



## **Determining the Attitudinal Disposition of Prospective Tertiary Admission seekers towards Open Distance Learning in Nigeria: Delta North in Perspective**

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### **Abstract**

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Open Distance Learning (ODL) has gained prominence and recognition in Nigeria because of its accessibility, flexibility and adaptability. It is an academic window that allows prospective tertiary admission seekers to actualize their educational interests and aspirations. The study attempted a determination of the attitudinal disposition of prospective tertiary admission seekers towards open distance learning in Nigeria: a case study of Delta North Senatorial District of Delta State. One research question and two hypotheses guided the study. The descriptive design was adopted for the study. The population of the study comprised of all potential tertiary admission seekers in Delta North Senatorial District of Delta State and the sample of the study comprised of 672 respondents (378 males and 294 females). The researcher employed a multi-stage sampling procedure. The instrument used for the study was a questionnaire titled: Attitudinal Disposition Inventory Questionnaire (ADIQ). The data collected were collated, coded and analysed using the descriptive statistics and the Independent Sample t-test. The outcome of the study revealed that the attitudinal disposition of potential admission seekers in Delta North Senatorial District of Delta State towards ODL was indeed low. The two hypotheses were rejected and there was disparity in the attitudinal disposition of potential admission seekers in Delta North Senatorial District of Delta state towards ODL on the basis of locations (urban or rural) and gender (male

and female). A conclusion was drawn based on the discussions and useful recommendations were made, which include among others, that enough public enlightenment campaigns should be made by the government and ODL institutions to sensitize prospective tertiary admission seekers towards open distance learning.

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**Keywords:** Attitudinal disposition, ODL, prospective tertiary admission seekers, synchronous learning, asynchronous learning.

## **Introduction**

Open distance learning (ODL) is a common term used to define the field of distance learning. UNESCO (2002) asserted that ODL reflects both the facts that all or most of the teachings are conducted by someone removed from time and space from the learner. The aim is to include greater dimensions of openness and flexibility, whether in terms of access, curriculum or other element of structure. It is a form of education administered to learners without the presence of the instructors and in most cases with the use of instructional media. It is a method of delivering subject contents and information to students who are separated by time and geography. A number of terms are used synonymously with ODL: e-learning, flexible learning, open learning etc. Distance education has become a popular term to describe learning through telecommunication. Communication denotes a variety of outfits such as radio, television, telephone and satellite. Greenberg (1998) opined that distance education is a planned teaching/learning experience that uses a wide spectrum of technologies to reach learner interaction and certification of learning.

Distance education technologies are divided into two modes: synchronous learning and asynchronous learning. Synchronous learning shares some characteristics of traditional classroom teaching because of its comprehensive features that allow for face-to-face interactions with learners. All the students are present at the same time. Adequate planning and strict adherence to the timetable are needed for synchronous learning to be organized. Synchronous technologies include web conferencing, video satellites, internet radio, live streaming, telephones, etc. Regan (2015) stated that the use of robot proxies is

another form of synchronous learning that has been in use for the past couple of years. Asynchronous learning on the other hand is a direct opposite to synchronous learning. This method only presents learning materials to students on their own schedules and learners are not expected to assemble together in a place at the same time. According to Lever & McDonald (2007), asynchronous learning includes message board forums, e-mail, video and audio recording, print materials, voicemail and fax. However, synchronous learning and asynchronous learning methods can be harmoniously combined. The product of this combination is called blended learning or hybrid learning. In blended learning, students have the privilege to learn through a classroom situation as well as utilizing mail, radio, telephones, computers etc.

ODL has gained an international reputation because of its accessibility, flexibility and adaptability. It is learner-centred, learner-friendly and permits adaptability. ODL has revived the educational aspirations of many adult working-class and educationally disadvantaged people, who previously have lost the hope of acquiring higher education, and can now do so at their convenience. The flexibility of ODL has made it possible for learners to advance in their own space without destabilizing their welfare and cardinal aspects of their lives. ODL is cost-effective form of learning and can save learners huge sum of money, unlike the brick-and-block setting. The amount spent on transportation and textbooks by students in conventional universities is avoided by ODL students. Most of the course materials are available in electronics as e-textbooks. Also, few lecturers can facilitate thousands of students at the same time. ODL is also organized in a pace or self-paced model. In the former model, learners commence and complete the course programme at the same time while the latter model allows the learners to enrol continuously and set the length of time they prefer to complete their academic programme. The choice to adopt any of the models eliminates the pressure of deadlines associated with conventional universities.

ODL removes the obstacles posed on people with physical disabilities in attempt to acquire education. People suffering from various illnesses such as decreased mobility and immune system suppression can obtain academic certificates through ODL. Distance education provides equal access to education regardless of their socio-economic status or income, areas of

residence, gender, race, age and variation of occupation. ODL provides broader communication opportunities for students' advancement in technology which has made it possible for a variety of electronic tools to be utilized and facilitated communication between learners and experts.

However, ODL is not without some criticisms. Galusha (2016) mentioned domestic distractions and unreliable technologies as setbacks. There are problems of cost, inadequate contact with instructors and support services as well as the need for experiences and electronic skills on the part of learners. Some students opt for ODL without the computer skills needed to succeed in the programme. Of course, not all courses can be facilitated through ODL. For instance, health core professions such as the medical profession as well as engineering courses cannot be done successfully with ODL for now; since it favours face-to-face interactions that are based on experimentation instead of lecturers-mediated chat rooms or independent studies.

Adeoye & Salawu (2010) found that learners opted for the distance degree programme of NOUN because of the ease in securing admission opportunity to pursue their studies and at the same time taking care of their families and having additional qualifications to improve their career prospect. In the same vein, Osuji, & Salawu (2006) recommended that for purpose of revitalization, liberalization, democratization and reformation of the education system in this country, ODL should be embraced and popularized. ODL has gained international acceptance and recognition because of its accessibility, flexibility and adaptability features. Most of the ODL institutions all over the world operate under the name of Open University. Indira Gandhi Open University, the United Kingdom Open University, the Open University of South Africa etc. are a few examples. In Nigeria, we have the National Open University of Nigeria. The National Open University of Nigeria (NOUN) has over seventy Study Centres across the country with over one hundred thousand students nationwide. Admission is open for all and sundry, irrespective of gender, language, age difference financial status. The popularity of NOUN is growing and many people are taking advantage of it to better their academic qualifications. The initial fear, apathy suspicion of its sustainability and credibility are evaporating and the attitude of people in many parts of Nigeria has changed. Ajunwa (2010) noted that in spite of the

fact that ODL is the sure means of dealing with a high rate of illiteracy, ignorance and ill-health in Nigeria, the attitude of a good percentage of Nigerians to this reality remains a puzzle. Now the interesting question is: Have these positive changes towards ODL affected the attitude of potential admission seekers in Delta North Senatorial District? According to Eiser (1986), attitudes are derived from individual evaluative beliefs summed together. Barker (2000) noted that attitude can be viewed as a predictions toward behaviours. Individual attitude about something is thought to affect behaviour, action and efficacy. Kanwar (2016) noted that in order to achieve Goal Four of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) of inclusive and equitable quality education by 2030, there must be quality distance learning in tertiary education, with massive open online courses, appropriate financing and use of technology. It is against the background that this study is conceived, to determine the attitudinal disposition of potential admission seekers in Delta North Senatorial District of Delta state towards ODL.

### **Statement of the problem**

ODL has made education available to all and sundry irrespective of differences in age, geography, gender, religion, race and socio-economic statuses. Many people have embraced ODL as an alternative means of attaining credible higher academic qualifications. There is the need for all prospective higher education seekers to key into the objectives of ODL, which is aimed at equalizing education opportunities that is affordable to all in spite of physical limitations. The question that this research undertaking tends to answer is: What is the attitudinal disposition of potential admission seekers in Delta North Senatorial District of Delta state towards ODL?

### **Research question:**

What is the attitudinal disposition of disposition of potential admission seekers in Delta North Senatorial District of Delta state towards ODL?

## **Hypotheses**

1. There is no significant difference in the attitudinal disposition of potential admission seekers in Delta North Senatorial District of Delta state towards ODL on the basis of locations (urban or rural).
2. There is no significant difference in the attitudinal disposition of potential admission seekers in Delta North Senatorial District of Delta state towards ODL on the basis of gender (male and female).

## **Purpose of the study**

The study was aimed at determining the attitudinal disposition of potential admission seekers in Delta North Senatorial District of Delta state towards ODL. Also, the study attempted to ascertain the influence of gender and locations on the attitude towards ODL in Nigeria.

## **Methodology**

### **Research Design**

The descriptive design was adopted for the study. The design was considered appropriate since data were obtained from potential admission seekers from different cities that constituted the areas of study.

### **Population of the study**

The population of the study comprised all potential tertiary admission seekers in Delta North Senatorial District of Delta State, which has nine LGAs. The LGAs are Aniocha North, Aniocha South, Ika North East, Ika South, Ndokwa East, Ndokwa West, Oshimili North, Oshimili South and Ukwuani.

### **Sample and Sampling Procedure**

The sample of this study comprised of 672 respondents, 378 males and 294 females. The researcher employed a multi-stage sampling procedure. Random sampling technique was used to select 4 out of the 9 LGAs that constituted Delta North Senatorial District. The purposive sampling technique was employed in the selection of the cities and respondents in each

of the 4 LGAs sampled for the study. The 4 LGAs were mapped out for the study, which are Ika South, Ndokwa West, Aniocha North and Ukwuani.

### **Instrumentation**

Instrument used for the study was a questionnaire title: Attitudinal Disposition Inventory Questionnaire (ADIQ). The Scale is composed of two sections labelled section A and B. Section A sought the demographic information of the respondents while section B has a 20-item question. The questionnaire was based on a modified Likert-type scale, with 4 response categories: Strongly Agree (SA), Agree (A), Disagree (D), and Strongly Disagree (SD). The options on the scale were weighed on modified Likert format: SA=4, A=3 SD=2 and SD=1. The maximum score was 80 while the least score was 20.

Research experts in the School of Education, National Open University, Lagos, face validated the instrument. Cronbach alpha was used to determine the internal consistency of the items. The validated questionnaire was used to conduct a pilot study at Warri south LG A in Delta South Senatorial District of Delta State, which is outside the targeted area of the study. An alpha value of 0.82 was established, which indicated a high reliability of the instrument. The instrument was administered to the respondents by the researcher and two research assistants. Out of 800 copies of the questionnaires that were distributed, 672 of them were retrieved and considered valid. This gave the return rate at 84%.

### **Method of Data Analysis**

The data collected were collated, coded and analysed using the descriptive statistics and the Independent Sample t-test. The Independent sample test (1ST) and the hypotheses were tested at a 0.05 level of significance. 1ST is inferential statistics, a version of a t-test that can be used for comparing means of two independent samples (Andrew, 2003). It was also chosen for the analysis because of its robust characteristics of comparing both the variances and means of two independent samples.

## Results and Discussion

**Research question:** What is the attitudinal disposition of disposition of potential admission seekers in Delta North Senatorial District of Delta state towards ODL?

**Table 1**

*Descriptive Statistics of the attitudinal disposition of potential admission seekers in Delta North Senatorial District of Delta state towards ODL?*

| Variable   | N   | Min max | Sum      | Mean  | SDV  | Decision |
|--|-----|---------|----------|-------|------|----------|
| Attitudinal disposition of potential admission seekers in Delta North Senatorial District of Delta state towards ODL | 672 | 27 43   | 22700.16 | 33.78 | 3.48 | Low      |

The result in Table 1 above shows that the mean score of the participants is 33.78 while the standard deviation is 3.48. Going by the norm of the scale (ADIQ), it could be observed that the score falls below the average score of 40. It could be concluded that attitudinal disposition of potential admission seekers in Delta North Senatorial District of Delta state towards ODL is indeed low. Further analysis of the result is demonstrated in the Frequency Distribution of the attitudinal disposition of potential admission seekers in Delta North Senatorial District of Delta state towards ODL as indicated in Table 1b. It shows that only item 13 has an average of 2.5, with other responses being concentrated on SD and D. This further buttressed the low attitudinal disposition of potential admission seekers in Delta North Senatorial District of Delta state towards ODL. Note that percentage of response is in parentheses.

**Table 2**

*Frequency Distribution on the attitudinal disposition of potential admission seekers in Delta North Senatorial District of Delta state towards ODL*

| S/N | Statements   | SA           | A             | D             | SD            | X    | Std |
|-----|--|--------------|---------------|---------------|---------------|------|-----|
| 1   | There is adequate number of staff with professional diversity in my school.            | -            | -             | 72<br>(10.7)  | 600<br>(89.3) | 1.12 | .31 |
| 2   | Staff members usually help students with disability.                                   | 42<br>(6.3)  | 132<br>(19.6) | 414<br>(61.1) | 84<br>(12.5)  | 2.2  | .73 |
| 3   | Students co-operate in the school irrespective of disabilities.                        | 15<br>(4.5)  | 138<br>(41.1) | 93<br>(27.7)  | 90<br>(26.8)  | 2.2  | .90 |
| 4   | There are remedial classes for slow learners in my school.                             |              | 18<br>(2.9)   | 96<br>(14.3)  | 594<br>(83)   | 1.2  | .46 |
| 5   | School counsellors often encourage students through vocational and career counselling. | 6<br>(.9)    | 30<br>(4.5)   | 300<br>(44.6) | 336<br>(50)   | 1.6  | .62 |
| 6   | Parents often come to school to monitor their children's learning programme.           | 42<br>(6.3)  | 180<br>(26.8) | 336<br>(50)   | 114<br>(17)   | 2.2  | .80 |
| 7   | Teachers support one another in the school.  | 72<br>(10.7) | 234<br>(34.8) | 198<br>(29.5) | 168<br>(25)   | 2.3  | .97 |
| 8   | Medical personnel treat students with injuries and illness.                            | 6<br>(.9)    | 24<br>(3.6)   | 54<br>(8)     | 5<br>(87.5)   | 1.2  | .52 |
| 9   | Staff members refer students to one another for appropriate attention.                 | 36<br>(5.4)  | 66<br>(9.8)   | 498<br>(74.1) | 72<br>(10.7)  | 2.1  | .64 |
| 10  | There is no discrimination in the school on the basis of physical impairment.          | 18<br>(2.7)  | 204<br>(30.4) | 348<br>(54.8) | 102<br>(15.2) | 2.2  | .74 |
| 11  | There are enough teaching and learning instruments for the physically challenged.      | -            | 36<br>(5.4)   | 36<br>(5.4)   | 600<br>(89.3) | 1.2  | .49 |
| 12  | The head teachers co-operate with the entire members of staff in the school.           | 24<br>(7.1)  | 84<br>(12.5)  | 396<br>(58.9) | 144<br>(21.4) | 2.1  | .79 |
| 13  | There is integrated service among staff and students in the school.                    | 78<br>(11.6) | 294<br>(43.8) | 204<br>(30.4) | 96<br>(14.3)  | 2.5  | .89 |
| 14  | Co-teaching with resource staff is usually done in the school.                         |              | 24<br>(3.6)   | 54<br>(8)     | 594<br>(88.4) | 1.2  | .46 |
| 15  | Resource teachers are attached to each of the classes in the school.                   | -            | 12<br>(1.8)   | 30<br>(4.5)   | 630<br>(93.8) | 1.1  | .3  |
| 16  | The Parents-Teacher Association facilitates a support structure in the school.         | 54<br>(8)    | 162<br>(24.1) | 372<br>(55.4) | 84<br>(12.5)  | 2.3  | .78 |

| S/N | Statements  | SA          | A           | D             | SD                 | X   | Std |
|-----|---|-------------|-------------|---------------|--------------------|-----|-----|
| 17  | Special education teachers usually assist physically impaired students.   | -           | 12<br>(.9)  | 54<br>(8)     | 612<br>(91.1)      | 1.1 | .33 |
| 18  | Disable students are not isolated in sporting activities in the school.   | 36<br>(5.4) | 42<br>(6.3) | 168           | 430<br>1<br>(63.4) | 1.5 | .84 |
| 19  | Government officials usually visit schools to ensure that the objectives of inclusive education are being attained. | 44<br>(6.3) | 24<br>(3.6) | 366<br>(54.5) | 240<br>(35.7)      | 1.8 | .77 |
| 20  | Physically impaired students are seldom isolated for treatment during school hours.                                 | -           | -           | 72<br>(10.7)  | 600<br>(89.3)      | 1.1 | .31 |

*Note:* Figures in parentheses are percentages.

### Hypothesis 1:

There is no significant difference in the attitudinal disposition of potential admission seekers in Delta North Senatorial District of Delta state towards ODL on the basis of location (urban or rural).

### Table 3

*Independent sample t-test statistics on the attitudinal disposition of potential admission seekers by location*

|  |   | Attitudinal disposition of potential admission seekers in DNCD towards ODL |  |
|--|---|--|--|
|  |   | Equal variances assumed  | Equal variances not assumed                                      |
| Leven's Test for Equality of variances | F<br>Sig.   | 65.900<br>.000   |  |
| t-test Equality of means               | t<br>Df<br>Sig(2-tailed)<br>Means differences<br>Std Error differences<br>95% interval of difference:<br>Lower<br>Upper | 3.814<br>334<br>.000<br>.18367<br>.04815<br>.08895<br>.09454               | 4.056<br>312.189<br>.000<br>.18367<br>.04529<br>.27840<br>.27278 |

Hypothesis one which stated that there is no significant difference in the attitudinal disposition of potential admission seekers in Delta North Senatorial District of Delta state towards ODL on the basis of locations (urban or rural) was rejected. This is because the analysis on Table 3 above revealed a  $t(334) = 4.056$ ,  $p = .000$  was significant at 0.005 confidence level. This implies that there is variation on the attitudinal disposition of potential admission seekers in Delta North Senatorial District of Delta state towards ODL on the basis of locations (urban or rural). Descriptive statistics was utilized to determine their mean difference as shown in Table 4 below. The indication is that the attitudinal disposition of potential admission seekers in Delta North Senatorial District of Delta state towards ODL was lower in rural areas with a mean of 32.4211 compared to urban areas with a mean of 34.0330.

**Table 4**

*Descriptive statistics on the attitudinal disposition of potential admission seekers in Delta North Senatorial District of Delta state towards ODL by location*

| School | N   | Mean    | Std. Deviation | Std. Error Mean |
|--------|-----|---------|----------------|-----------------|
| URBAN  | 546 | 34.0330 | .50065         | .03030          |
| RURAL  | 114 | 32.4211 | .44426         | .05884          |

#### Hypothesis 2

There is no significant difference in the attitudinal disposition of potential admission seekers in Delta North Senatorial District of Delta state towards ODL on the basis of gender (male and female).

**Table 5**

*Independent sample t-test statistics on the attitudinal disposition of potential admission seekers in Delta North Senatorial District of Delta state towards ODL on the basis of gender (male and female)*

|  |                             | Attitudinal disposition of potential admission seekers in DNCD towards ODL |                             |
|--|-----------------------------|--|-----------------------------|
|  |                             | Equal variances assumed  | Equal variances not assumed |
| Leven's Test for Equality of variances | F                           | 65.900   |                             |
|  | Sig.                        | .000   |                             |
| t-test Equality of means               | t                           | 3.079  | 3.329                       |
|  | Df                          | 328  | 77.661                      |
|  | Sig(2-tailed)               | .000   | .002                        |
|  | Means differences           | .22036   | .22036                      |
|  | Std Error differences       | .07157   | .0619                       |
|  | 95% interval of difference: |  |                             |
|  | Lower<br>Upper              | .07956<br>.36116   | .08883<br>.35188            |

The Independent sample t-test statistics on the attitudinal disposition of potential admission seekers in Delta North Senatorial District of Delta state towards ODL on the basis of gender (male and female) depicted a  $t(328)=3.3269$ ,  $p=.000$ , which was found to be significant at 0.005 level of confidence. With this result, hypothesis 2 was therefore rejected. The implication is that there is a difference on the attitudinal disposition of potential admission seekers in Delta North Senatorial District of Delta state towards ODL on the basis of gender(male and female). Although the attitudinal disposition of potential admission seekers in Delta North

Senatorial District of Delta state towards ODL on the basis of gender (male and female) is generally low in both instances, it was worst as regards female with a mean difference of 1.775 (34.775-33.000) as shown in Table 6 below.

**Table 6**

*Descriptive statistics on the attitudinal disposition of potential admission seekers in Delta North Senatorial District of Delta state towards ODL by gender*

| <b>Location</b> | <b>N</b> | <b>Mean</b> | <b>Std. Deviation</b> | <b>Std. Error Mean</b> |
|-----------------|----------|-------------|-----------------------|------------------------|
| MALE            | 378      | 33.000      | .48273                | .03511                 |
| FEMALE          | 294      | 34.775      | .41867                | .03453                 |

The research question that sought to determine the attitudinal disposition of potential admission seekers in Delta North Senatorial District of Delta state towards ODL led to the finding that the attitudinal disposition of potential admission seekers in Delta North Senatorial District of Delta state towards ODL is indeed low. This finding agreed with the view of Ajunwa (2010) who noted that in spite of the fact that ODL is the sure means of dealing with high rate of illiteracy, ignorance and ill-health in Nigeria, the attitude of a good percentage of Nigerians to this reality remains a puzzle. Galusha (2016) also mentioned domestic distractions and unreliable technologies as setbacks. The outcome disagreed with Osuji & Salawu (2006) who recommended that for purpose of revitalization, liberalization, democratization and reformation of education system in this country, ODL should be embraced and popularized.

Hypothesis one which stated that there is no significant difference in the attitudinal disposition of potential admission seekers in Delta North Senatorial District of Delta state towards ODL on the basis of locations (urban or rural) was rejected. This conclusion disagrees with the norm of ODL reputation of easy accessibility, flexibility and adaptability, which has made education available to all and sundry irrespective of difference in age, geography, gender, religion, race and socio-economic status. The outcome also disagreed with the assertion of UNESCO (2002) that ODL reflects both

the facts that all or most of the teachings are conducted by someone removed from time and space from the learner.

Hypothesis two which stated that there is no significant difference in the attitudinal disposition of potential admission seekers in Delta North Senatorial District of Delta state towards ODL on the basis of gender (male and female) was rejected. The implication is that there is a difference in the attitudinal disposition of potential admission seekers in Delta North Senatorial District of Delta state towards ODL on the basis of gender (male and female). This finding is at variance with the view of Salawu, (2015) who opined that distance education provides equal access to education regardless of their socio-economic status or income, areas of residence, gender, race, age and variation of occupation.

## **Conclusion**

The study attempted a determination of the attitudinal disposition of prospective tertiary admission seekers towards open distance learning in Nigeria: a case study of delta north senatorial district of delta state. The outcome of the study revealed that the attitudinal disposition of potential admission seekers in Delta North Senatorial District of Delta state towards ODL is indeed low. Also, there is a disparity in the attitudinal disposition of potential admission seekers in Delta North Senatorial District of Delta state towards ODL on the basis of locations (urban or rural). Lastly, that there is a difference in the attitudinal disposition of potential admission seekers in Delta North Senatorial District of Delta state towards ODL on the basis of gender(male and female).

## **Recommendations**

Enough public enlightenment campaigns should be made by the government and ODL institutions to sensitize prospective tertiary admission seekers towards open distance learning.

ODL institutions should endeavour to eradicate the problems currently damping their progress (erratic network, missing scores, quality lecturers etc.).

ODL institutions should endeavour to upgrade the contents of their teaching materials to reflect the current trend of development.

ODL institutions should ensure that their academic programmes should be duly accredited by NUC to avert discrimination in the society.

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