

OPEN AND DISTANCE LEARNING MODEL EFFECTS ON STUDENTS' PERFORMANCE IN THE FACULTY OF ARTS AND SOCIAL SCIENCES AT EGERTON UNIVERSITY, KENYA

Open and Distance Learning (ODL) has evolved in greater and greater amounts to change higher education by offering learning flexibility and accessibility, especially when the technological progress is growing in all aspects. In Egerton University, students have been found to perform fairly well in the academia, regardless of their different Kenya Certificate of Secondary Education (KCSE) entry qualifications. Factors such as socio-economic status, access to resources, and instructional strategies affect their performance. In spite of the increased usage of ODL, there is a lack of empirical data on its particular effect on the student performance in the Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences. It was a cross-sectional research with a quantitative design that involved 4,112 participants who were undergraduate students at the Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences at Egerton University. A sample of 352 participants was chosen by means of simple random type of sampling to give the data in form of structured questionnaires. Five theoretical frameworks; Theory of Distance Learning by Holmberg, Cognitive Load Theory (CLT), Transactional Distance Theory (TDT), Constructivist Learning Theory, and Student Integration Theory by Tinto helped to understand the learning and performance dynamics in the study. The validity and reliability of the data were guaranteed using a pilot study and the ethical considerations, such as informed consent and confidentiality. Student performance and ODL practices were analyzed using descriptive and inferential statistics to determine the relationship. The findings showed that ODL has a positive impact on student performance since it facilitates flexibility and self-directed learning. Nevertheless, the lack of online infrastructure, insufficient support mechanisms of learners, and the high level of cognitive load is a barrier to successful engagement. Results of regression showed that ODL-associated variables have a significant effect on variations in student academic results. Open-ended responses were gathered as qualitative feedback, and based on this feedback, there was a need to have a better-designed instructional process and constant technical assistance to facilitate learning. The research proposes to reinforce institutional ODL capacity by improving the digital infrastructure, educating faculty about virtual pedagogy, and creating learner-centered teaching models. Moreover, there is also the need to have greater institutional support and inclusive policies to maximize learning outcomes and provide equitable access to quality education among diverse student bodies.