in the gender roles/ privileges/restrictions domain. One item in the violence domain does stand out for girls in the GEA+ arm: among these girls, there was an increase in nearly 20 percentage points in the proportion who disagreed with the statement, "A woman should tolerate violence in order to keep her family together."

Students who participated in both rounds of the interventions sustained their support for gender equality but there was no significant improvement beyond what was achieved after the first academic year.

There was a significant positive trend in the GEA+ group that girls should be older at marriage than the legal age of 18 years.

The proportion of students believing that girls should be at least 18 years old at marriage increased over time in all groups, reaching nearly 100 percent at the 2nd follow-up survey. But in the GEA+ group, support consistently increased among both boys and girls for girls to be even older at marriage – at least 21 years. Among all students in this arm the proportion increased from 15 percent at baseline to 22 percent at 2nd follow up. In control schools, it declined from 18 percent to 14 percent at

> The girl should study further. But if her parents will force her, she will not be able to do anything. She will have to marry. If that girl is 20 or 21 years old, then it's ok to think about marriage, but if she is 15 or 16 years old, parents should not think about marriage.
>
> Girl from GEA+ school
>
> The girl should study. She has the right to study. It is illegal to get her married before the age of 18 and no one should be married off at a young age. One should get married after the age of 18 or 20.
>
> Boy from GEA+ school

2nd follow up while it remained around 10-13 percent in the campaign schools. Age at marriage was addressed in several of the sessions that focused on gender discrimination during both rounds of the intervention.

After the second round of the intervention, more students in both intervention groups reported they would take action in response to sexual harassment.

The students were asked about how they might respond to someone touching them inappropriately or exposing themselves. At the 1st follow up there were no significant positive changes for boys or girls in the intervention arms compared to the control arm in terms of whether they would protest or complain to someone about the offending behaviors. But at the 2nd follow up, significantly more students in the GEA+ and campaign groups said they would mount either response. For example, more than seven in 10 students in both groups would complain about the sexual harassment. The increase among the students from 1st to 2nd follow up was primarily driven by the girls, a promising result given that female victims are often blamed for being the cause of sexual harassment and violence which, in turn, discourages disclosure.

Boys and girls in the GEA+ schools reported greater changes in their own behavior than those in the campaign only schools.

Students in the intervention schools were asked whether or not they had undergone certain changes after their participation in the program. For boys in both intervention arms the greatest changes (reported by more than half the boys in each group) were doing more household chores, stopping the teasing of girls and curbing the use of abusive language. For girls, the most common changes were using less abusive language, understanding boys better and opposing gender discrimination. Many of these reported changes were significantly greater among the girls and boys in the GEA+ schools compared to the campaign only schools (Figure 3). At the 2nd follow up, there was continued improvement in two indicators: a significantly higher proportion of students in GEA+ schools said they better understood the opposite sex and they opposed gender discrimination compared to campaign schools.

Figure 3: Self-reported changes in behavior at 1st follow up by intervention arm

Girls:
- Oppose gender discrimination: GEA+ 42*, Campaign 30
- Understand boys better: GEA+ 49*, Campaign 34
- Play more with boys: GEA+ 28*, Campaign 19

Boys:
- Oppose gender discrimination: GEA+ 36, Campaign 29
- Understand girls better: GEA+ 46, Campaign 44
- Stop teasing girls: GEA+ 58, Campaign 53
- Doing HH chores more: GEA+ 61, Campaign 56

*significant at p <0.05

Legend: ■ GEA + ■ Campaign
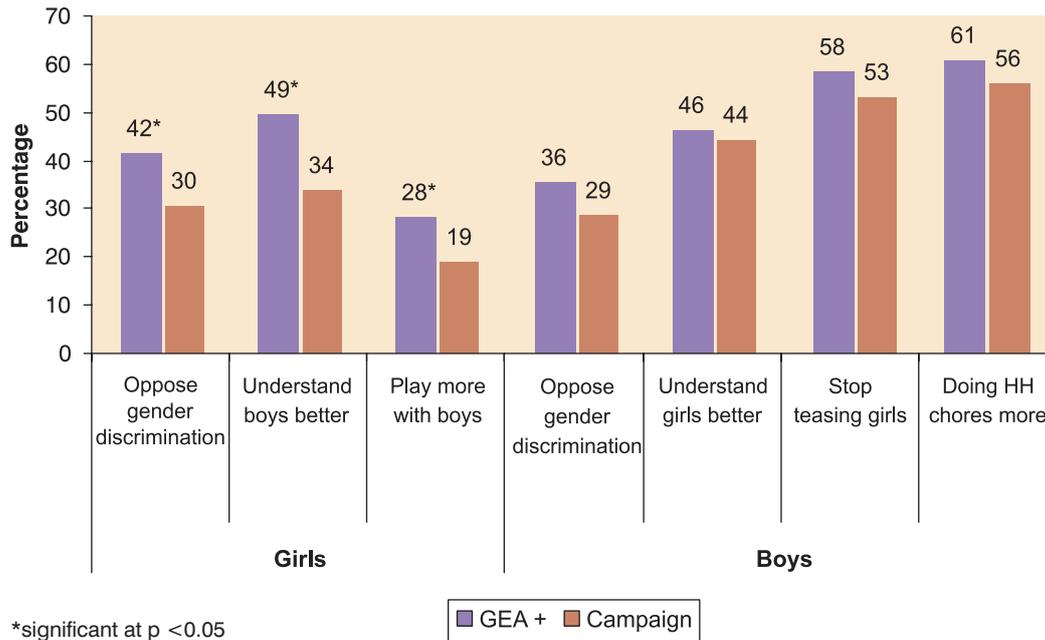
…After the sessions, I changed myself. I started thinking of not reacting too quickly. I used to quarrel a lot with my friend. I used to get angry a lot but now I understand…My family members say this is correct. Both girls and boys have to study equally. They say it is very good.

Girl from GEA+ school

I never worked at home before. I started two years ago at the same time when our sessions began. The sessions were about relationships, communicating with family members, not answering back. I used to think that boys should only do outdoor chores. Now I think that they should help women and work with them [at home].

Boy from GEA+ school

A girl was standing on the road when two or three boys pulled her *dupatta* (scarf). The girl called out for help. We shouted at them and threatened to inform their parents about this. They apologized immediately. I was not frightened while doing so. …I could not stop harassment in the past. But because of the classroom sessions we got to know many things such as harassment of girls should be stopped, boys should understand the feelings and emotions of girls and girls should oppose violence.

Girl from GEA+ school

The results pertaining to students' involvement in school violence were mixed.

As shown in Figure 4, reported perpetration of physical violence by boys in the last three months went up in the GEA+ arm but decreased in the campaign arm from baseline to the 1st follow up. These changes were significant when compared to the change in the control group. For girls in the GEA+ arm, the increase in perpetration of physical violence at school was also significant when compared to the control group.

Among the students who participated in both rounds of the intervention, those in the GEA+ arm (boys and girls combined) reported a 4 point decrease in physical violence at the 2nd follow-up survey while there was a 6-8 point increase in the other two arms (Figure 5).

Figure 4: Percentage of students who reported perpetrating physical violence at school in last 3 months


*Differences significant at p <0.05

Legend: ■ Baseline ■ 1st Follow-up
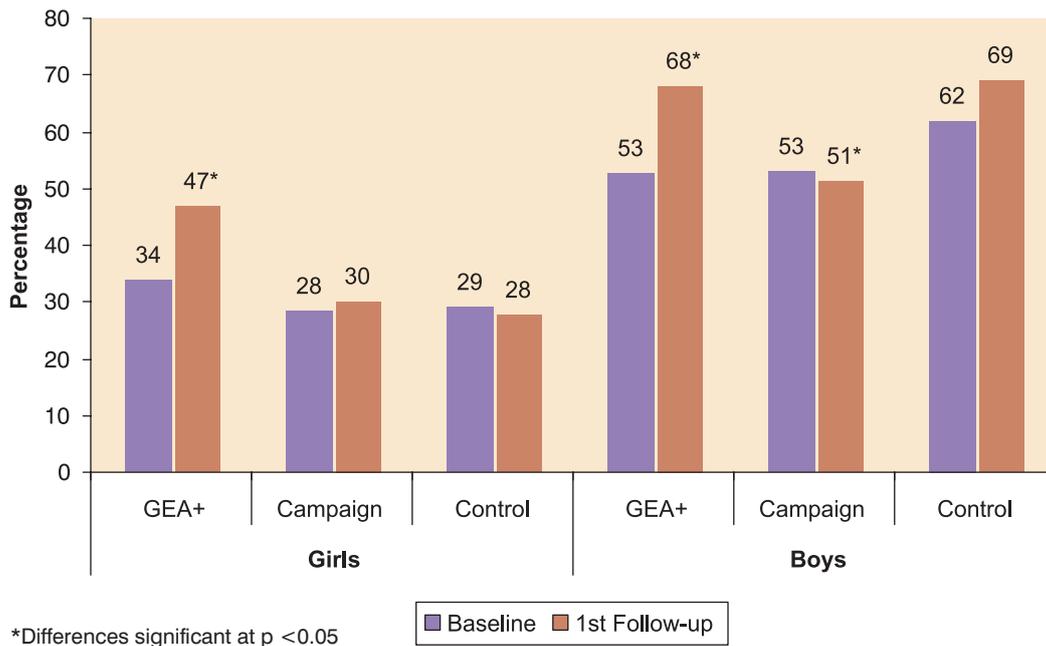
Figure 5: Percentage of students who reported perpetrating physical violence at school in last 3 months

*Differences significant at p <0.05

Legend: ◆ GEA+ ■ Campaign ▲ Control
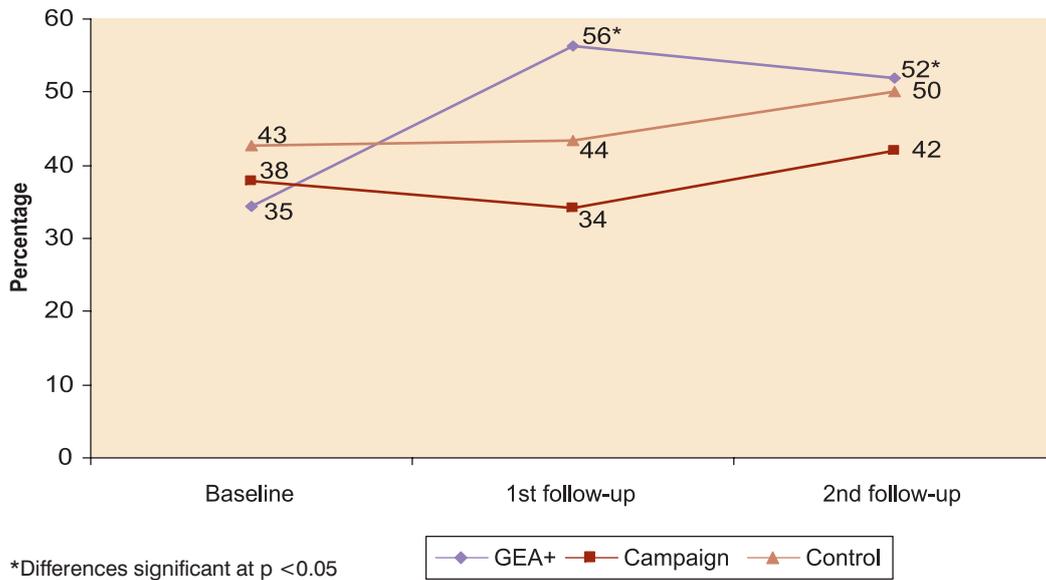
While the survey did not ask students whether they initiated the violence or reacted to it, the reported increase among boys and girls in the GEA+ schools from baseline to the 1st follow up, was nevertheless surprising. One possible explanation, as noted by the GEA facilitators in discussions of the findings, is that the group sessions sensitized students to behaviors that they initially considered normative, like pushing or hitting, but now learned that they were forms of violence.[5] These behaviors are often carried out by groups of children at school or may be individual retaliatory responses, both of which are likely to be particularly difficult to curtail. The decrease in reported physical violence from the 1st to the 2nd follow-up, however, is encouraging.

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[5] The facilitators also noted that they never received any negative feedback from teachers about increased violence among the students. In fact, teachers were appreciative of the program and requested training in conducting the group sessions.

> Once a boy used an expletive against a girl. I told him, "If you do this again then you will regret the consequences." He abused me also. Then we broke into a fight. I also used expletives. Later on I felt bad and thought that I should not have done that. Because it means that I have done violence against someone.
>
> Boy from GEA+ school

Another survey question asked about the students' reaction to the last incidence of peer-inflicted violence at school. Responses such as "tried to stop it" or "sought help" were categorized as positive reactions, while "hit back" was categorized as a negative reaction (another category was no reaction). The findings are presented for boys and girls together because of the small sample sizes. The proportion of students who reported a positive reaction increased in the GEA+ arm from baseline to 1st follow up, while at the same time those who reported a negative reaction decreased. These changes were significant when compared to the control arm (Figure 6). At the 2nd follow up there was a further increase in positive action among the students in the GEA+ schools but not in the other two arms.

Figure 6: Percentage of students reporting a positive reaction in response to violence by peers or senior students at school

*Differences significant at $p < 0.05$
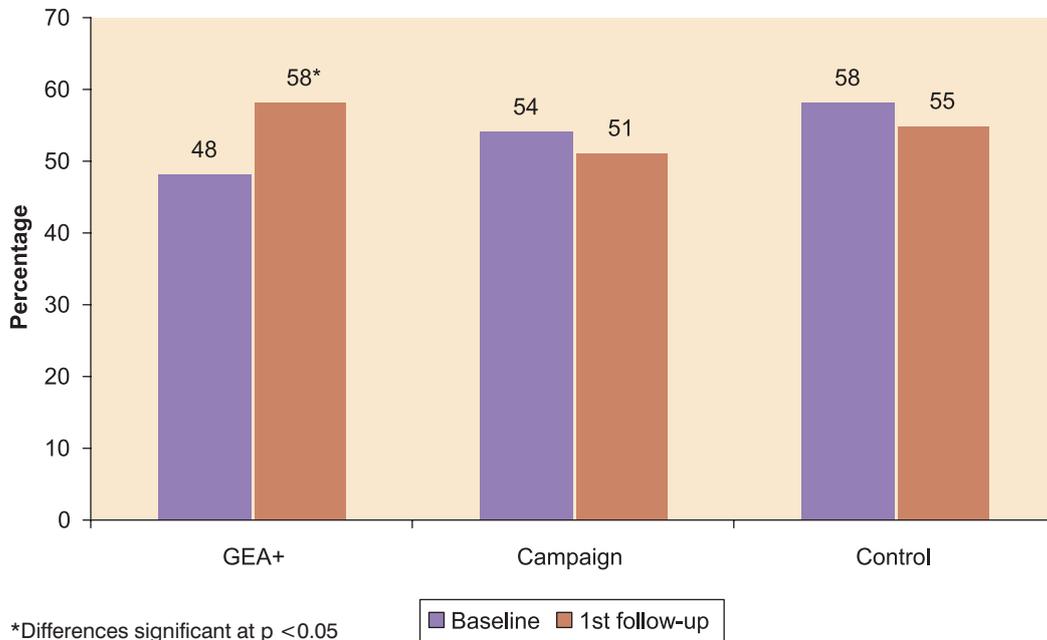
Overall, students in GEA+ schools were more likely to have high gender equality scores, support a higher age at marriage (21+ years) and higher education for girls, and oppose partner violence.

The research team conducted logistic regression analysis to better understand the effects of the interventions while controlling for background variables, such as age, sex, working status of the mother and household and personal assets (Figure 7). The models also controlled for the students' gender equality scores at baseline. After two rounds of the intervention, students from GEA+ schools were more than four times as likely to have high gender equality scores and three times as likely to disagree with the statement, "Since girls have to get married, they should not be sent for higher education," compared to the control arm. The students in the GEA+ schools were also more likely to support a higher age at marriage (21+ years) and disagree with the statement, "There are times when a boy needs to beat his girlfriend." Two rounds of the campaign also succeeded in bringing about significant positive changes for three of the four indicators.

Figure 7: Odds ratios from logistic regression for four key indicators at 2nd follow up
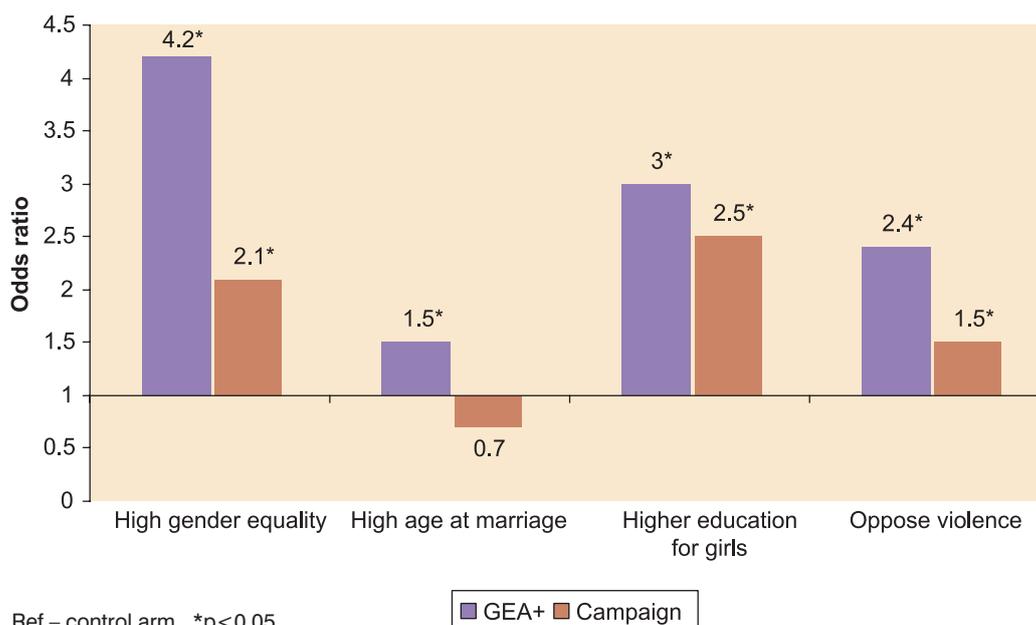
Ref – control arm, *p<0.05

Model controlled for age; sex; gender equality scores at baseline; working status of mother; and having TV, DVD/CD player and bicycle at home

Conclusions and Recommendations

The study finds that students in both intervention groups report more positive outcomes compared to those in the control group. But the data also clearly show that boys and girls in the GEA+ schools demonstrate greater positive changes compared to those in the campaign only schools, highlighting the value of the group education sessions. This finding is consistent with other research that shows GEA to be an effective methodology for bringing about attitudinal and behavioral changes (Verma, et al., 2008).

The outcome variables that demonstrate the greatest changes are clustered around appropriate roles for women and men and girls and boys. Other key attitudinal and behavioral changes are increased support for a higher age at marriage for girls, greater male involvement in household work, increased opposition to gender discrimination and reacting in a more positive way to violence. These changes reflect specific themes around which many of the sessions were organized, giving students a chance for discussion and reflection. The data on self-reported changes in behavior are particularly encouraging, suggesting that girls and especially boys are taking steps in their lives that reflect the aims of the GEMS program.

The effect of the interventions on violence is more difficult to tease out, given that there are both positive and negative findings. But the data do suggest that GEMS is laying the necessary groundwork for increasing awareness, building skills and changing behaviors around violence both inside and outside the school setting. The findings on how students are responding to violence in the GEA+ schools are clearly indicative of a positive shift.

The study demonstrates important changes after just one round of the intervention. Attitudes toward gender equality sharply improved after the first round, and were sustained at the end of the second round. Yet there is also added value in a second round of the intervention given increased support for a higher age at marriage for girls, greater self-efficacy in responding to sexual harassment and more positive responses to violence and discrimination.

The GEMS experience provides evidence of a useful and feasible methodology for creating discussion around gender equality within the school setting. The findings suggest that a methodology which involves students in self-reflection has the potential to make a positive difference in attitudes and behaviors. Schools, being spaces for learning, have a role beyond giving knowledge to also fostering support for gender equality and non-violence.

Recommendations

- Include and invest in group education activities as part of efforts by schools and educational institutions to change gender norms. Group education activities provide platforms for boys and girls to confront, challenge and ask questions about entrenched gender roles and relationships, contributing to more gender equitable attitudes and behaviors among students.

- Mobilize institutional support and long-term commitment to address violence and create more visible impact. This study shows that violence among both boys and girls is deeply rooted and normalized, but that a series of group sessions plus a campaign can set in motion a process in which students become more aware of their own and others' behaviors. In school settings, aggressive behaviors among boys in particular are often tolerated or ignored as they are considered natural. Yet schools have an important role to play in helping students distinguish between what is "playful" versus what is "violence" – an important prerequisite for ultimately reducing a range of behaviors harmful to girls and women as well as boys and men.

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SUCCESSS STORY

HULYA EKER
ANADOLU UNIVERSITY; ESKİSEHIR; TURKEY

I made my decision about my future profession when I was studying at secondary school. I was thinking about working in IT. Then, I decided to study at a vocational school, focussing on computers. In that period, computers were not popular and there was no computer education at vocational schools. Then, I decided to study electronics which was the only similar programme to IT. Day by day, I started loving electronics more and I feeling myself belong to this profession.

When I graduated from high school, I started to think that university education was unnecessary for me. Besides, some economic problems encouraged me to start the working life quickly.

I found a job and passed the exam at Anadolu University EMYO where I was hired as a technician. Accordingly, I improved my IT skills at the working place.

STUDYING A DEGREE IN DISTANCE EDUCATION SYSTEM

The place where I work was a university. I was thinking about the prestige of having a university degree and I was encouraged by people around me very much to go for a university degree. Then, in 1993, I decided to study at Anadolu University Open Education Faculty which was offering a university education while students can actively continue their professional life. I chose studying an undergraduate degree at Department of Labour Economics and Industrial Relations at Economics Faculty. After four years, I had a graduate degree which was something I was proud of. However, the degree did not have a direct contribution to my own job.

In order to advance in my profession, to upgrade my title and increase my salary, I had to study something related to electronics.

STUDYING AT A TECHNICAL DEPARTMENT IN DISTANCE EDUCATION

In 2002, people who were graduated from technical high schools had an opportunity to start for an associate degree in their field without any entrance exam. I could study evening education but it would be hard for me to follow the courses in the evenings as I was working full time. Then, in 2009, I decided to start evening education for an associate degree for 2 years. I made some research on how the system works and applied for the programme which accepts students without an entrance exam. During my research, I found out that electronics could be studied by distance education as well. This sounded like a very entertaining, flexible and advantageous education programme for me.

My first choice was Sakarya University as the city was near Eskisehir and the university was one of the first institutions in this system. I was allocated to Electronic Technology Programme at Adapazarı Vocational School. When I received the acceptance letter, I was nervous and happy as if I received an undergraduate programme offer.

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Meeting people who are in the same situation, supporting each other while preparing assignments and studying for exams, studying courses online, going to Sakarya for final exams were all great experiences. Moreover, making new friends at the student hotel, experiencing being a student at the canteen, campus garden and exam halls were amazing experiences too. It was definitely worth for all stress and tiredness. I was working hard and becoming successful. Sakarya became one of the cities I like very much. Still, I sometimes go to Sapanca for travelling.

As it had been quite long time ago that I gave up studying, I was a bit anxious at the beginning concerning how to find time to study, how to learn the course topics that I forgot long time ago. However, being awarded by honour degrees made me so happy as it was the result of my hardworking.

Would it be hard to study a technical programme like electronic technology, and would it bring in something for a student? I was thinking about these questions at the beginning but I forgot about it when I started the programme. The courses were the same like formal education curriculum. All topics were shared on the internet weekly and students were responsible of all topics before the exams. Preparing the assignments which were about each different course and sitting for midterm exams on the internet were very good preparations for the final exams. Besides, the time I spent at my office was accepted as a compulsory training which made things easier for me.

THE ADVANTAGES AND DISADVANTAGES OF DISTANCE EDUCATION FOR ME

Studying distance education is more expensive than formal education. If I did not have a job, it would be quite hard to pay for it. Graduating from the programme provided me a better status at the office and brought some financial advantages.

MY THOUGHTS ABOUT THE FUTURE

Now I would like to study an upper programme here or abroad provided that it does not make me tired and it is not expensive.

Hülya EKER, Anadolu University Communication Sciences Faculty, ESKİŞEHİR
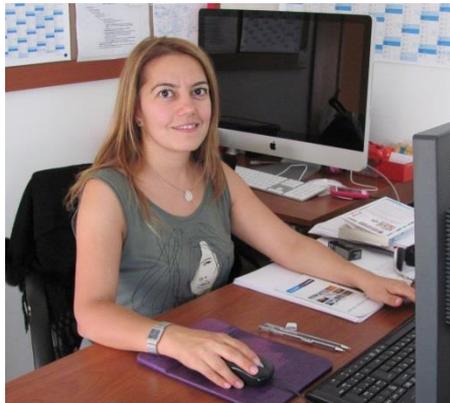
Hülya EKER was graduated from Eskişehir Yunusemre Technical High School. She worked as a technician at Anadolu University Eskişehir Vocational School between 1993 and 2000. She has been working as a technician at Anadolu University Communication Sciences Faculty since 2000. She graduated from Anadolu University Department of Labour Economics and Industrial Relations at Economics Faculty in 1997. Lastly, she completed Electronic Technology Programme at Adapazarı Vocational School at Sakarya University.

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