SOCIOLOGICAL IMPEDIMENTS THAT LEADS TO INACCESSIBILITY OF WOMEN ATTENDING OPEN DISTANCE LEARNING (ODL) IN NATIONAL OPEN UNIVERSITY OF NIGERIA (NOUN), EKITI-STATE BRANCH

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ABSTRACT

This paper meritoriously sets out to explore and provide an up-to-date picture on sociological impediments that lead to inaccessibility faced by women attending ODL in their quest to study, specifically at the National Open University of Nigeria (NOUN) Ekiti-State, Branch. Proportionate sampling technique was used to select three hundred (300) respondents from part 1-4 based on their physical appearance at the centre premises and their claims, evidence presented (Student Identification Card) that they were students of NOUN. The study adopted descriptive research design.

The main data collection technique used for the study were questionnaire and structured by researcher titled "Sociological Impediments on Inaccessibility of Women Attending Open Distance Learning Questionnaire (SIIWAODLQ)" and validated by experts at Ekiti State University, Ado-Ekiti and experts in Nigerian Educational Research and Development Council, Abuja for vetting and clarity. The response from that vetting (both parties) became the basis for restructuring and reviewing questions that provided useful answers to the study. Reliability coefficient of 0.78 was derived after using Spearman Brown prophecy formula technique. Tables, frequencies and simple percentage were the key descriptive statistics used to analyse demographic information and Research question 1. Mean score of 2.50 above was used to analyse Research question 2 and present the findings while linear regression (SPSS) was used to test the Hypotheses at 0.05 level of significance.

Finding revealed that Institutional, Situational and ICT were significant to the sociological impediments that lead to women inaccessibility on ODL in the covered area of study, because all were above 0.05 level of significance. The findings of the study will be utilized instrumentally and theoretically in informing policy directives by public universities presently involved in ODL programmes at large.

Keywords: Open Distance Learning, institutional, situational, women, ICT, Education, NOUN.

INTRODUCTION

Education plays an important role in economic and social development. Therefore, many governments, Nigeria included, value basic education and equal educational opportunity. Basic education equips recipients with skills and knowledge that can enable them to deal with problems at a personal and a national level.

In developing countries, governments have enthusiastically embraced distance learning as an affordable solution to address problems of equity and access to education. The various researchers use the term distance education and distance learning interchangeably so also will this article do. Considering the global challenges of higher education, it is not surprising that Open and Distance Learning (ODL) is an important strategy towards resolving problems of access, quality and equity (UNESCO, 2004). Adopting ODL in Universities is

both the matter of responding to global demands and providing opportunities to individual who wish to fulfil their education potential.

Distance education has been conceptualized in numerous ways, but in simple terms distance education refers to a planned and regular educational provision where there is distance between the instructor and the learner. Eastmond, (1995); Kerka, (1996) cited by Ohene and Essuman, (2014) define distance education as the use of print or electronic communications media to deliver instruction when teachers and learners are separated in place and/or time. The Commonwealth of Learning defines distance education as that which refers to situations where learners are physically separated from the educational provider, communicating in writing, (using letter, mail, email, fax or computer conferencing; verbally (by telephone, audio conferencing, video conferencing); or in face-to-face tutorial sessions' (COL, 2003). Distance education or learning is an approach used by providers of education for students who study when and where it suits them best. There is continuous learning by students in this mode of education, which usually suits students who fulfil other commitments such as work, family and community.

Women represent half of the world's population and could represent half of the total productive labour force, we endorse the United Nations Development Program assertion that "it is necessary to seek cultural and educational institutions to train, prepare, and give full opportunity for woman to participate with thought and experience and practice" to develop themselves and the nations in which they live (UNDP, 2007). In addition to advancement, education provides a means for women to protect themselves from exploitation. I can optimistic that distance education, especially the use of e-learning, will move educational systems forward, especially in the most influential aspects that touch the women lives, and especially for disadvantaged or marginalized women who are otherwise denied formal education and developmental opportunities.

National Open University of Nigeria (NOUN) was initially established on 22nd July, 1983 as springboard for Open Distance Learning (ODL) in Nigeria. The university, at present, has 47 study centres spread across Nigeria and operates its Administrative Headquarters located in Lagos, Nigeria.
From the take-off of the university, pioneer student enrolment stands at 32,400 with over 50 programmes and 750 courses, stair casing through from certificate to diploma and degree level, and maintain a strong commitment to internationalization. The establishment of Open and Distance Learning institutions around the world is to address the education and re-educational needs of individual learners and workforce (Pierrakeas et al., 2004).

NOUN in particular, typically develop educational activities underpinned by an educational philosophy fundamentally different from those held by conventional educational systems. The main aspect of this philosophy is to promote "lifelong education" and to provide an individual with the best alternative mode of accessing higher education (Keegan, 1996) cited by (Raymond, 2012). NOUN is located along Are-Afao Road, Ado Ekiti, Ekiti-State, Nigeria with population over 4000 students offer different courses.

Institutional impediments are those caused by organisational set-up, it may be both physical and non-physical. The physical may include such things as nearness to classroom, road net-work and other academic resources such as the library. Stringent admission requirements, high tuition fees and the mode of paying these fees constitute some of the non-physical. NOUN is an institution running ODL programmes in Nigeria including Ekiti-State Branch face some impediments of serving student population which is diverse in terms of enrolment, demography, location and level of advanced knowledge prior to enrolment into programmes. Currently, ODL students are the fastest growing segment of tertiary education in the country, in NOUN, women students, who enrol on distance education programmes, it is believed, do so for several reasons, including convenience.

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Distance education students who are mainly adult workers may be time-bound due to work or location-bound due to geographic or family responsibilities (Galusha, 2012).

Situational impediments are persistent and pertain to the women individual's to a particular situation. It includes process of socialization, cultural, family responsibilities, lack of support from the husband, not being taken seriously, campus climate, lack of network support for coping, time conflicts, and lack of mobility.

Thus, the ability to handle these situational impediments by women will determine ones participation in distance programmes. The individual's situation may refer to her responsibilities at home, place of work or community. Many distance women learners are within the working class bracket and are married adult learners taking care of the family.

Therefore, they need to possess the ability to balance their time for the different roles and responsibilities. Galusha (2012) asserts that students' age, type of work and marital status, lack of adequate money to cover the cost of the programme constitute an important aspect of situational impediment for women. The level of one's salary, access to loan and the desire to improve one's self for a better future may determine the urge to go for a loan to pursue further education.

There is universal recognition of the need to use Information and Communication Technology (ICT) in education as the era of globalization began, where the free flow of information via satellite and the internet holds sway in global information dissemination of knowledge. Braimoh and Osiki (2008) raise concern about this approach of restoring the teaching learning transaction in Africa because of the low development of the Information Communication Technology (ICT) sector.

It is further argued that the use of ICT in distance education poses a lot of challenges due to uneven and unequal access to computers and the internet and most importantly the fact that power supply is unstable. ODL at NOUN in Ekiti- State is presently facing impediment in information dissemination because of instability of power supply that decline the women to have access to immediate information through the internet. Two types of skills are involved, namely, technical competence and information literacy (Mossberger et al., 2003) that people need in order to have effective access to contemporary ICT is a problem to distance learners. Accordingly, technical competence refers to the skills needed to operate the hardware and software of ICT, including the skills of using networked systems to access and share information.

Collectively, these skills have been referred to as "computer literacy" (Warschauner, 2003). Lack of these skills is a critical impediment as learner may fail to use the various physical, digital and human resources involved ICT.

The potential benefits of ODL related to its flexibility, accessibility, affordability and life based education are numerous. ODL could enable an expansion of tertiary enrolments at less cost per student than under the traditional residential campus system (Pityana, 2004), since it allows the training of more people. Greater flexibility enables ODL courses to adapt to specific student needs or work requirements, thereby enabling greater relevance. ODL also accommodates the growing demand for lifelong learning more easily than do residential programmes. Moreover, ODL can effectively reach those learners who have been denied access to higher education, for example, women who are unable to attend traditional educational programs because of household responsibilities or cultural constraints, economically marginalized groups, and the imprisoned (Rumble, 2000). Despite the expanding growth of ODL and its perceived benefits, students who enrol with ODL have been shown to face many impediments related to individual, institutional and ICT (Cosmas and Mbwette, 2009; Mbukusa, 2009).

ABOUT the STUDY

Statement of the Problem
Open Distance Learning (ODL) has greater flexibility, relevance and its ability to accommodate the growing demand of lifelong learning education (Daniel, 2005; Pityana, 2004), and is a perseverance avenue to those who have previously one way or the other denied access to higher education to earn their degrees. Yet, studies reported that ODL students facing some impediments which lead to the high drop-out and late completion of their studies (Allen and Seaman, 2010; Zirnkle, 2004). Whereas there is an agreement on the benefits of distance learning, controversy persists with regard to certain fundamental issues among the women attending distance learning such as limited use of technology; lack of awareness of quality parameters of delivery systems among staff, general inefficiency of administrative systems and high attrition rates.

It's on this note that investigating the sociological impediments that leads to inaccessibility of women attending Open Distance Learning (ODL) in National Open University of Nigeria (NOUN) Ekiti-State Branch became necessary.

Purpose of The Study
The purpose of this study was to examine the sociological impediments that lead to inaccessibility of women attending Open Distance Learning (ODL) in National Open University of Nigeria (NOUN) Ekiti-State Branch.

Objective of The Study
The objective of this study was to examine impediments related to Institutional, Situational and ICT levels facing women attending distance learning in NOUN, Ekiti-State Branch.

Research Questions
The study seeks to find answers to the under listed research questions:

➢ What are the impediments facing women attending distance learning in NOUN
➢ What are the perceptions' of women attending distance learning in NOUN

Hypotheses
The following hypotheses were formulated and tested for the study:

➢ Institutional impediments will be a significant to women attending ODL in NOUN.
➢ Situational impediments will be a significant to women attending ODL in NOUN.
➢ ICT impediments will be a significant to women attending ODL in NOUN.

Significance Of The Study
It was the belief of my (researcher) that this research work would meet a certain expectations, findings would be beneficial to the ODL stakeholders and public at large. It will help to explain the impediments facing women attending ODL that would be the steppingstone towards its solutions.

It would also provide useful information to policy maker and ODL planners, that would be useful for formulating actionable ODL policies on women in the nation.

It would contribute to the exiting body of knowledge and better understanding on impediments facing women attending ODL in general.

METHODOLOGY

Research Design
This study adopted descriptive research design. Descriptive research design is a scientific method, which involves observing and describing the behaviour of a subject without influencing it in any way. It is used to obtain information concerning the status of the phenomena to describe, "what exists" with respect to variables or conditions in a situation.

Population
The study population refers to members, individuals, groups or elements involved in the study. The population of this study consisted of all women attending ODL in NOUN Ekiti-State Branch and it focus on 1500 (One thousand five hundred) respondents respectively.

Sample and Sampling Procedures
The sample for this study was three hundred (300) women selected from NOUN study centre Ekiti-State, Branch. Proportionate sampling technique was used to select them from part 1-4 based on their physical appearance in the centre premises and their claims, evidence presented (Student Identification Card) that they were students of NOUN.

Ethical Issues
The researcher requested clearance and approval letters from Director study centre (NOUN, Ekiti-State, Branch) respectively before meeting the respondents.

Prior to the main study, all respondents were informed about the purpose and process of the study and were assured that confidentiality will be maintained and that information collected was for academic purpose only.

Instrumentation
Questionnaire was the only instrument used for this study duly designed by the researcher in line with identified variables titled "Sociological Impediments on Inaccessibility of Women Attending Open Distance Learning Questionnaire (SIIWAODLQ)" and it was divided into two sections.

Demographic information of the respondents was focused in section A while section B based on independent variables involved.

Validity
Validity determines whether the research truly measures that which it was intended to measure or how truthful the research results are (Golafshani, 2003). It implies that the researcher want to measure what he/she is supposed to measure. The researcher structured questionnaire were subjected to an experts at Ekiti-State University, Ado-Ekiti and experts in Nigerian Educational Research and Development Council, Abuja for vetting and clarity. The response from that vetting (both parties) became the basis for restructuring and reviewing questions that provided useful answers.

Reliability
Reliability addresses the question of consistence of the research procedures and results. It implies the research process and its ultimate outcomes and it is the degree of consistence demonstrated in a study. In order to ensure reliability for this study, the instrument was also estimated by test-retest method and analyzed using Spearman Brown prophecy formula technique and a coefficient of 0.78 was got indicating that the instrument is reliable.

Data Collection
Three hundred (300) copies of the questionnaire were distributed and administered over a period of 6 weeks, all the completed questionnaire were retrieved immediately and a coding guide was developed to facilitate data analysis.

Data Analysis Procedures
The data was analyzed with Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) version 18.0 to test the hypotheses at 0.05 level of significance and descriptive statistics of simple percentage was used for demographic information and research question 1 while mean score of 2.50 above was also used for research question 2 respectively.
Results and Discussions.

FINDINGS

SECTION A
Demographic Information
Data collected in respect of demographic information on marital status of the respondents shows that single were 112 (37.3%), married were 188 (62.7%). District of the state shows that 74 (24.7%) were from south, 68 (22.7%) were from north and 158 (52.6%) were also from central, these disparity became imperative because the study centre was located at the central district of the state that gives them the privilege.

Age of the respondents pointed out that 64 (21.3%) were below 30 years, 98 (32.7%) were between 31-40 years, 78 (26%) were between 41-50 years, and 60 (20%) were 51 years above. It shows that most of the respondents whose education has been interrupted by one thing or other were involved in distance learning and those that want to elevate herself academically. Mbukusa (2009) found that most of the distance learning students are within 35 to 50 years of age and some are more or less.

In contrast, Dabbagh and Bannan-Ritland, (2005) and Dabbagh (2007) documented that, the profile of the distance learner population is changing to one that is dynamic, tentative, younger, and responsive to rapid technological changes.

While Years of study reviewed that 95 (31.7%) were part 1; 80 (26.7%) were part 2; 58 (19.3%) were part 3 and 67 (22.3%) were part 4 respectively, these disproportion were reviewed, it simply because most of them were been denied on admission into direct university and they discovered that distance learning is an alternative access to education.
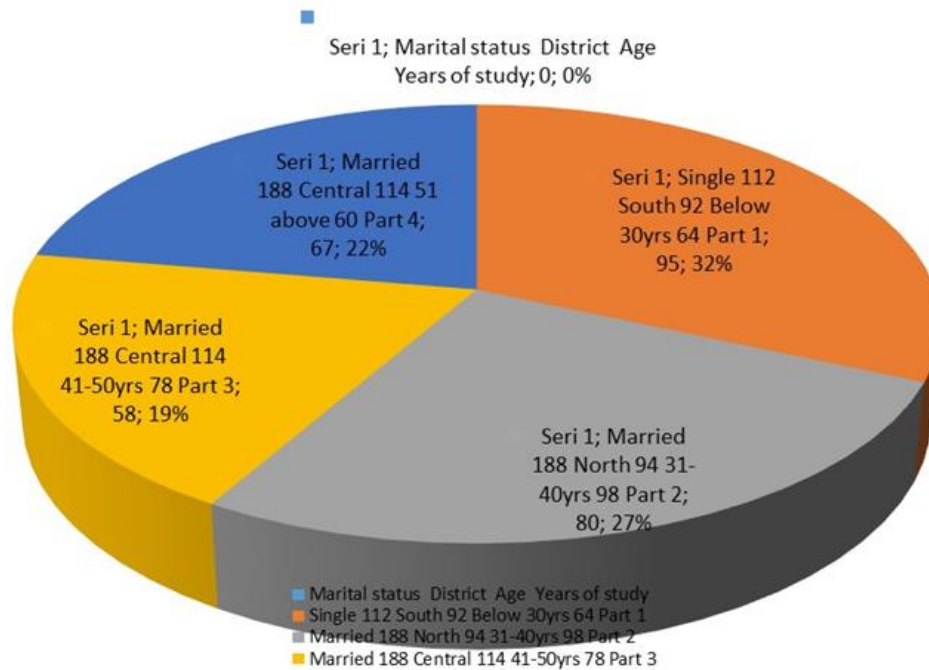
Figure 1:
Demographic information of the respondents

SECTION B

Research question 1:
Impediments facing women attending distance learning in NOUN
Table 1. belove shows result on different types of impediment facing women attending ODL in general.

Huge cost of education was the greatest impediments to continuing a formal education as showed in the table above with (69%), this was not only on cost of tuition and books but includes the cost of lost income from going to school rather than working. And also includes a complex set of substitution costs of not being available to do non-financially rewarding work that a full-time housewife and mother would do to support the family, such as producing food and cooking, caring for children and other dependents, making clothes etc., all as part of supporting other family members who are working to produce an income to support the family group.

Early marriage was (66%); having new born babies was (62%); in supportive by spouse was (40%). These impediments go hand in hand because they are all migrating from one to another. An early marriage for girls is associated with ignorance about birth control, which results in a larger family unit and spouse in supportive because of domestics responsibilities. Parental rejection (56%); occupational stress (27%); in conducive environment (25%); Preference of the family to educate boys only (31%). These may be related to the fact that most parents fear their daughters leaving the house alone; some parents even do not see any importance for college education, especially for a woman; and some believe that women should only be full-time house wives. The results was supported by findings of the report on the National Committee for Women on the lack of awareness of the importance of education for girls (National Committee for Women, 2005).

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Table 1:
Different Types of Impediment with percentages

No/s	Different Types of Impediment	Frequency	Percentage
1	Huge cost of the study for women	208	69%
2	Early marriage of the women	198	66%
3	Having new babies during the programme	186	62%
4	In-supportive by the husband/spouse.	120	40%
5	Parental rejection of the programme	168	56%
6	Occupational stress with the house work	80	27%
7	In conducive environment for the study by women	75	25%
8	Preference of the family to educate boys only	92	31%
9	Time allocation for the programme	66	22%
10	Distance covered before getting to programme Centre	70	23%
11	Spinsterhood rejection of the programme	64	21%
12	Parents refused education outside work for woman	56	19%
13	Deficiency in the general secondary exams of the women	50	17%
14	Limited disciplines by the universities on ODL programme	48	16%
15	Work condition for the women	40	13%
16	Health problems of the women	38	13%
17	Others	34	11%

According to Mushi (2001); Pierrakes and Xenos (2004); Mbukusa, (2009), unfavourable home learning environment is among the barriers that have routinely impeded ODL students. Time allocation (22%); distance cover (23%); Spinsterhood rejection (21%); Parents refused education outside work for woman (19%); Deficiency in the general secondary exams (17%); Limited disciplines by the universities on ODL (16%); work condition (13%); health problems (13%) and others (11%). Time and distance can be seen as absence from home. Mushi (2001) reported problems of transport and greater distance to regional centre as among the challenges facing ODL students. This was in line with Vergids and Penagiotakooulos (2002) at Hellenic Open University in Greece found that, fluctuations in the time available for study affected by changes in work and family environments, coupled with an underestimation of the actual effort and time necessary for studies made many students (47%) abandon their studies. Most of the respondents admitted that deficiency in their secondary exams prompt them to enrol in ODL for further education, no discipline incurred by the authority in respect of ODL is concern and other impediments confronted by women see ODL as alternative for their education uplifting in nature. Whereas Diran and Yoon, (2009) in Jordan found similar results; they documented that students failure to balance time for studying and other family and job obligations is a single most cited barrier by distance learners. Moreover, lack of time as a challenge facing ODL students is a key theme which emerged from other studies conducted elsewhere in Africa such as Mbukusa, (2009) in Namibia, Ojo and Olakulehin, (2006) in Nigeria, and Basaza et al, (2010) in Uganda.

Taking the above literature into consideration, it is obvious that ODL students fail to appreciate the fact that, studying by distance mode demands equal time as traditional mode if not more.

Research question 2:
Perceptions' of women attending distance learning in NOUN

Table 2:
Perceptions' of women attending distance learning in NOUN

| No/s	Items	N	Mean	Decision
1	Do you think ODL programme is a quickest way of been fully educated by women whose education was interrupted?	300	2.78	Agree
2	Do you prefer ODL programme than regular programme?	300	1.98	Disagree
3	Online internet-based course is more preferable to women?	300	2.54	Agree
4	Do you see poor internet connectivity as a major setback for ODL programme?	300	2.62	Agree
5	Do you think face-to-face interaction of teaching is valuable than computer interaction?	300	2.51	Agree
6	Poor computer knowledge among the women make the ODL miserable?	300	2.53	Agree
7	Do you think printed materials are better than internet conversion on ODL study for women?	300	2.71	Agree
8	Do you think there is age limit for ODL among the women?	300	2.36	Disagree
9	Do you think all the women attending ODL can defend their certificate acquired?	300	2.88	Agree
10	Do you think women are not hiring machinery to do some of their course work and exams?	300	2.50	Agree
11	Can you encourage women to continue participating in ODL programme?	300	2.82	Agree

Table 2. reviewed result on perceptions' of women attending ODL to their level of understanding. All the respondents (women) agree with ODL programme as quickest way of getting educated, online internet-based course, poor internet connectivity, face-to-face interaction of teaching, poor computer knowledge, printed materials, defend their certificate, hiring machinery to do some work and exams, continue participating in ODL programme while preferable ODL programme than regular and age limit for ODL was totally disagree.

From these result, it can be emphatically said that women attending ODL was profitable because they saw it as an alternative for them to be duly educated for one reason that their education has been early instructed. This result was corroborated with a study by Ukpo (2005) in Nigeria showed that teachers enrolled in the ODL face challenges related to failure of trainees to receive training materials on time, students engagement in other economic activities to supplement their family incomes, and poor learner support services especially where study centre are under resourced and overstretched.

Likewise, Kamau (2007) in Kenya found that, without an effective learners, support services system that provides on-site face -to-face, timely feedback on student performance and access to library services, student achievement will inevitably be undermined and drop-out rates and procrastination will increase, while the advantages of distance education including cost effectiveness, will be undermined.

The fact remain that face-to-face should provide opportunities to students to talk to their tutors and peers around content that seems difficult for them while on their own. Such contact times create many opportunities for students to learn and obtain encouragement from their peers (Mbukusa, 2009). Therefore, face-to-face sessions are unique opportunity for isolated learners to be engaged physically in teaching and learning. Basaza et al, (2010); Juma, (2005); Senanayake and Dadigamua, (2005) suggested that, students often have difficulty when they do not have direct and ongoing contact with academic advising services from their instructors.

Hypothesis 1:
Institutional impediments will be a significant to women attending ODL in NOUN
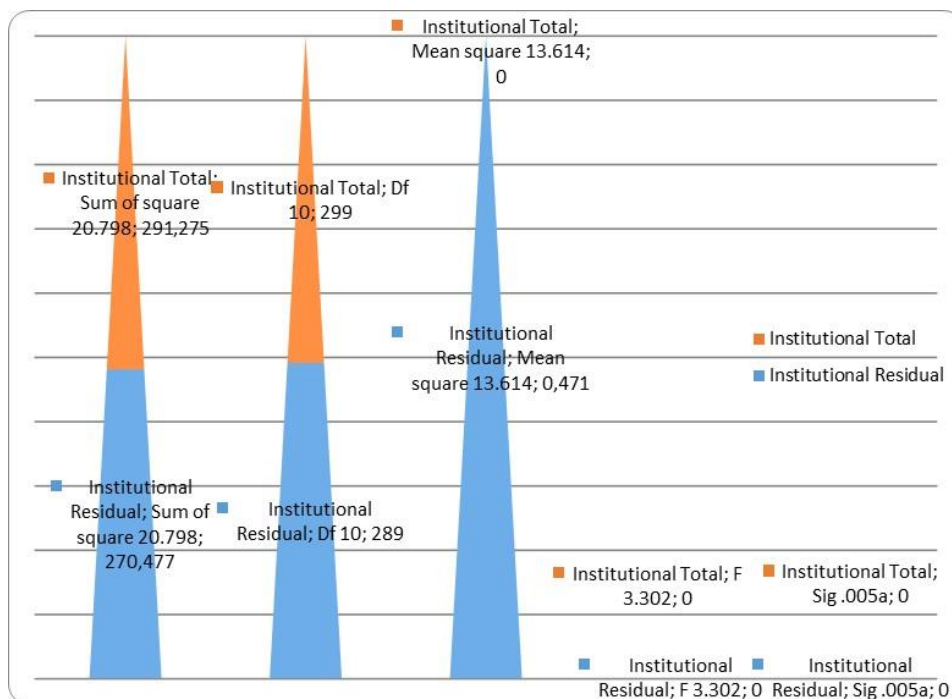
Figure 2:
Linear regression analysis result on institutional impediments.

The above figure 2 shows result on institutional impediments on women attending ODL in NOUN, Ekiti-State branch. The hypothesis that say institutional impediments will be a significant to women attending ODL was accepted due to the fact that 3.302 were above the level of significance 0.05 respectively.

Women viewed that institutional impediments gives them uncomfortable stress which include poor logistics system or a lack of appropriate advising; hence women may be more likely to experience isolation and alienation from the institution due to the lack of proper organizational support.

This result was in line with a research report submitted by some researchers across the globe. Daniel, (2005) viewed that all effective distance-learning programs depend upon the "three legs" of good learning materials, effective student support, and efficient logistics. Principally, the distance learning institution should engineer all these "three legs" for effective students learning.

However, there is evidence from research that the ODL may be causing, or at least contributing, to their own students' sense of burden (Tresman, 2002, Carnwell, 2000). Institutional impediments are constructed by educational institutions with or sometime without their knowledge (Zirnkle, 2004). This include difficulty in registering and paying for classes or a lack of appropriate advice provided under the umbrella of students services support (Bruening et al., 2001).

Pierrakeas et al., (2004); Tresman, (2002) reported that institutional related factors facing distance education student in some region is general higher lack of guidance and information prior to enrolment. Students reported that the course in which they enrolled took more time, or it was too dense in terms of the pace of programmes, than they had expected.

Many students enrol to distance learning with preconceived ideas and expectations, which may be based on prior educational experiences. Thus, guidance and information can be seen as a way to help students reframe their expectations, attitudes, and feelings about the next step in their educational journey (Moxley et al., 2001).

Ineffective feedback has effects on students as they are likely to develop fear that they will not finish their programmes on time (Zirnkle, 2004).

This fear of unknown or that which they do not comprehend makes students perform poorly in exams, school and even in real life (Mbukusa, 2009).

Although up to-date NOUN management has put many efforts to make ODL a reality in Nigeria, still students face institutional impediments. Logistics problems such as delayed study materials at regional centre, poor record keeping and inadequate provision of other students' administrative support.

Hypothesis 2:
Situational impediments will be a significant to women attending ODL in NOUN
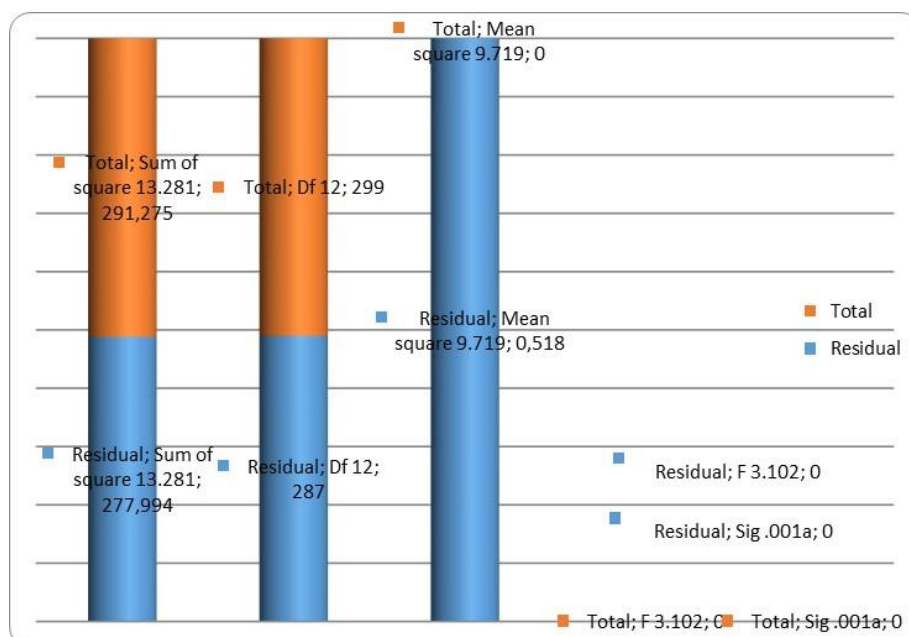
Figure 3:
Linear regression analysis result on situational impediments.

Figure 3 above reviewed analysis result on situational impediments on women attending ODL. It was noted that the hypothesis that says situational impediments will be a significant to ODL was therefore accepted. This was followed by calculated F-ratio that higher than level of significance that is 3.102; 0.05.

Women opinionated reaffirmed that situational impediments characterized all the condition disallowed them to accomplish their desire in ODL. This situational condition occurred in different perspectives such as physical, emotional, spiritual, psychological, behavioural, cultural, political, family responsibilities, lack of support from the family, not being taken seriously, campus climate, lack of network support for coping, time conflicts, lack of mobility and unidentifiable condition as shown by regression result.

This result was pipeline with a research on an ethnographic study conducted by Garland (2007) identified some situational impediments for students to persistence in distance learning. These include poor learning environment and lack of time, for example, students felt that the course took more time than anticipated because they failed to judge the demands of work, home and school.

Previously, Kember (1989) cited by Jakani, (2014) argued that poor time management leads to challenges such as learners inability to integrate the demands of off campus study with family, work and social commitments. Bourlova (2005) showed that adult students were seeking educational opportunities that were more appropriate for their circumstances so that they can reconcile their work life with family obligations.

Despite the lack of desire to return to the traditional school, they found a solution in ODL.

The finding was coincidence with Bourlova (2005) that highlights some of the impediments that facing women in continuing their education and found themselves in ODL such as: work comes first, high financial costs, having young children, and health problems.

Mhehe (2002) also lists the obstacles and type of impediments facing women in Tanzania, and includes financial problems, lack of support from family or spouse, the work of women and their inability to reconcile their responsibilities at home and field, and the burdens of studying.

Hypothesis 3:
ICT impediments will be a significant to women attending ODL in NOUN
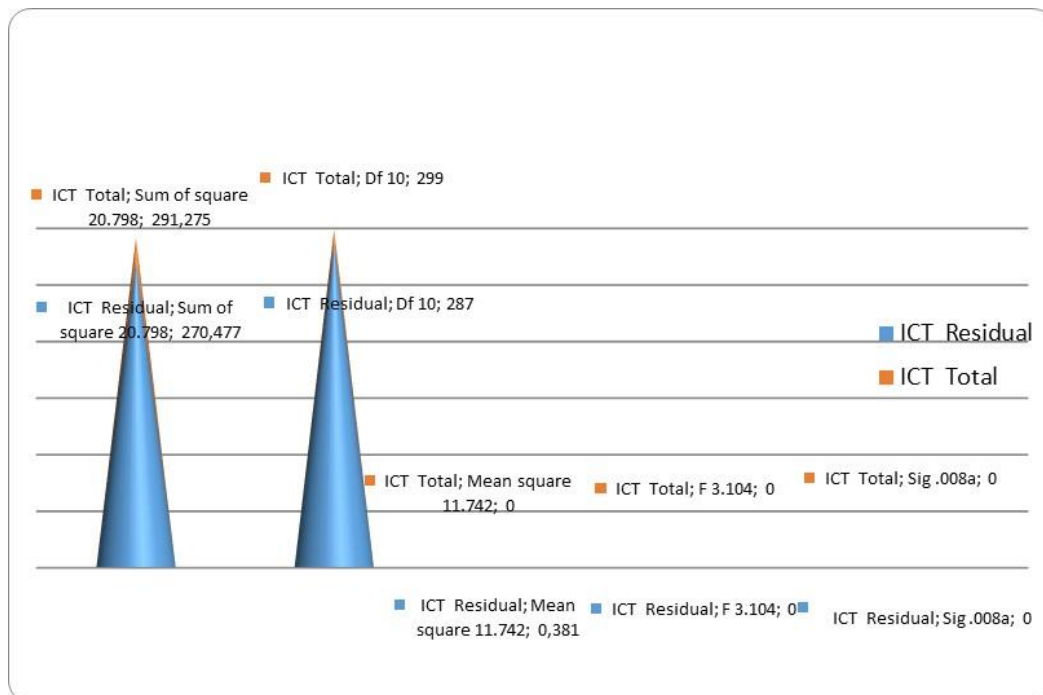
Figure 4:
Linear regression analysis result on ICT impediments.

Above figure 4 shows result on ICT impediments in relation to women attending ODL in NOUN, Ekiti-State Branch. This hypothesis was significant impediments with calculated F-ratio 3.104 and is higher than level of significance which is 0.05. However, the hypothesis was totally accepted as sociological impediments that lead to inaccessibility of women attending ODL in NOUN, Ekiti-State Branch.

This result was corroborated with Warschauner, (2003) that lack of these ICT skills is a critical challenge as learner may fail to use the various physical, digital and human resources involved ICT. Mossberger et al, (2003) replicated that to distance learners who are not well versed with technical competence and skills of information literacy, the use of an electronic medium in distance learning can inadvertently exclude them or be problematic in their education undertakings.

It is therefore fair to anticipate that, though under circumstances some students are unable to access ICT facilities offered by the university, others might be lagging behind time simply because are reluctant to change.

Howell et al, (2003) submitted that many educational institutions especially in developed countries are shifting from purely a campus-centred model of higher education to ODL model using information and communication technologies.

Cosmas and Mbwette, (2009) shows that, lack of or limited knowledge of ICT by academic staff, students and the high workload of staff at University level claimed to have proliferated the problems on how to manage students records.

Maguire (2001) points out in her study entitled "Gender, information technology, and developing countries" that women's access to technology and training is one of the most important requirements for the participation of women in the global knowledge economy.

Therefore, attention should be given to encouraging women to deal with technology and to provide opportunities for them.

She also notes that women in the developing countries in particular face some problems in accessing technology, and so it is important to provide opportunities for them to deal with the technology, as providing enormous potential will improve the status of women.

Information and communication technology has an effect on women's development (Alfrih, 2005) through "a change in ways of thinking and dealing with the modern means of communication, which gives women a broad educational dimension, particularly as they were able to keep pace with technology" (Khalil, 2004).

CONCLUSION

Open Distance Learning (ODL) is an important objective in the development of higher education and has great potential to balance opportunities and take higher education to the door steps of women. It is expected that this ODL will lead to empowerment of women especially among rural and tribal women.

Further the National Open University of Nigeria Scheme seeks to open the avenues of education to school dropouts, women entrepreneurs and artists, among others, who wish to enhance their natural expertise and aptitudes through formal learning.

Above all, concerning financial constraints, it was expected, because most of the distance learners are adults with family obligations that need money, financial constraints in their studies would be obvious. Almost, all respondents reported being self-financing their studies.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The following recommendations were made:

➢ Women attending ODL should be stimulated and skilled to use ICT for faster and easier learning.
➢ Centres for study with library facilities should be opened in each village to smooth the progress of women.

➢ Certificate discrimination should stop for ODL degrees among the educational institutions, employers and in the society at large.
➢ Contact programmes in ODL should be elastic to suit to the timing of working women in urban and rural areas.
➢ Courses for women in ODL should be application oriented so that it will help them in their money-making and community empowerment.

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