

Attitude of IGNOU Learners Towards Online Counselling Sessions (During and post Pandemic)

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During the COVID-19 outbreak all across the world, everyone was is taking all precautionary and preventive measures to combat this pandemic. All face to face mode Colleges/schools/Universities had been shut down to contain the spread of this novel virus. It was expected that the shutdown would impact the learning process to a great extent. But, at this crucial point of time, the open university especially IGNOU with the help of ICT had arranged and shared several online links which was accessed by students, faculties, academicians and researchers for audio, video and text content. The wave and ideology to provide student support services through ICT interventional not only continued till date but also strengthened with blended

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mode of learning in present of time. In this paper researcher will find out the attitude of IGNOU learner's during & post Pandemic towards online counseling sessions. During pandemic online sessions was the need of hours and learner's of IGNOU enjoyed the online counseling sessions and got benefitted. But after the pandemic when normal situation arrived, learners may expecting face to face counseling.

[**Keywords :** Attitude, IGNOU learners, Online counselling sessions, Pandemic]

1. Introduction

IGNOU is providing education to all segments of society by establishment of Study Centre in PG Colleges, Universities and rural and backward Area. IGNOU was started with slogan “reach to unreached” with two academic Programme namely Diploma in Management and Certificate in Computer with near about 2000 enrolled learners, but presently near about 4.5 million learners are enrolled in different 240 Academic programme of IGNOU with the help of 21 Schools of Studies and a strong network of 68 Regional Centres located all over India, more than 2000 Learner Support Centres and 53 overseas centres and IGNOU providing good and quality education not only to common man but is reaching to all segment of society i.e teachers, working people, disabled persons, people residing in remote areas and working and house hold women etc. IGNOU is playing a vital role for teachers for their upliftment with professional, educational and personal growth by providing various in service programmes.

Interventions taken by IGNOU to strengthen the support services during lockdown due to COVID-19 :

- ▶▶ In the current emerging crisis due to COVID-19, the Open and Distance Learning (ODL) system is suitably placed because of its pedagogy having greater weightage of Self Learning Material (SLM) in its teaching learning process.
- ▶▶ In more than 90 percent programmes of the university face to face academic counselling component is around 10 percent of overall hours devoted for the learning.
- ▶▶ In order to provide academic support to its learner's university, it quickly adopted various tools of Information and Communication Technology (ICT) to reach out to its learners to provide them alternative to the face to face academic counselling, which the university organizes at its LSCs.

- ▶▶ The video conferencing ICT applications like Google Meet, Zoom, Microsoft Team were used extensively in the last one month to connect faculty, academic counselors and learners. Besides this university has also organized a number of facebook live sessions involving faculty directly from its head quarter in New Delhi to further supplement the academic support to its learners.
- ▶▶ Further university has allowed learners to submit a scanned copy of the assignments (which has around 30%weightage in the overall assessment for any course) through email to further support the learners which otherwise need to be submitted by hand at the LSCs. These assignments will also be evaluated online by academic counselors.

All above activities have been conducted by IGNOU through ICT intervention during lockdown due to pandemic COVID-19. The RCs are adopting online method for providing learner support service by advising them to utilize online method to handle various student queries.

- ▶▶ The Regional Director has assigned works relating to Finance & Accounts, student queries, communication with LSCs etc to every staff of the Regional Centre to work from home.
- ▶▶ Student queries are being replied via email, IGRAM, phone and Facebook.
- ▶▶ Uploading E-learning materials for every programme and uploading links for self learning materials from e-Gyankosh.
- ▶▶ Updating our Regional Website regularly.
- ▶▶ Utilizing the means of FaceBook to update various information.
- ▶▶ Email ID has been created assignment<rcname>@gmail.com. to submit scanned copy of hand written assignments by the learners. A circular in this regard has also been uploaded in Regional Centre Websites
- ▶▶ SMS has also been sent to all the learners regarding submission of scanned assignment in the dedicated email ID and also sent the said information to all the coordinators.

The globalization of higher education, particularly through the distance mode of delivery, has given an altogether different perspective to the cross border delivery of IGNOU's academic programmes in various countries. Because of diversity of society,

work conditions and interests demand of need based programme has been aroused from long time. Indira Gandhi National Open University (IGNOU) has been launching different need based academic programme. These programme have been developed as per the need and requirement of local community.

It is well established fact the education in general and higher education in particular is an effective instrument of social & economic transformation. It is the most important source of human resource development all over the world.

2. Review of related Literature

Survey of related literature is an essential pre-requisite to actual planning and execution of any research project. It is like surveying the area and judging the distance first and then to formulate a plan. It helps the researcher in avoiding duplication on the one hand, and in getting benefit from similar study on the respect of method adopted and devices used in the collection of data and their organization and interpretation

2.1 Research in Abroad

C. Villiedi (2003) : Studied on Knowledge, Attitude Perception and Expectations (KAPE) of the Women Learners of University of Madras. The survey method was selected to collect the research information for the study. Cluster sampling method was used. In the first stage one contact seminar center was chosen for collection of data.

David Olugbenga Ojo and Felix Kayode Olakulehin (2006) : Studied the Attitudes and Perceptions of Students towards Open and Distance Learning in Nigeria. The samples for this study comprised 120 distant learning students randomly selected from study centres located at the six geo-political zones in Nigeria. A structured questionnaire was used as research instrument and find out that ODL learners in Nigeria are favorably disposed to Open and Distance Learning institutions.

Helen Khoo Chooi Sim, Hanafi Atan and Rozhan M. Idrus (2006) : Studied the factors that contribute to satisfaction regarding the quality of the learner support system. In this study five-point Likert scale questionnaire was used as research instrument. The population of this study involved students registered at the School of Distance Education and stratified sampling method was used. The

factorial analysis was conducted to see the inter-relationship amongst the 16 dimensions identified in the study.

Femi A. Adeoye and Ibrahim O. Salawu (2010) : Studied to identify the reasons why learners opted for the distance learning degree of National Open University of Nigeria (NOUN) and their perception of the programme.

2.2 Research in India

Prabir K. Biswas (1999) : studies the Awareness, Interest and Motivation of fresher in IGNOU. The findings of the study were that more and more young and unemployed learner's are taking admission at IGNOU who have very little knowledge about open learning system. These learners need more useful re-admission guidance and counselling for proper selection of programme. Most of them are motivated to join their specific programme for accelerating educational clarification and job.

C. R. K. Murthy (2004) : Studied components involved in delivery of programme, learners feedback on various aspects including Face-to-face etc. The finding of the research was; the learners' perception about the PGDDE programme is positive and its utility to their society is highly recognized by them.

R. K. Srivastava and A. Jagriti (2005) : studied the personal problems and their solution of the distance learners. For this purpose he selected 105 distance learners and 08 teachers. Personal problems included applying for admission, submission of Exam form and preparation for exams remain from the beginning till obtaining mark sheet. The findings of the study are as under :

- Teachers also observed that learners face serious problems on account of exam procedure.
- Teachers suggested establishment of a cell for the solution of problems learners.

S. Raja Rao (2008) : studied three study centres of Dr. B. R. Ambedkar Open University (BRAOU) from two districts of Andhra Pradesh to find out the access of media infrastructure at homes of the distance learners and awareness of media support services and infrastructure at the study centres. The findings of the study were as under :

Access of media infrastructure at learners' homes : new technologies are less accessible to the respondents than the old technologies like radio and tape recorder.

Awareness of media support services of the university : majority of the respondents were aware that Dr. B.R. Ambedkar Open University uses television and radio for teaching its students.

Manashee Gogoi and Mukut Hazarika (2009) : studied Awareness and Attitude of the college students at first degree level in the colleges under Dibrugarh University towards open and distance learning. The findings of the study were as under :

- There exists a significant difference between the male & the female and urban and rural as far as their awareness are concerned.
- There is no significant difference between the male and the female college student as far as their attitude is concerned.

Ashok K. Gaba and S. S. Sethy (2010) : Studies the Case of Indira Gandhi National Open University to find out the learners' Perception towards Information and Communication Technologies, the awareness towards online/distance learning programmes, accessibility to on-line programmes, level of skills for study through online and learners' preference for the support services through ICTs. The findings of the study were as under :

- Majority of the respondents of all the programmes were having basic knowledge of ICT in general and computer skill in particular before registration with IGNOU. They were also having experience in using Internet for about 1 to 2 years.
- Learners had given their preference to receive support services through Audio/ Video and CDs/DVDs followed by Online/e-Learning/Web based programmes.
- More than 90% of IGNOU's learners of respondents were having mobile phones followed by access to FM Radio (80%), TV with Cable, DTH and Gyan Darshan on it (77%), MP3 player (70%), Desktop Computer (67%), TV without cable connection (66%), telephone landline (63%), audio, video, CD/DVD player (55%), and Desktop with Internet facility (53%). About one fourth learners of all the programmes were having the accessibility of laptop and laptop with internet facility
- Majority of the respondents (about 70%) of B.Sc and BCA programmes were aware about the web pages of IGNOU and its Regional Centres' in comparison to rest of the respondents of other programmes.

2.3 Conclusion of Review of related Literature

The researcher visited to the various online resources in the field of Open & Distance learning. The researcher also referred to RC, Library to study the literature available in the relevant field. Researcher has also discussed the topic with the Academics working in the field of ODL and found the above mentioned studies relevant to the present studies. From the above referred studies, it is found most of the studies conducted in abroad & in India pertains to one or the other aspect of Learner awareness but none of the study was conducted on the objectives of this present study.

3. Significance of the Study

Distance Education-Programmes are being offered with help of a plethora of interactive media-printed material (SLMs), Audio-Video programmes, Teleconferences internet, Academic Counselling Assignments, Face-to -Face workshops, project work, practical works etc. However, these technologies may influence learning in unanticipated way, if used without understanding the implications for student learning. One can find a number of empirical validations, pertaining to student reactions or perceptions to Distance Education, from several perspectives. Similarly Comparative, effectiveness, of distance education and traditional educational system has also been studied in term of several variables.

4. Objectives of the Study

Based on area of study i.e The Study of Attitude of IGNOU Learners Towards Online Counselling Sessions (During and Post Pandemic),the following objectives are formulated for study :

- To find out the attitude of IGNOU learners towards online counselling sessions during pandemic.
- To find out the attitude of IGNOU learners towards online counselling sessions post pandemic.

5. Operational Definations of the Terms

Online Councelling Sessions : “Education is a virtue, it stays with an individual throughout their life” has been told by elders. But the means for the virtue is on the cross road across the globe due to the corona pandemic. In view of the COVID-19 outbreak all across the world, All face to face mode Colleges/schools/

Universities have been shut down to contain the spread of corona virus. The lockdown due to COVID 19 has put the government on the tight rope leading the academic administrators in the country to plan a series of activities by the concerned ministry and various regulators including UGC, IGNOU, CBSE, NCERT, NIOS etc.

Attitude : The opinions, tendency or felling of person individual or a human group towards objects or a system. For example- what is the opinion of students, parents and society towards distance education system?

The Attitude is predisposition or a tendency to respond positively or negatively towards a certain idea, object, person, or situation. Attitude influences an individual's choice of action, and responses to challenges, incentives, and rewards (together called stimuli).

6. Research Methodology

In order to study the Learner attitude towards the online counselling sessions in Open & Distance Learning during and post pandemic, the investigator has collected the information through a self made questionnaire. The self made questionnaire was made on different parameters of student support services, which were provided to the learners through online /digital mode during pandemic like counselling, submission of assignment and projects etc. has been included in the questionnaire. The questionnaire was prepared on five point rating scale i.s Strongly Agree, Agree, Neutral, Disagree and Strongly Disagree. The questionnaire were sent to the learners who are already enrolled in M.A. (EDU) programmes of IGNOU under IGNOU Regional Centre Noida. The Questionnaire was prepared on Google form and link was created. The link of questionnaire was shared with RC Noida with a request to sent to all M.A. (Edu) learners. The Regional Director RC Noida taken proactive support to the researcher and sent email to all the M.A.Edu Learners enrolled under RC Noida.

Population : Under the jurisdiction of IGNOU-Regional Centre, Noida, 257 learners are enrolled in the session Jan 2019, July 2019, Jan 2020 and July 2020 in M.A(Edu) Programme at different Study Centres. In this case, all the learners (i.e. 257) enrolled at IGNOU-Regional Centre, Noida has been taken as Population.

Sampling : Due to time & resource constraints, the investigator has sent the link of the questionnaire to M.A.(Edu) Learner with the help of Regional centre, Noida through email and SMS. Only 71 learners have filled the questionnaire online as sample for this study.

Table-1 : Profile of Learner Selected as Sample

Sr. No.	Head	Category	Frequency	Percentage
1.	Gender	Male	50	70.4
		female	21	29.6
2.	Residence	Urban	29	40.8
		Rural	42	59.2
3.	Educational Group	Science	34	47.9
		Arts	37	52.1

Description of Tool : The investigator has designed a questionnaire to collect the information from learners on their personal information as well on their attitude about SSC, Use of ICT Tools & Online resources. The draft questionnaire was distributed to the Academics at the IGNOU-Regional Centre, Noida & Local Study Centre. It was also administered to some learners to find out whether the questions are comprehended by them easily. The suggestions & modifications received were incorporated into the Questionnaire.

The questionnaire was divided into Two (02) parts :

Part-A : consists of 04 question about their Programme, Sex, Residence status, Educational group under study questionnaire and purpose of Study.

Part-B : This part consists of Ten (10) Questions. It consists of ten questions to test the attitude level of M.A.Edu learners towards student support services during pandemic.

Delimitation of the Study : The Study will be delimited to the student enrolled in M.A (Edu) Programme under Noida Regional Centre sessions of year 2020 (Jan 2020 and July 2020) only.

7. Analysis and Interpretation of Data

The data collected through the Questionnaire having 10 questions on different aspects of the online counselling sessions. The Significance at the level 0.01 has been shown by (*), significance at

the level 0.05 has been shown by (**) and No significant Difference has been shown by (***). The Critical Value at the Significance level 0.01 is 2.58 and the Critical value at significance level 0.05 is 1.96. The data collected is being analyzed and interpreted in the light of the set objective is as follow :

Objective 1 : *To find out the attitude of IGNOU learners towards online counselling during pandemic.*

Based upon the above objective, the data were collected about the following 10 statements through a self made questionnaire :

S-1 : Prefer to attend the online counselling sessions conducted through digital mode.

S-2 : Comfortable with the counselling through GoogleMeet/ Zoom/ Webex as students can interact with their teacher.

S-3 : Like to attend the lecture sessions through YouTube / Facebook live

S-4 : In live session of YouTube/ Facebook, interactions through Chats with the academic counsellors were helpful

S-5 : In live session of YouTube/Facebook, interactions through Chats with the academic counsellors were helpful.

S-6 : The Online Counselling sessions were interactive and informative for the learners.

S-7 : The Regional Centres and Study Centres are able to give information on different academic activities through websites/ Facebook/whatsapp/ email/ Twitter/Instagrametc.

S-8 : The schedule for online counselling sessions was provided well in advance.

S-9 : The information pertaining to submission of projects/ assignments/exam form etc. Were also shared during online counselling/ chat box.

S-10 : It was easy to excess the web link given by the University to attend the online counselling sessions.

Responses of the selected sample are analyzed in table-2 on next page. Reading of data contained in this table reveal the following facts :

1. Data on **S-1** show that 43.60% (Strongly Agreed - 19.70 + Agreed - 23.90) Learners of IGNOU were more or less agreed, 25.40% were neutral and only 31.00% Learners of IGNOU were

found more or less disagreed with the statement that Prefer to attend the online counselling sessions conducted through digital mode.

Table-2 : Learner's Attitude towards Online Counselling Sessions during Pandemic

statement	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
S-1	19.7	23.9	25.4	22.5	8.5
S-2	16.9	31.0	25.4	14.1	12.6
S-3	18.3	23.9	31.0	14.1	12.7
S-4	23.9	28.2	23.9	12.7	11.3
S-5	21.1	33.9	23.9	12.6	8.5
S-6	22.5	28.2	22.5	16.9	9.9
S-7	18.3	31.0	22.5	16.9	11.3
S-8	21.1	31.0	26.7	11.3	9.9
S-9	23.9	33.8	19.7	14.1	8.5
S-10	31.0	35.2	21.1	7.0	5.6

- Responses on **S-2** clearly show that 47.90% (Strongly Agreed - 16.90 + Agreed - 31.0) Learners of IGNOU were more or less agreed, 25.40% were neutral and only 26.70% Learners of IGNOU were found more or less disagreed with the statement that Comfortable with the counselling through GoogleMeet/ Zoom/Webex as students can interact with their teacher.
- Data about **S-3** clearly show that 42.20% (Strongly Agreed -18.30 + Agreed - 23.90) Learners of IGNOU were more or less agreed, 31.0% were neutral and only 26.80% Learners of IGNOU were found more or less disagreed with the statement that Like to attend the lecture sessions through YouTube/Facebook live.
- Responses on **S-4** clearly show that 52.10% (Strongly Agreed - 23.90 + Agreed - 28.20) Learners of IGNOU were more or less agreed, 23.90% were neutral and only 24.0% Learners of IGNOU were found more or less disagreed with the statement that In live session of YouTube/Facebook, interactions through Chats with the academic counsellors were helpful.

5. As regards **S-5**, data clearly show that 55.00% (Strongly Agreed - 21.10 + Agreed - 33.90) Learners of IGNOU were more or less agreed, 23.90% were neutral and only 21.10% Learners of IGNOU were found more or less disagreed with the statement that Online counselling gives the opportunity to have interactions with IGNOU faculty (HQ) besides Counsellors (at Study Centre).
6. It is clear from the responses on **S-6** that 50.70% (Strongly Agreed - 22.50 + Agreed - 28.2) Learners of IGNOU were more or less agreed, 22.50% were neutral and only 26.80% Learners of IGNOU were found more or less disagreed with the statement that The Online Counselling sessions were interactive and informative for the learners. The graphical diagram is given below:
7. It is evident from the responses of the sample on **S-7** that 49.30% (Strongly Agreed - 18.30 + Agreed - 31.00) Learners of IGNOU were more or less agreed, 22.50% were neutral and only 28.20% Learners of IGNOU were found more or less disagreed with the statement that The Regional Centres and Study Centres are able to give information on different academic activities through websites/Facebook/whatsapp/ email/Twitter/Instagram etc.
8. Data on **S-8** clearly show that 52.10% (Strongly Agreed - 21.10 + Agreed - 31.00) Learners of IGNOU were more or less agreed, 26.70% were neutral and only 21.20% Learners of IGNOU were found more or less disagreed with the statement that The schedule for online counselling sessions was provided well in advance.
9. It is clearly evident from responses on **S-9** that 57.70% (Strongly Agreed - 23.90 + Agreed - 33.80) Learners of IGNOU were more or less agreed, 19.70% were neutral and only 22.60% Learners of IGNOU were found more or less disagreed with the statement that The information pertaining to submission of projects/ assignments/exam form etc. Were also shared during online counselling/chat box.
10. Responses on **S-10** clearly show that 66.20% (Strongly Agreed - 31.00 + Agreed - 35.20) Learners of IGNOU were more or less agreed, 21.10% were neutral and only 12.60% Learners of IGNOU were found more or less disagreed with the statement

that It was easy to excess the web link given by the University to attend the online counselling sessions.

Objective 2 : *To find out the attitude of IGNOU learners towards online counselling post pandemic.*

Based on the data collected through a self made questionnaire about same 10 statements may also be analyzed in different point of view with the help of table- 3, which is presented again in different prospective i.e analyzing the percentage of sample which was more or less disagree with the online academic counselling even in pandemic as they were usual with face to face counselling and they may always prefer to the face to face counselling :

Table-3 : Learner's Attitude towards Online Counselling Sessions Post Pandemic

statement	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Disagree-ment level
S-1	19.7	23.9	25.4	22.5	8.5	56.4
S-2	16.9	31.0	25.4	14.1	12.6	52.1
S-3	18.3	23.9	31.0	14.1	12.7	57.8
S-4	23.9	28.2	23.9	12.7	11.3	47.9
S-5	21.1	33.9	23.9	12.6	8.5	45
S-6	22.5	28.2	22.5	16.9	9.9	49.3
S-7	18.3	31.0	22.5	16.9	11.3	50.7
S-8	21.1	31.0	26.7	11.3	9.9	47.9
S-9	23.9	33.8	19.7	14.1	8.5	42.3
S-10	31.0	35.2	21.1	7.0	5.6	33.7

Analysis of the data contained in the table above shows the following facts :

1. Responses on **S-1** show that 56.4% learners of IGNOU were found more or less disagreed to attend the online counselling sessions conducted through digital mode.
2. As regards **S-2**, data reveal that 52.1% learners of IGNOU were found more or less disagreed that comfortable with the counselling through GoogleMeet/ Zoom/Webex as students can interact with their teacher.

3. Responses on **S-3** clearly show that 57.8% learners of IGNOU were found more or less disagreed that like attending the lecture sessions through YouTube/Facebook live.
4. It is clearly evident from the responses on S-4 that 47.9 learners of IGNOU were found more or less disagreed that In live session of YouTube/Facebook, interactions through chats with the academic counsellors were helpful.
5. As regards **S-5**, data clearly show that 45% learners of IGNOU were found more or less disagreed that online counselling gives the opportunity to have interactions with IGNOU faculty (HQ) besides counsellors (at Study Centre).
6. It is clear from the responses on **S-6** that 49.3 learners of IGNOU were found more or less disagreed that the online counselling sessions were interactive and informative for the learners.
7. It is evident from the responses of the sample on **S-7** that 50.7% learners of IGNOU were found more or less disagreed that The Regional Centres and Study Centres are able to give information on different academic activities through websites/ Facebook/whatsapp/ email /Twitter/Instagram etc.
8. Data on **S-8** clearly show that 47.9 learners of IGNOU were found more or less disagreed that The schedule for online counselling sessions was provided well in advance.
9. It is clearly evident from responses on **S-9** that 42.3 learners of IGNOU were found more or less disagreed that The information pertaining to submission of projects/assignments/ exam form etc. were also shared during online counselling/chat box.
10. Responses on **S-10** clearly show that 33.7 learners of IGNOU were found more or less disagreed that It was easy to excess the web link given by the university to attend the online counselling sessions.

8. Conclusion

The output of study revealed that during the pandemic online sessions was the need of hours and learner's of IGNOU enjoyed the online counselling sessions and got benefitted. But after the pandemic when normal situation arrived, learners are expecting face to face counselling also.

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