



**Assessment of Variables Responsible for Distance Learning Students'
Dropout from University of Maiduguri, Borno State, Nigeria**

**Évaluation des facteurs variables responsables de l'abandon scolaire
parmi les étudiants des FOAD de l'Université de Maiduguri, Etat de
Borno.**

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Abstract

This study sought students' opinion on factors responsible for students' dropout from distance learning programme University of Maiduguri, Borno State. The study had set three research objectives to determine students' factors, course contents factors and staff/students relationship factors. The target population for the study included all the 15,217 CDL students during 2019/2020 academic session. Krejcie and Morgan method was used to select a total of 550 CDL students, Factors Responsible for Students Dropout Questionnaire developed and validated by the researchers was used in this study, with reliability index of 0.64. The data collected were analyzed using

percentages. Findings on course content factors revealed that poor delivery on learning management system LMS as revealed, tutors unable to organize chat, teaching online, unable to attend to students' questions, these will lead to student's dropout from the programme in CDL, course content factors; the management failure to activate students' passwords to join LMS in time also lead to students' dropout from the programme. Study also revealed that students' dropout from the programme due to poor staff/students relationship factors, It is recommended that CDL management should understand and implement the policy guiding CDL programme. One of the policy of the programme is there is no repeat in CDL programme.

Key words: Students' Opinion, Factors, Dropout, Distance Learning Programme

Résumé :

Cette étude utilise l'opinion des étudiants sur les facteurs qui contribuent à l'abandon de leurs études. Elle a trois objectifs de recherche en vue de déterminer les facteurs tels que ceux qui sont liés aux étudiants eux-mêmes, aux contenus des cours et à la relation entre étudiants et enseignants. La population visée par cette étude comprend tous les étudiants de l'année académique 2019/2020 au nombre de 15.217. La méthode de Krejcie et Morgan a été adoptée pour sélectionner un nombre de 550 étudiants. Un questionnaire sur les facteurs qui poussent les étudiants à abandonner les études a été développé et validé par les chercheurs a été utilisé pour cette enquête avec un index de fiabilité de 0.64. Les données recueillies ont été analysées par pourcentage. Les résultats sur les facteurs de contenus des cours révèlent une mauvaise gestion de système d'apprentissage (Learning Management System, LMS), les enseignants sont incapables de dispenser les cours en ligne et ne peuvent pas répondre aux questions des étudiants, tout cela conduit à l'abandon des programmes des FOAD par les étudiants. Le contenu des cours, l'incapacité des administrateurs à activer à temps les mots de passe des étudiants pour qu'ils rejoignent les activités sur la plateforme, ont aussi pour conséquence l'abandon scolaire. L'étude a aussi révélé que les étudiants abandonnent les programmes à cause de facteurs liés à la mauvaise qualité des relations entre les étudiants et les enseignants. Il est conseillé aux gérants de centres de FOAD de comprendre et de mettre en œuvre la politique qui régit les

programmes des centres de FOAD. L'une des règles des centres de FOAD est qu'il n'y a pas de reprise de cours.

Mots Clés: Opinion des étudiants, facteurs, abandon, formation à distance.

Introduction

The number of adult learners who were admitted to the Centre for Distance Learning (CDL) University of Maiduguri has rapidly grown in the last few years. Distance learning programme allows learners who are gainfully employed to update their existing knowledge and skills. The schedules for open and distance learning programme (ODL) is flexible, friendly and easily allowing the students to cope with it. United Nations Educational Scientific and Cultural Organization UNESCO (2002) defines Open and Distance Learning (ODL) as approaches that focus on opening access to education and training provision, freeing learners from constraints of time and place and offering flexible learning opportunities to individual and groups of learners. University of South Africa (2008) defines ODL as a multidimensional concept aimed at bridging the time, geographical, economic, social, educational and communicative distance between students and institution, students and academics, students and courseware and students and peers. Open and Distance Learning focuses on removing barriers to access learning provision, students' centeredness, supporting students and constructing learning programmes with the expectation that students can succeed.

The Commonwealth of Learning (COL) (2000) maintains that there is no one definition of ODL. Most definitions pay attention to the following characteristics: a way of providing learning opportunities characterized by the separation of teacher and the learner in time or place or both time and place and learning that is certified in some way by an institution or agency. The use of variety of media is employed, including print and electronic, two-way communications that allow learners and tutors to interact, the possibility of occasional face to face meeting and a separated division of labour in the production and delivery of course.

The Internet is incorporated into educational settings to extend

learning activities without depending on traditional classroom space and time (Hagel & Shaw, 2006). In fact, flexibility of time and place for learning is the most important feature of online instruction. While distance education provides an interactive, reflective and collaborative learning setting (Maor, 2003), it also challenges researchers and designers of online instruction to develop educational software and find ways to support online learning environments in which students' needs are fulfilled.

Dropout refers to an admitted candidate who has abandoned a course of study or who has rejected conventional society to pursue an alternative lifestyle. Dropping out of school is a worldwide phenomenon with drastic mental health consequences for the learner, families and the society. The causes of a student dropping out of school are often termed as the antecedent of dropout because it refers to the pivotal event which leads to dropout. This event, however, is the culmination of a much longer process of leaving school that began long before the date that a student actually discontinues attendance. In general, dropouts can be defined as those students who dropout of academic institution on basis of poor academic performance, leave their education in the middle due to financial constraints or do not get graduated for any other social or cultural reason (Pike & Saupe, 2002).

Dropout rates reported by Open and Distance Learning (ODL) institutions are typically higher than those reported by conventional universities. Within ODL educational systems, dropout rates also vary depending on the educational system adopted by each institution and selected subjects of study (Pike & Saupe, 2002). They also opined that, in Europe, dropout rates in distance education programmes typically range from 20 percent to 30 percent or even higher in Northern America. Asian countries have recorded rates as high as 50 percent (Shin & Kim, 1999). A number of models, such as Tinto's model of students' retention, have been developed to help explain the dropout phenomenon in higher education (Bernard & Amundsen, 1989).

The term dropout is subject to a number of interpretations. The term “dropout” used in open and distance education is not the same as that used in a conventional University as open and distance students can resume their studies

at any time (Cambruzzi, Rigo & Barbosa, 2015). The term “dropout” as used refers to students who admitted that they would not continue their studies. In practice, they might continue their studies sometime in the future. Unlike students of conventional Universities, physically, distance learning students are separated from the instructors and the other students in terms of time and space (Rashid, Jahan, Islam & Ratna, 2015). Although modern information communication technology has been used widely in distance learning, Budiman (2015a) found that the separation of the students from the instructors and the other students may lead to dropout.

Brown, Hughes, Keppell, Hard and Smith (2015) carried out a study on the experience of newly admitted students at Charles Sturt University, Australia and Massey University, New Zealand. The authors identified challenges faced by first time distance students, including employment and family responsibilities, home environment, prior educational experience, health and wellbeing, digital literacy, and personal activities. Conventional students may not meet the challenges. In addition, Musingafi, Mapuranga, Chiwanza and Zebron (2015) who investigated the challenges facing Open and Distance Learning students at the Zimbabwe Open University (ZOU) listed a number of factors that were considered as major challenges. The authors broke down the challenges into three sub-categories: individual, instructional and institutional challenges. Individual challenges came from the students, including lack of study time, ICT literacy, financial constraints and transportation issues. Instructional challenges were majorly to delay of feedback. Institutional challenges were delayed order or unavailable study materials and inadequate academic support. In general, it suggests that distance students face many more challenges, compared to conventional students.

Several other studies have clearly shown that there are some factors that warranted learners to drop out from open and distance learning programme. Tinto (1993), conducted a study in Chicago and found the following; academic integration, social integration, goal commitment, institutional commitment and learning community as important internal factors that might lead to dropout of programme. Bean and Metzner (1985), in their study revealed factors such as study habits, advising, absenteeism, course

availability, programme dual satisfaction. Rovai (2003), reported internal factors by including students' needs such as clarity of programme, self-esteem, interpersonal relationships, accessibility to service and identification with school environment. In particular, course design issues have been identified by many researchers for example. After interviewing 24 dropout students.

Willging and Johnson (2004), found that assignment level, learning style conflict, lack of interaction, lack of interest, lack of technical support and learning environment were some of the reasons why students' dropped out from programme. Zielinski (2000) indicated six reasons that cause learners to bail from online training. Three out of the six lack of connectedness, learner preference and poor course design were related to internal factors. Many studies have also emphasized the importance of course design related factors. Jun (2005), have indicated the importance of motivation, hence the study showed the strong relationship between these values and students behavior, in addition, it was found that students with low task values, low prior grades in English language and older students may be more likely to drop out of a web-based course.

Learner characteristics have been recognized as factors that are related to students' dropout from programme, Brown (1996), reported the following characteristics in relation to dropout are age, ethnicity, gender, employment status and socio-economic group. Rovai (2003) found gender-related differences in communication patterns and sense of community and presumed its effect on students' persistence in online courses. Jun (2005) found that many individual background variables such as the number of online courses completed, gender, learning hours for the course per week, and hours worked per week were significant to predict learner dropout.

Research by Zhang and Luo (2006) used multivariate regression to analyze the data of 57,549 students from nine Universities: results showed that demographic attributions such as gender, ethnicity and nationality attribution are significantly correlated to dropping out of school. Another logistic regression study conducted by Doherty (2006) analyzed the data of 10,466 students in the educational institution information system; results showed that the students' demographic attributions, learning methods and curriculum

interaction were correlated to dropping out of school. Comparatively, Chinese researchers primarily use descriptive statistics and interviews for investigating the factors associated with students' dropout. Li, Niu and Ding (2012), performed statistical analysis on the academic records of 142 student dropouts; results showed that low passing rates were closely related to students' giving up their studies. In another study conducted by Li, Niu and Ding (2012) that investigated the reasons for students' dropping out from the school through a questionnaire (118 students) and interviews (98 students & 40 teachers), the researchers concluded that in addition to course passing rate, other factors such as work and study conflicts, profession selection error, improper learning methods and emergencies were also key factors influencing students' dropout rates from school.

Rashid and Budiman (2015) in their findings listed nineteen factors that related dropout. Factors that received attention from the students were lack of communication between students and instructors, inability to understand the course content, inability to collaborate with other students and low quality of teaching and instructors. These findings suggest that quality interaction between students and students as well as between students and instructors seem to play important role in the distance learning process. Rashid and Budiman (2015) categorized factors related to student dropout into two groups; intrinsic and extrinsic factors. Extrinsic factors that were associated with dropout were employment responsibilities, financial constraints and low academic capability. Meanwhile, extrinsic factors included in sufficient academic support from the institution, and less interaction. Similar findings were identified in a study of Rashid and Budiman (2015b) who investigated factors that related to students' achievement and dropout. It could be argued that reasons for dropping out of distance education programme were numerous. In a study reasons for attrition in Massive Open Online Courses (MOOCs) context, Yang, Sinha, Adamson, and Rosé (2013) reported that there was a strong correlation between course completion and social connectedness. The finding of the study might suggest that social connection fosters academic success.

A study carried out by Moore and Kearsley (1996) indicates strong positive correlation between instructor performance and students' satisfaction,

in their studies they used simple descriptive statistics with very limited sample sizes which may not be representative enough. High dropout rates have negative effects on both the educational institutions and students and are not conducive for the healthy development of E-learning. Dropouts increase the average cost per student for education institutions, as the cost for recruiting a new student is usually several times that of retaining a potential dropout. Logistic regression is a method frequently used for analyzing the correlation between attributions in studies related to students' dropout rates. Roblyer, Davis and Mills (2008) used a Likert scale that contained 60 measurable variables for conducting a survey on 2,162 E-learning students. Binary logistic regression analysis of the sample data revealed a relatively strong correlation between demographic attributions (such as age) and learning achievement (such as GPA) and students' dropout.

Statement of the Problem

There are so many reasons why students' dropout of ODL programme, these factors maybe; students factor, course content factors and staff-students' relationship factors. Recently so many students' dropout from ODL programme as observed by the researchers, However, if this students' dropout of programme is not stopped or controlled, it would have some adverse consequences on national development and university of Maiduguri. Therefore, the researchers purpose was to determine the variables responsible for student's dropout of distance learning programme University of Maiduguri, Borno State.

Objectives of the study

The following were the objectives of the study:

1. To determine If students' factors are responsible for students' dropout from CDL programme, University of Maiduguri
2. To ascertain whether course contents are responsible for students' dropout from CDL programme, University of Maiduguri.
3. To determine whether the students-staff relationship are responsible for students' dropout from CDL programme, University of Maiduguri

Research Questions

The following research questions were answered in this study:

1. Are the students factors responsible for students' dropout from CDL programme, University of Maiduguri?
2. Are course contents responsible for students' dropout from CDL programme, University of Maiduguri?
3. Are staff-students relationship responsible for students' dropout from CDL programme, University of Maiduguri?

Methodology

The design of the study was a survey which according to Ary, Jacob and Razaviah (1979), sought to obtain information from people concerning current status of phenomena or events over a period of one year. Furthermore, survey according to Kerlinger and Lee (2000) are generalized means of data collection through interviews or questionnaire. surveys are designed or modified to meet the needs of the researcher or fit the topic of research. The target population for the study included all the 15,217 CDL students during 2019/2020 academic session. Random sampling technique was used to select 110 students from part I, II, III, IV and V. Krejcie and Morgan method was used to select a total of 550 CDL students Krejcie and Morgan (2006) suggest that for a population of 1,000 000 a sample size of 384 is adequate for a 95% confidence level. Factors Responsible for Students Dropout Questionnaire developed and validated by the researchers was used in this study, the questionnaire elicits information on factors that are responsible for students' dropout in CDL, the questionnaire consists of 27 items that require the respondents to agree or disagree, the questionnaire had been administered earlier to 50 students during 2017/2018 academic session of CDL, the researchers used test- re-test method to obtained the reliability index of 0.64. Responses to the items on the research questions were answered using frequency counts and rank ordering.

Results

Research question one: Are the students factors responsible for students' dropout from CDL programme, University of Maiduguri?

Table 1: Percentages of Responses on Students' Factors Responsible for Dropout in CDL Programme, University of Maiduguri

Factors	Responses				Ranking
	Agree	%	Disagree	%	
Students dropout of the programme because their pending courses are more than 6	541	98	9	2	1
Students drop out of the programme because they have too many No Results (NR) on their result sheet	539	98	11	2	2
Students drop out of the programme because courses passed were brought back for them	532	96	18	4	3
Students dropout of the programme because they skip one session	529	96	21	4	4
Students dropout of the programme because they can't print their results	499	90	51	10	5
Students dropout of the programme because they can't print their results	486	88	64	12	6
Students dropout of the programme because their scripts were lost	447	81	103	19	7

Table 1, shows the opinion of students on students factors that are responsible for students dropout from CDL programme, University of Maiduguri by ranking (98%) of the respondents respond to agree options while (2%) respond to disagreed option, (98%) respond to agree while (2%) disagreed, (96%) of respondents respond to agree option while (3%) disagreed, (90%) of the respondents respond to agree, (88%) of the respondents respond to agree option while (11%) disagreed and lastly on this table (81%) of the respondents respond to agree option and (18%) respond to disagree option.

Research question two: Are course contents responsible for students' dropout from CDL programme, University of Maiduguri?

Table 2: Percentages of Responses on Course Content Factors Responsible for Students' Dropout from CDL Programme, University of Maiduguri

Factors	Responses				Ranking
	Agree	%	Disagree	%	
Students dropout of the programme because they don't have the device to join the chart.	501	91	49	9	1
Students drop out of the programme because there is no internet connection in their area.	491	89	59	11	2
Students dropout of the programme because their password and ID are always invalid.	467	84	83	16	3
Students dropout of the programme because lecturers have no time to attend to them through LMS.	409	74	141	26	4
Students dropout of the programme because teachers do not attend to their questions.	366	66	184	34	5

Students drop out of the programme because there is no face to face lectures.	361	65	189	35	6
Students dropout of the programme because tutors do not teach at all.	131	24	419	76	7
Students dropout of the programme because they are computer illiterate.	239	44	311	56	8
Students drop out of the programme because of	47	9	503	91	9

Table 2, shows the opinion of students on course content factors that are responsible for students' dropout from CDL programme, University of Maiduguri, (91%) of the respondents respond to agree option while (9%) disagreed, (89%) agreed to the option while (11%) respond to disagree option, (84%) of the respondents respond to agree while (16%) of the respondents respond to disagree, (74%) of the respondents respond to agree while (26%) respond to disagree option, (66%) of the respondents respond to agree option while (34%) respond to disagree option, (65%) of the respondents responds to agree option while (35%) of the respondents respond to disagreed option, (24%) of the respondents respond to agree while (76%) respond to disagree option, (44%) of the respondents respond to agree option and (56%) of the respondents respond to disagree option and (9%) of the respondents respond to agree while (91%) of the respondents respond to disagree option.

Research question three: Are staff-students' relationship responsible for students' dropout from CDL programme, University of Maiduguri?

Table 3: Percentages of Responses on Staff-Students Relationship Factors Responsible for Students' Dropout from CDL Programme, University of Maiduguri

Factors	Responses				Ranking
	Agree	%	Disagree	%	
Students dropout of the programme because of poor staff/students relation	543	98	7	2	1
Students dropout of the programme because staff hardly attend to their requests	511	92	39	8	2
Students drop out of the programme because staff are too harsh to the students	509	92	41	8	3

Table 3, shows the opinion of students on staff/students relationship factors that are responsible for students' dropout from CDL programme, University of Maiduguri (98%) of the respondents respond to agree while (2%) respond to disagree option. (92%) of the respondents respond to agree on the option while (8%) of the respondents respond to disagree option. Finally, (92%) of the respondents responded to agree option while (8%) of the respondents respond to disagree option.

Discussion on Findings

The results revealed that mismanagement of students and their results related factors lead to students' dropout of the programme from Centre for Distance Learning University of Maiduguri, this results agree with the findings of Li, Niu and Ding (2012) who investigated the reasons for students dropping out of a programme through a questionnaire (118 students) and interviews (98 students and 40 teachers). The research concluded that in addition to course passing rate, other factors such as work and study conflicts, profession selection error, improper learning methods and emergencies were also key factors influencing student dropout of programme.

The findings on the course content factors revealed that poor mode of

lecture delivery on learning management system lead to students' dropout of the programme from Centre for Distance Learning University of Maiduguri, the findings of this study agreed with the study conducted by Zielinski (2000) who revealed the following; lack of connectedness, learner preference and poor course design were related to the factors. The study also agreed with the study carried out by Willging and Johnson (2004) who found that assignment level, learning style conflict, lack of interaction, lack of interest, lack of technical support, and learning environment were the reasons why students' dropout, the finding further agree with the findings of Rovai (2003) who in his study reported the following factors influencing students' dropout of programme; needs such as clarity of programme, self-esteem, interpersonal relationships, accessibility to service and identification with school. In particular, course design issues have been identified by many researchers. After interviewing 24 dropout students.

The findings on staff/students relation revealed that students' dropout of programme due to poor staff/students relationship, this finding agreed with study carried out by Jun (2005) who revealed the importance of motivation, the findings of the study further agree with research conducted by Rashid and Budiman (2015) categorized factors related to student dropout into two groups; intrinsic and extrinsic factors. Extrinsic factors that were associated with dropout were employment responsibilities, financial constraints, and low academic capability. Meanwhile, extrinsic factors included in sufficient academic support from the institution, and less interaction.

Conclusion

Based on the findings of this study it is concluded that students' factors are responsible for students' dropout from Centre for Distance Learning programme, University of Maiduguri the course content factors also are responsible for students' dropout from the Centre for Distance Learning programme, poor staff/students relationship factors are responsible for students' dropout from the programme from Centre for Distance learning, University of Maiduguri.

Recommendations

Based on the outcome of this study, the following recommendations were

made:

1. Management of Centre for Distance Learning University of Maiduguri should understand and implement the policy guiding ODL programme, one of the policy of the program is there is no repeat in CDL programmes.
2. Learning Management System should be expanded to uphold crashing of the (LMS) and courses should also be properly taught, since the policy ODL University of Maiduguri operating blended mode, there is need to have face to face contact at list once in a month.
3. The Management and the staff of the CDL should respect the learners' interest at all the time, motivation is one of the factor that will make learner to have more interest in the programme of the Centre for Distance Learning University of Maiduguri.

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