
MINIMIZING SOCIO-PSYCHOLOGICAL PROBLEMS ON ADMINISTRATION OF DISTANCE EDUCATION PROGRAMMES IN TERTIARY INSTITUTIONS.

Ugwoegbu Ifeanyi
Department of Adult Education
Nnamdi Azikiwe University, Awka, Anambra State, Nigeria
E-mail: ugwoegbuifeanyi@yahoo.com

ABSTRACT

The purpose of the study was to identify how group and guidance and counseling strategies can minimize socio-psychological problems on administration of distance education programmes in tertiary institutions in South East zone of Nigeria. The population was made up of 1904 administrators and lecturers from where a sample of 1551 respondents were selected. A 21 item questionnaire constituted the instrument for the study. Mean ratings were used to analyse the two research questions while t test and Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) for the four hypothesis. The findings of the study revealed that Group study and Guidance and Counseling strategies were capable of minimizing socio-psychological problems on administrators of distance education programmes. Based on the findings of the study, recommendations were made.

INTRODUCTION

Distance education programme refers to all educational programmes carried out in educational institutions which are not on full time basis (Baath 1992). Baath further noted that while part time education is being adopted in many countries in the world, there is certainly an even greater need for it in developing countries to enable them expand educational opportunities. The history of distance education programme in Nigeria dates back to 1887. This was the year London University was able to conduct its examination for distance education in Lagos Colony (Omolewa 1982). According to Omolewa, the need to participate in distance education came up with the feeling that education is the key to development. By 1925, some Nigerians like Eyo Ita and Hezekiah Olagunju Oladipo enrolled with the London Matriculation Examination on distance education programme.

Another attempt to boost distance education programme in Nigeria was through correspondence education, followed by radio which was initiated by the Nigerian Broadcasting Service. In 1960's, television education programme was introduced by the television station in Western Nigeria by the Awolowo Regime. This was to satisfy the need for formal education by the teeming education thirsty people. As observed by Ukeje (1993), apart from formal education, many Nigerians pursued correspondence courses and external studies. These programmes latter ultimately crystallized into the present day different types of distance education programmes like Sandwich, Continuing education, Weekend programmes, University of the air and other types of distance education programmes. Since many people in Nigeria who were eager to further their formal education have already been working, they could not afford to study on campus on full time basis. Distance education programmes would disrupt their life pattern and family roles. As a result, distance education programme was conceived in the 1960's as a ready

answer to the yearning need for furthering one's education and at the same time doing one's and family roles.

Establishing distance programme is one thing and the students benefiting fully from such a programme is another. Careful observation shows that inspite of the desire of the students to further their education, a good number of these students who register for distance education programme do not finish up (Ukeje 1993; Ugwoegbu 2003; Usun 2004; and Hossein 2004). Despite the apparent benefits of distance education programmes, one of the draw backs of distance education is the high rate of drop outs among its students. One possible reason for this poor performance as Omolewa (1982) noted was the issue of attendance at study centers by students. Another problem that faced the students was lack of face to face teaching. Omolewa was of the opinion that there was however some striking correlations between performance and face-to-face teaching in the examination. Hosseni (2004) observed that the problem of inequality between one student and another is greater in distance education. This is because there are inequalities in finance, educational background, and differences in age and in family, work and other commitments. According to Usun (2004), the problem of students' loneliness is one of the greatest draw backs in distance education programme. Anowor (2001), Observed that distance education programmes are highly individualistic and therefore participants lack the advantage of interacting with other students, Usun further observed that one major factor that affects the progress and achievement of students in learning is lack of contact with each other. Ani (2003) stated that informal student discussions and classroom debates have always been important to students. There is always an attempt for students to excel in the presence of their peers, this desire stimulate many students to greater achievement.

The regular campus system gives chances for regular counseling of students. Usun (2004), alluded that regular counselling of students is lacking in distance education programmes. Students of distance education programmes have problems in having counselors to consult. As a result, distance education students can easily drop out because they do not have people to help them.

Goel and Goel (2002) realized that due to continuous increase in student population, and scarcity of infrastructure, financial, physical and personnel resources, there occur some inherent and external problems in imparting formal education and training. It is distance education that, through the latest technology, can overcome these problems and limitations owing to its inherent potentialities. Despite these, students of distance education have a lot of psychological problems facing them. Goel and Goel (2002) observed that distant learners in isolation, away from their institutions, teachers and fellow learners. Sherry (2004) observed that distance education learners lack interaction among themselves. He noted that interaction is an important part of all forms of learning. Interaction legitimizes part time education. He noted that there are different forms of interaction:-

- i. Learner-content interaction
- ii. Learner-teacher interaction
- iii. Learner-learner interaction

iv. Learner-technology interaction.

He noted that lack of these interactions constitute a lot of psychological problems to students.

STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

Distance education has come to be an accepted type of education espoused by many Nigerians (Anowor 2001). Despite the apparent benefits of distance education, one of the draw backs of the system is the high rate of drop out among its students (Ukeje, 1992). As a result, one starts to wonder what could have been the reasons for high attrition rate in distance education programme despite the fact that it is a system expected to help to improve the educational activities of the country. It is therefore not clear whether the problems of distance education programme are caused by social, economic, psychological set-up of the programme. On the other hand, one is not quite sure if the socio-psychological problems on the administration of distance education programme are caused by lack of the establishment of study groups, guidance and counselling units. This study will try to find out the extent study group and guidance and counseling factors can help as strategies in improving the administration of distance education programmes.

Research Questions

The following research questions guided this study: to what extent

1. do administrators and lecturers perceive the use of study group strategy in minimizing socio-psychological problems on the administration of distance education programmes in tertiary institutions.
2. do administrators and lecturers perceive the use of guidance and counseling strategy in minimizing socio-psychological problems on the administration of distance education programmes in tertiary institutions.

Hypotheses for the Study

The following four null hypotheses were tested at the 0.05 level of significance:

1. There is no significant difference between male and female respondents on their mean ratings for the use of study group strategy in minimizing socio-psychological problems on administration of distance education programmes in tertiary institutions.
2. There is no significant difference between male and female respondents on their mean ratings of guidance and counseling strategy in minimizing socio-psychological problems on administration of distance education programmes in tertiary institutions.
3. There is no significant difference between administrators and lecturers on their mean rating of study group strategy in minimizing socio-psychological problems on administration of distance education programmes in tertiary institutions.
4. There is no significant difference between administrators and lecturers on their mean ratings of guidance and counseling strategy in minimizing socio-

psychological problems on administration of distance education programmes in tertiary institutions.

METHODOLOGY

The study was a descriptive survey carried out in ten tertiary institutions carrying out distance education programmes in South-East states of Nigeria. The population comprised all the administrators (Directors, coordinators and Heads of Departments) and all lecturers lecturing distance education students which numbered 1904 respondents. A sample of 1554 respondents were selected from the population using proportionate stratified random sampling. The stratification was based on institutions.

The instrument used for data collection was a questionnaire made up of 21 items. Ten items were for group study strategy while II for guidance and counseling strategy. The instrument was subjected to a Split half method of reliability based on odd and even numbers. Pearson Product Moment Correlation Coefficient was used for analysis. The correlation coefficient of reliability obtained were 0.80 for study Group strategy and 0.86 for Guidance and counseling strategy. These figures represented high reliability levels. This result proved that the instrument has high level of correlation coefficient and reliability for this study. Ten research assistants who were instructed on how to give out questionnaires were used to administer copies of the questionnaire. Out of the 1554 copies of questionnaires given out, 1524 copies were collected and used for analysis. The number of the copies of questionnaire collected amounted to 98 percent of those given out. Mean score was used to analyze the data collected. A mean score ranging from 3.50 and above was considered high and accepted for each item. Then any item with mean score less than 3.50 was rejected. For the sections in the instrument to be accepted or rejected, the subject aggregate scores were used. This criterion of judgment is based on the modified 5 point Likert type scale, which was used to rate the responses of the participants. Four Null hypotheses were tested at the 0.05 level of significance. Hypothesis 1 and 2 were tested using t-test while null hypothesis 3 and 4 were tested using analysis of variance (ANOVA).

Research Question One

To what extent will study group strategy help in minimizing socio-psychological problems on the administration of distance education programmes in tertiary institutions?

Table I

Range of Scores, Frequency, Percentages and Overall mean on the study group strategy for minimizing socio-psychological problems.

Scores	Freq.	%	Overall mean	Remark
10 – 30	34	2.20		Rejected the Strategy
31-50	1490	97.80		Accepted the Strategy
Total	1524	100	40.45	The strategy is Accepted.

Table 1 shows that 34 (2.20%) of the respondents scored between 10 – 30 marks which indicates that they rejected study group as a strategy that could help in minimizing socio-psychological problems on the administration of distance education programme. While 1490 (97.80%) of the respondents who scored between 31 to 50 points accepted the strategy as being capable of helping minimizing the problems.

However, with the overall mean score of 40.45, the use of study group was accepted as a good strategy for minimizing the socio-psychological problems on the administration of distance education in tertiary institutions.

Research Question Two

To what extent will Guidance and Counseling strategy help in minimizing socio-psychological problems on the administration of distance education programmes in tertiary institutions?

Table 2

Range of Scores, Frequencies, Percentages and Overall mean score on Guidance and Counseling strategy for minimizing socio-psychological problems.

Scores	Freq.	%	Overall mean	Remark
14-42	54	3.50		Rejected the Strategy
43-70	1470	96.50		Accepted the Strategy
Total	1524	100	54.47	The strategy is Accepted.

In table 2 it was observed that 54 (3.50%) of the subjects rejected the use of guidance and counseling strategy as a strategy to minimizing the socio-psychological problems of the administration of distance education programmes in tertiary institutions by scoring between 14 and 42 point. On the other hand, 1470 (96.50%) of the subjects accepted the strategy as being capable of minimizing the socio-psychological problems by scoring between 43 – 70. However, the over all mean score of 54.47 indicates that guidance and counseling as a strategy is believed to be useful in minimizing the socio-psychological problems.

Testing the Null Hypotheses

Null Hypothesis 1. There is no significant difference in the mean scores of male and female respondents on the study group strategy in minimizing socio-psychological problems on administration of distance education programme in tertiary institutions.

Table 3

t-test on the mean scores of the subjects based on gender on the use of study group strategy in minimizing the problem.

Source of Variation	N	X	Sd	Df	Cal. T	Crit. T	P>0.05
Male	845	39.75	4.51	11522	6.59	1.96	0.05
Male	679	41.31	4.66				

Table 6 showed that at 0.05 level of significance and 1522 df, the calculated t of 6.59 was greater than the critical t of 1.96. Therefore, the first all hypothesis was rejected. Then the researcher concluded that the mean scores of male and female respondents differed significantly on the study group strategy help, in minimizing the problem.

Null Hypothesis Two

There is no significant difference in the mean scores of male and female students on the help of guidance and counseling strategy in minimizing socio-psychological problems on the administration of distance education programmes in tertiary institutions.

Table 4
t-test on the mean scores of male and female subjects based on guidance and counseling strategy in minimizing the problem.

Source of Variation	N	X	Sd	Df	Cal.t	Crit. T	P>0.05
Male	845	53.82	5.26	1522	5.49	1.96	0.05
Female	679	55.28	5.04				

In table 7, it was discovered that at 0.05 level of significance and 1522 df, the calculated t of 5.49 is greater than the critical 1 of 1.96. Therefore, the second null hypothesis is rejected. The researcher concluded that there is significant difference in the mean scores of male and female subjects on using guidance and counseling strategy in minimizing the problems.

Null Hypothesis 3

There is no significant difference in the mean scores of Directors/Co-ordinators, HODs and Lecturers on the use of study group strategy in minimizing socio-psychological problems on administration of distance education programmes in tertiary institutions.

Table 5
ANOVA on the Mean Scores of respondents on study group strategy.

Source of Variation	Ss	Df	Ms	Cal. T	Crit. F	P>0.05
Between groups	1373.05	2	686.53	33.27	3.00	0.05
Within groups	313387.43	1521	20.64			
Total	32760.48	1523	3.01			

In table 10, it was observed that at 0.05 level of significance, on 2 df numerator and 1521 denominator, the calculated F of 33.27 was greater than the critical F of 3.00. Therefore, the fifth null hypothesis was rejected. The researcher concluded that the mean scores of subjects on the use of study group in minimizing the problem differ significantly due to their status.

Null Hypotheses 4

The mean scores of the respondents on the use of guidance and counseling strategy in minimizing socio-psychological problems on the administration of distance education programmes in tertiary institutions will not differ significantly due to their status.

Table 6
ANOVA on the mean scores of the respondents based on status on the use of guidance and counseling strategy in minimizing the problems.

Source of Variation	Ss	Df	Ms	Cal. T	Crit. F	P>0.05
Between groups	207.63	2	103.81			
Within groups	41101.60	1521	27.02			
Total	41309.23	1523	3.01	3.84	3.00	0.05

Table 6 Reveal that a 0.05 level of significance on 2 df nominator and 1521 df denominator, the calculated F f 3.84 was greater than the critical F of 3.00.

Therefore the sixth null hypothesis was rejected. The researcher concluded that, there was significant difference with the mean scores of Director/Coordinators, HODs and Lecturers on the use of guidance and counseling strategy in minimizing socio-psychological problems.

Discussion of the Findings

The findings were discussed under the following subheadings: Study Group strategy, Guidance and Counselling strategy. Answer to the question on whether study group strategy will help in minimizing socio-psychological problems on the administration of distance education programmes in tertiary showed that it will. It was discovered that 1490 representing 97.80 percent of the sample subjects accepted the strategy as being capable of minimizing socio-psychological problems they encounter. The present finding agrees with the claims of Harlow and Garlow (1970) who stated that distance educations students who are victims of isolation problems can have their socio-psychological problem of isolation minimized by creating study groups. This they said will make the students come together, interact and exchange ideas. When this has taken place the administrators of distance education will then have less work to do on the students.

Again, study group as a strategy for minimizing socio-psychological problems discovered in this study was also in line with Ozulu’s view (1997) when he said that students who would have dropped out of the distance education will be made to stay back through study group strategy. He said that this would enhance the co-ordinating work and make the lecturers’ work easy. When adults are made to study in groups, they feel relaxed and develop more sense of responsibility (Houle 1976).

Also, as gender of the respondents has no significant influence on their view on the use of study group strategy in his study it then implies that the strategy was acceptable to majority of the subjects irrespective of their gender. Nevertheless, when the mean scores of these respondents were placed according to their work status, it was discovered that they differed significantly, implying that the directors, heads of departments and lecturers differed in their belief of the usage of study group strategy. This is so because they differ in the roles they perform in the programme as administrators (Ozulu, 1997).

A question on whether guidance and counselling strategy will help in minimizing the socio-psychological problems in the administration of distance education programmes. It was discovered that 1470 (96.50%) of the subjects used in the study accepted the strategy as being capable of minimizing the problem. This present studying agreed with the

observation of Ogili (2001) who said that the problems of anxiety, lack of self-confidence, inferiority feelings and lack of support services experienced by the distance education students can be minimized by employing guidance counselors to render necessary guidance and counseling services to the students.

Also, the present finding had statistical backing to the claims of Hossein (2004) who stressed that guidance and counseling strategy will also help the distance education students overcome and minimize the level of the fear of the unknown and anxiety. By implication, when these problems are minimized in the students through guidance and counseling strategy, the administrative work will be less problematic socio-psychologically. The opinion of the subjects on the usefulness of guidance and counseling strategy in minimizing the socio-psychological problems on the administration of distance education programmes was significantly influenced by the gender and status of the respondents.

CONCLUSION

From the discussion of the findings, the researcher made the following conclusions:

1. Study group strategy is capable of minimizing the socio-psychological problems of the administration of distance education programmes in tertiary institutions.
2. Guidance and counseling strategy is capable of reducing the socio-psychological problems of administration of distance education programmes in tertiary institutions.

Recommendations of the Study

On the basis of the findings and the implications of this study, the researcher has proffered the following recommendations:

1. The administrators in the distance education programmes should encourage and assist the students organize functional study groups amongst them to enable them interact for their well being.
2. The distance education students should be guided to develop their own e-mail addresses and encouraged to be using internet facilities to enable them interact more and more with both their lecturers, administrators and fellow students.
3. Guidance counselors should be employed to work with the distance education students to provide them with the very much needed counseling services.

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