STUDY OF FACTORS AFFECTING PERSISTENCE AMONGST DISTANCE LEARNERS IN INDIAN UNIVERSITIES

Abstract

This study is an investigation of the factors affecting persistence amongst distance learners in Indian Universities. The focus of the study was on Social Integration, Academic Integration, Academic Incompatibility, External Attribution, Cost Benefit and Demographics of the Students. The study was delimited to Distance learners enrolled in Ignou (Indira Gandhi National Open University, Alagapa University and Panjab University Open learning (USOL). The objectives of the study was To study contribution of Academic integration, social integration, External Attribution, Academic incompatibility and Cost benefit to prediction of persistence among Distance learners. Three self constructed tools were used for the study 1. Questionnaire on Factors affecting Persistence in Distance Education 2. Persistence Scale 3. Questionnaire for demographics of students which are developed and standardized by the researcher. Seven hundred questionnaires were distributed to the samples in their PCP (Personal Contact Program) classes in centers located in Chandigarh and New Delhi. 527 questionnaires were collected back, tabulated and statistical analysis such as t-test, F-test, Correlation and Step-wise regression were done to analyze the data. The results of 262 responses from Males and 267 responses from females indicated that there is significant difference between males and females only in Academic Integration (p=0.023, at 0.05 level) and not in the other independent variables. Significant difference between male and females were found in their persistence (p-value was 0.001). Male distance learners were found to have Academic Integration (B=0.281, p<.01), Academic Incompatibility (B=0.271, p<.01), Cost benefit (B=0.449, p<.05) and External Attribution (B=0.095, p<.05) as four predictors for their persistence. Female distance learners were found to have only academic integration (B=0.267, p<.01) and Academic Incompatibility (B=0.155, p<.05) as predictors for their persistence. Social integration was not to be predictor in any of the groups.

Key words: Social Integration, Academic Integration, Academic Incompatibility, External Attribution, Cost Benefit, Persistence, Distance Learning