Minimizing Socio-Psychological Problems on Administration of Distance Education Programmes in Tertiary Institutions

Ugoewgbu Ifeanyi

Adult Education Department
Nnamdi Azikiwe University, Awka, Anambra State, Nigeria.

The study was carried out on Socio-psychological problems that are encountered in the administration of Distance education. The study was a survey. The purpose of the study was to identify how group, guidance and counseling strategies could be used to minimize socio-psychological problems on administration of distance education programmes in tertiary institutions in South East Zone of Nigeria. South East Zone of Nigeria is occupied by the Igbos and there is a concentration of tertiary institutions in the area. 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, recommendations were made.

Keywords: socio-psychological, strategies, administration, distance education, guidance and counseling

INTRODUCTION

Distance education refers to educational programmes carried out which are not on full time basis (Baath 1992). The history of distance education in Nigeria dates back to 1887 when London University conducted its examination for distance education in Lagos (Omolewa 1982). Another attempt to boast distance education in Nigeria was through correspondence education, followed by radio which was initiated by the Nigerian Broadcasting Service. 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 like Sandwich, Continuing education, Weekend programmes, University of the air and others. 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 would disrupt their life pattern and family roles. As a result, distance education 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 family roles.

In spite of the desire of the students to further their education, a good number of these students who register for distance education do not finish up (Ukeje 1993; Ugwoegbu 2003; Usun 2004; and Hosseini 2004). Despite the apparent benefits of distance education, one of the draw backs there 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. Hosseini (2004) noted that 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. Anowor (2001) observed that distance education is 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 student discussions and classroom debates have always been important to students. The regular campus system gives chances for regular counseling of students.

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. Through the latest technology, Distance education 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 are in isolation, away from their institutions, teachers and fellow learners. Sherry (2004) observed that distance education learners lack interaction among themselves.

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 drawbacks 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 despite the fact that it is a system expected to help to improve the educational activities of the country. It is therefore not clear what the problems of distance education are. On the other hand, one is not quite sure if the socio-psychological problems on the administration of distance education are caused by lack of the establishment of study groups, guidance and counselling units hence this study.

Research Questions
The following research questions guided this study:

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 counselling strategy in minimizing socio-psychological problems on the administration of distance education programmes in tertiary institutions?

HYPOTHESIS 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 in South-East states of Nigeria. The population comprised all the administrators and all lecturers lecturing distance education students which numbered 1904 respondents. A sample of 1554 respondents were selected from the population. 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. This result proved that the instrument has high level of correlation coefficient and reliability for this study. Out of the 1554 copies of questionnaires given out, 1524 copies were collected and used for analysis. 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>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Scores</th>
<th>Freq.</th>
<th>%</th>
<th>Overall mean</th>
<th>Remark</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>10 – 30</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>2.20</td>
<td></td>
<td>Rejected the Strategy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>31–50</td>
<td>1490</td>
<td>97.80</td>
<td></td>
<td>Accepted the Strategy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>1524</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>40.45</td>
<td>The strategy is</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
in minimizing socio-psychological problems on the administration of distance education. While 1490 (97.80%) of the respondents who scored between 31 to 50 points accepted the strategy as being capable of 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.

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

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Scores</th>
<th>Freq.</th>
<th>%</th>
<th>Overall mean</th>
<th>Remark</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>14.42</td>
<td>54</td>
<td>3.50</td>
<td>54.47</td>
<td>Rejected the Strategy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>43.70</td>
<td>1470</td>
<td>96.50</td>
<td>54.47</td>
<td>Accepted the Strategy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>1524</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>54.47</td>
<td>The strategy is Accepted</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 2 shows 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 by scoring between 14 and 42 point. Also, 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 overall 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

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Source of Variation</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>X</th>
<th>Sd</th>
<th>Df</th>
<th>Cal. t</th>
<th>Crirt. t</th>
<th>P&gt;0.05</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>845</td>
<td>39.75</td>
<td>4.51</td>
<td>11522</td>
<td>6.59</td>
<td>1.96</td>
<td>0.05</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>679</td>
<td>41.31</td>
<td>4.66</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In table 3 at 0.05 level of significance and 1522 df, the calculated t of 6.59 was greater than the critical t of 1.96 so the first hypothesis was rejected. This shows 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

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Source of Variation</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>X</th>
<th>Sd</th>
<th>Df</th>
<th>Cal. t</th>
<th>Crirt. t</th>
<th>P&gt;0.05</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>845</td>
<td>53.82</td>
<td>5.26</td>
<td>1522</td>
<td>5.49</td>
<td>1.96</td>
<td>0.05</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>679</td>
<td>55.28</td>
<td>5.04</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In table 4, at 0.05 level of significance and 1522 df, the calculated t of 5.49 is greater than the critical t of 1.96. Therefore, the second null hypothesis is rejected so 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

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Source of Variation</th>
<th>Ss</th>
<th>Df</th>
<th>Ms</th>
<th>Cal. T</th>
<th>Crirt. F</th>
<th>P&gt;0.05</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Between groups</td>
<td>1373.05</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>686.53</td>
<td>33.27</td>
<td>3.00</td>
<td>0.05</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Within groups</td>
<td>31387.43</td>
<td>1521</td>
<td>20.64</td>
<td>3.01</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>32760.48</td>
<td>1523</td>
<td>3.01</td>
<td>3.01</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 5, shows that at 0.05 level of significance, on 2 df numerator and 1521 denominator, the calculated t of 33.27 was greater than the critical t of 3.00 so, the fifth null hypothesis was rejected. Showing that the mean scores of subjects on the use of study group in minimizing the problem differ significantly due to their status.

Null Hypothesis 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

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Source of Variation</th>
<th>Ss</th>
<th>Df</th>
<th>Ms</th>
<th>Crit t</th>
<th>P&gt;0.05</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Between groups</td>
<td>207.63</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>103.81</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>41101.60</td>
<td>1521</td>
<td>27.02</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Within groups</td>
<td>41309.23</td>
<td>1523</td>
<td>3.84</td>
<td>3.00</td>
<td>0.05</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 6. At 0.05 level of significance on 2 df nominator and 1521 df denominator, the calculated t 3.84 was greater than the critical t of 3.00. The sixth null hypothesis was rejected, so 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

It was discovered that 97.80 percent of the subjects accepted group strategy as minimizing socio-psychological problems. This agrees with Harlow and Garlow (1970) who stated that study group can be used to solve isolation problems. That agrees with Ozulu (1997). When adults are made to study in groups, they feel relaxed and develop more sense of responsibility (Houre 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).

It was discovered that 1470 (96.50%) accepted guidance and counseling strategy as being capable of minimizing their problems. Ogili (2001) said that the problems of anxiety, lack of self-confidence, inferiority feelings and lack of support services experienced by distance education students can be minimized by employing guidance counselors. The findings agree with Hossein (2004) who stressed that guidance and counseling strategy will also help the students overcome and minimize the level of the fear of the unknown and anxiety.

CONCLUSION

This study had looked at methods that can be used to solve problems of distance education students. Based on the findings of the study, recommendations were made.

RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE STUDY

The following recommendations are proffered.

1. There is need to encourage and assist the students organize study groups to enable them interact for their well-being.

2. The students should be guided to develop their own e-mail addresses and encouraged to be using internet facilities.

3. Guidance counselors should be employed.

REFERENCES


Ogili, E.E. (1995). Teacher Education And Distance Learning. NNCR


