

**CHALLENGES FOR EFFECTIVE LEARNING AMONG OPEN AND
DISTANCE LEARNERS: EXPERIENCES FROM THE OPEN UNIVERSITY
OF TANZANIA STUDENTS IN KIGOMA MUNICIPALITY**

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**A DISSERTATION SUBMITTED IN PARTIAL FULFILMENT OF THE
REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE OF MASTER OF EDUCATION IN
OPEN AND DISTANCE LEARNING OF THE OPEN UNIVERSITY OF
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CERTIFICATION

The undersigned certifies that she has read and hereby recommends for acceptance by the Open University of Tanzania the Research titled: “*Challenges for Effective Learning among Open and Distance Learners: Experiences from the Open University of Tanzania Students in Kigoma Municipality*” in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of master of Education in Open and Distance Learning of the Open University of Tanzania.

.....

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.....

Date

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DECLARATION

I, **Jackson K. Edward**, do hereby declare that this report is my own original work and has never been submitted to any University of the higher learning institution and has not be presented to any other higher learning Institution for any other academic award.

.....

Signature

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Date

DEDICATION

This work is dedicated to my wife, Luciana Lyatuu for her support and tolerance during the study period whose support was immeasurable. May GOD bless her.

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This research report is the result of many individuals. Firstly I thank my Almighty God for his protection and blessings throughout the time of proposal writing to this dissertation. Secondly, my sincere gratitude goes to my supervisor Dr. Hyasinta Kessy the research supervisor for her guidance, and advice during the study. More appreciation goes to various institutions including OUT Kigoma and postgraduate studies as well as Kigoma/Ujiji Municipality Director's Office for granting me letter for data collection, which assisted in the production of this report. This work would be impossible without their support. I am grateful to all staffs at OUT Kigoma and students who provided data for building this research report.

Finally, I would like to thank all other individuals who in one way or another put their efforts in producing this research report but it may happen that they did not appear in this work. I also acknowledge their contributions and their support.

ABSTRACT

The purpose for doing this study was to investigate the challenges for effective learning among open and distance learners from the open university of Tanzania at Kigoma Municipality. The study was guided by three objectives including: to examine the home factors challenging ODL students towards effective learning at the Open University of Tanzania, to examine the work factors challenging ODL students' towards effective learning at the Open University of Tanzania and to examine the institutional factors challenging ODL students towards effective learning at the Open University of Tanzania. Quantitative and qualitative research approaches were used along with survey design consisting of 106 respondents. Interview, questionnaire, and documentary review methods were used to collect data. The findings revealed the home factors such as failure to balance study time and home duties affect their learning, home responsibilities including cooking, taking care of sick people and community needs limit effective learning. Again work place challenges include the unfavorable work environment, e.g. absence of study space, lack of electricity at work, that both affect ODL students especially in rural areas. Finally, the institutional challenges revealed by the study are lack in provision of feedback on time about the events, lack of teacher contact poor learning infrastructure such as lack of library and books, lecture halls for discussion, enough chairs, tables, as well as playgrounds, affect learning. The study concludes that effective learning among open and distance learners can be achieved by resolving the challenges around students to ensure high completion rates. This study recommends that the Open University of Tanzania should take the responsibility to reduce some of institutional, work, and home challenges so as to increase completion rates the Open University of Tanzania.

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS AND ACRONYMS

ICT	Information and Communications Technologies
MOOCs	Massive Open Online Courses
ODL	Open and Distance Learning
OED	Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development
OL	Open Learning
OU	Open University
OUT	Open University of Tanzania
SDT	Self-Determination Theory
SPSS	Statistical Package for Social Sciences
ZOU	Zimbabwe Open University

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND TO THE PROBLEM

1.1 Background of the Study

This study presents a study on the challenges facing open distance learners at the Open University of Tanzania. Recently Massive open online courses (MOOCs) offering large-scale interactive participation and open access through the World Wide Web and other network technologies have been developed in distance mode of education (Keegan, 1996). The concept of distance education is understood differently by different authors. Keegan (1996) refers to it as an educational approach in which there is quasi- separation of the learners and the lecturers in time and space. In such situation the instructor, instructional strategy, and methods are subsumed into the learning materials popularly referred to as the study materials that have been designed as self directed learning guide for students (Carr, 2000). Again, Allen and Seaman (2010) refer distance education as open learning education to students who may not always be physically present at a school. In this study distance education is taken as online education, which involves courses conducted in a blended mode, meaning that the students learn both face to face and online system.

Historically distance learning was firstly introduced in United States of America and England in 1870s. The first correspondence school in the United States was the Society to Encourage Studies at Home, founded in 1873 whereby the University of London was the first university to offer distance learning degrees, establishing its external Program in 1858 (Kaplan, et al., 2016). The first distance education course in the modern sense was provided by Sir Isaac Pitman in the 1840s, who taught a system

of shorthand by mailing texts transcribed into shorthand on postcards and receiving transcriptions from his students in return for correction. This scheme was made possible by the introduction of uniform postage rates across England in 1840. In Africa it started in South Africa, National Open University of Nigeria and Zimbabwe Open University and the Open University of Ghana. In Tanzania distance education was introduced since 1992 by using different instructional materials (Kessy, 2012).

In the developed nations, Pethokouk (2002) and Thomas (2001) documented that the implementation of a distance-learning programme in United States of America is associated with unique problems that stand against achieving students' goals including high rate of student' drop-out and late completion. Drop-out rates vary between countries. Carr (2000) indicated that in the United States, drop-out rates range from 20% to 50%. Again, in US, where it is anticipated that distance education technology is widely used, the learners reported being frustrated, confused and their interest in learning was reduced due to the lack of experience in technology applications in Open and Distance Learning (ODL). Challenges related to technology, are reported as computer vision syndrome, finger joint pain, backaches, headaches, and dizziness due to occasional long periods of computer use to compensate for limited access (Mushi, 2001).

Further, in India, it was revealed that students might have wanted to be browsing web pages but some of them indicated that they did not know how to operate a computer (Hussein, 2005). The Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) (2000) reported that drop-out ranges from 20% in the United Kingdom to 45% or more in Austria, France, Portugal and Turkey; and 35% in Italy. According to

Perryer (2004), in England more than 2.4 million students were enrolled in ODL and it is estimated that there are about 1.6 distance learners in dropped out. In India, 22% of the total number of students enrolled in India's higher education system is distance learners 8% failed to complete (Forzdar & Kannan, 2006). Meanwhile as in 2006 in China, 1.4 million or 24.4% of its 5.8 million students in higher education were studying through ODL the remaining percent shifted to next year's (Forzdar, & Kannan, 2006). Some of the challenges observed include several categories such as situational, attitudinal psychological. These challenges are not more like on developing nations where by institutional challenges are the major ones.

In case of Africa, number of the study done found that among the distance learners who survive from drop-out take a long time to complete their studies than it was anticipated (Mbukusa, 2009; Bhalalusesa, 1999; Daniel, 2005; Tyler-Smith, 2006). Such high drop-out and late completion are the signs that, there are several underlying challenges facing the ODL students from not meeting their goals (Senanayake & Dadigamuwa, 2005). The challenges facing distance learners fall into several categories such as situational, attitudinal psychological, and pedagogical (Berge et al., 2002); and institutional and socio-cultural related challenges (Zirnkle, 2001). Regardless of these categorizations, these challenges emerge from three particular levels: work, home and institutional which needs to be studied more.

According to Cross (1981) there are three distinct categories of challenges facing ODL students as situational, institutional and dispositional. Zirnkle, (2004) explains that students lack experience and/or training with instructional technology is a big challenge to ODL learners which affect their completion. According to Cross,

situational challenges include job and responsibilities that reduce time for study. Lack of experience in ODL studies and/or training with instructional technology causes students to fail to study while at work (Zirnkle, 2004).

In Tanzania, Cosmas and Mbetwe (2009) show that, along with that problem even there is no electricity in rural schools for ODL learners so that they can work while studying at their own time. He argues further that in the middle of other issues, students are reluctant to change and adopt new changes especially those related to the use of ICT as well, lack of limited knowledge of ICT. Additionally in developing countries like Tanzania the issues related to experiences of modern educational technologies is more of a vision than authenticity which ODL learners may benefit.

The question by Cosmas and Mbetwe (2009) is how can we blame the students that are reluctant to change while the institutions themselves are ill-prepared to lead these changes with technology? Whilst technology applications at individual level are still a challenge in developed countries like Tanzania, the situation in developing countries is much worse than developed ones. Distance learners in developing countries are not only challenged by lack of experience in the application of technology but also, scarce of those technology (UNESCO, 2004). In poor nations where the major issues are meeting their basic need for food, clothing, and shelter, with access to ICT is very near to the ground on their list of priorities.

Therefore, it is hard to imagine that these technologies can have a positive influence on the education of learners who lack basic living resources and live with an underdeveloped educational infrastructure in poor countries. This problem has

appeared in number of studies and continues to re-appear despite of efforts in studies conducted in before. The problem can be dealt by the Open University of Tanzania management by improving their infrastructure and general service delivery to the students so that completion in time is possible.

1.2 Statement of the Problem

In order to compete with the current state of globalization it is important to remove barriers and constraints that prevent learners from accessing and successfully learning in quality and lifelong education through open and distance education (Cosmas & Mbetwe, 2009). Several studies on Open and Distance learning have been done worldwide and Africa in particular. For example, a study on done in USA by Carr (2000) indicated drop-out rates that ranged from 20% to 50%. Again, in US, where it is anticipated that distance education technology is widely used, the learners reported being frustrated, confused and their interest in learning was reduced due to the lack of experience in technology applications in ODL. Challenges related to technology, are reported as computer vision syndrome, finger joint pain, backaches, headaches, and dizziness due to occasional long periods of computer use to compensate for limited access (Mushi, 2001).

Further, in India, it was revealed that students might have wanted to be browsing web pages but some of them indicated that they did not know how to operate a computer (Hussein, 2005). In case of Africa, Mbukusa, 2009; Bhalalusesa, 1999; Daniel, 2005; Tyler-Smith, 2006) found that among the distance learners who survive from drop-out take a long time to complete their studies than it was anticipated. Such high drop-out and late completion are the signs that, there are several underlying challenges facing

the ODL students from not meeting their goals. Again, Zirnkle (2004) studied on the challenges facing ODL students and found that Lack of experience in ODL studies and lack of electricity infrastructure causes students to fail to study while at work. Moreover, in Tanzania, Cosmas and Mbetwe (2009) did an investigation on work factors and show that, along with that problem even there is no electricity in rural schools for ODL learners so that they can work while studying at their own time. In spite of some researches that have been done on ODL but the problem of teacher effectiveness is still continuing, implying that less has been studied on challenges for effective students learning. Also how these challenges and learning technologies impact students' learning is not yet well studied in Tanzania, which is why this study is important to be conducted to fill the gap.

1.3 Objectives of the Study

The general objective of this study was to investigate challenges facing learning effectiveness to open and distance learners at the Open University of Tanzania.

1.3.1 Specific Objectives

This study was guided by the following specific objectives:

- (i) To examine the home factors challenging ODL students towards effective learning at the Open University of Tanzania
- (ii) To examine the work factors challenging ODL students towards effective learning at the Open University of Tanzania
- (iii) To examine the institution factors challenging ODL students towards effective learning at the Open University of Tanzania

1.4 Research Questions

- (i) What are the homes factors challenging ODL students towards effective learning at the Open University of Tanzania?
- (ii) What are the works factors challenging ODL students' towards effective learning at the Open University of Tanzania?
- (iii) What are the institutions factors challenging ODL students towards effective learning at the Open University of Tanzania?

1.5 Significance of the Study

The study provides number of benefits; the study helps to document the contemporary challenges facing ODL students along with its solutions. The study provides useful information to open universities for redesigning and formulating actionable ODL polices in Tanzania. For academicians, the study is advantageous in terms of knowledge and theory building and for being a dependable reference for future similar studies. It further creates understanding and awareness among of readers on the challenges facing ODL students.

1.6 Scope of the Study

The scope of this study identifies the challenges that obstruct ODL students' success in their studies; it covered all graduated, continuing students and academic staff at OUT Kigoma. Geographically and academically, the study covered the area of Kigoma Municipality.

1.7 Limitations and Delimitations of the Study

According to Wei, et al. (2016) the limitations of the study are those characteristics of the methodology that impact the interpretation of the findings from a research. These

are the problems a researcher faces during the study. Delimitations mean boundaries that are set by the researcher in order to control the range of a study. During data collection a researcher faced financial constraints and time caused by nature of respondents' works. In order to meet the objective of the study the researcher was flexible to budget in case of costs in carrying out data collection. In the course of time constrain the researcher abide to appointment given by respondents and met them for their own time after work so that to get the completed questionnaire.

1.8 Organization of the Report

The dissertation is organized into five chapters as follows. Chapter one covers introduction, the background to the problem, statement, significance of the study, scope, objectives, research questions, and limitation. Chapter two covers literature review. This include: definitions and conceptual definitions of key terms, theoretical literature, empirical literature, research gap, and conceptual framework. Chapter three covers research methodology. The components under research methodology are: research design, study area, study population, population size and sampling procedures, data collection methods, research instruments, validity and reliability as well as data analysis. Chapter four present research findings, data analysis and discussions. Lastly, chapter five presents conclusion and recommendations.

CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Introduction

This chapter consists of the definition of the key terms, theoretical literature, Empirical literature, and the research gap.

2.2 Definition of Key Terms and Concepts

2.2.1 Open Learning

Open Learning refers to an educational approach in which there is quasi- separation of the learners and the lecturers in time and space (Keegan, 1996). In distance education, the instructor and instructional strategy and methods are subsumed into the learning materials popularly referred to as the study materials that have been designed as self directed learning guide for students. Open learning refers to the philosophical construct that seeks to remove barrier and constrains that may prevent authentic learners from accessing and succeeding in quality lifelong learning education (UNESCO, 2004). The term open learning may in other way refer to the education of students who may not always be physically present at a school.

2.2.2 Distance Learning

Distance Learning is a way of learning remotely without being in regular face-to-face contact with a teacher in the classroom. In the UK such learning has its roots in students' learning through correspondence courses (Holmberg, 1995). The term distance learning according to Senanayake & Dadigamuwa, (2005) is a system in which the teacher is separated geographically and time from students, and in which

the student is separated from other students. Generally it is a learning mode where by teachers and students interact through technologies.

2.2.3 Open and Distance Learning (ODL)

Open and Distance Learning is a general term for the use of telecommunication to enhance learning. Literature by UNESCO, (2004) define Open and Distance Learning as a potential means for providing higher education to all who need to realize their ambitions and fulfill their potential in this globalized world. This study defines Open and Distance Learning as a means to provide education to meet demand of learners while a facilitator and students are not geographically together.

2.2.4 Distance Education

Distance Education is the education of students who may not always be physically present at a school. Courses that are conducted (51 percent or more) are either hybrid, blended or 100% whole instruction (UNESCO, 2004). It is also referred to as independent learning by the extensive use of information and communications technology (ICT), replacing traditional content delivery by postal correspondence. In general way it is a learning process facilitated by use of information technology.

2.2.5 Challenges

Challenges is something that needs great mental or physical effort in order to be done successfully and therefore tests a person's ability: Along with the study Challenges: is anything which put a barrier to achievement of planned goals. It is the explanation about the students at open universities who are faced with number of challenges towards their learning in ODL programme.

2.3 Theoretical Literature Review

Theory is a contemplative and rational type of abstract or generalizing thinking or the results of such thinking (Zima, 2007). According to him theories guide the practice and research of distance education and other areas of study. This study is guided by theory of independence and autonomy. Keegan (1986) considered the independence of the student as the essence of distance education. His beliefs were that, distance learning should be capable of operating any place where there are students even only one student whether or not there are teachers at the same place, at the same time; His objective was to describe how open and distance learning can become effective. The objectives and assumptions are related to the variables of the study that, the objectives of the study that establishes home, work and institution challenges facing ODL learners were related to the theory of independence and autonomy which asserts that learners in ODL can learn effectively when they are free from challenges. That is why the theory supports the study.

2.4 Conceptual Framework of the Study

A conceptual framework is logical structure of meaning that guide the development of the study (Rodman, 1980). All frameworks are based on the identification of key concepts and the relationships among those concepts. Purposes of Conceptual Framework; to clarify concepts and propose relationships among the concepts in a study, to provide a context for interpreting the study findings to explain observations, to encourage theory development that is useful to practice. The following conceptual framework integrates the research specific objectives/ questions, along with the key issues from empirical studies, which are the outcomes. Figure 1.1 is a diagrammatical

conceptual framework developed to describe the home factors challenges, work, and institutional challenges facing ODL students towards effective learning in distance learning. It consists of several variables including dependent variable and independent variable as indicated in Figure 1.1

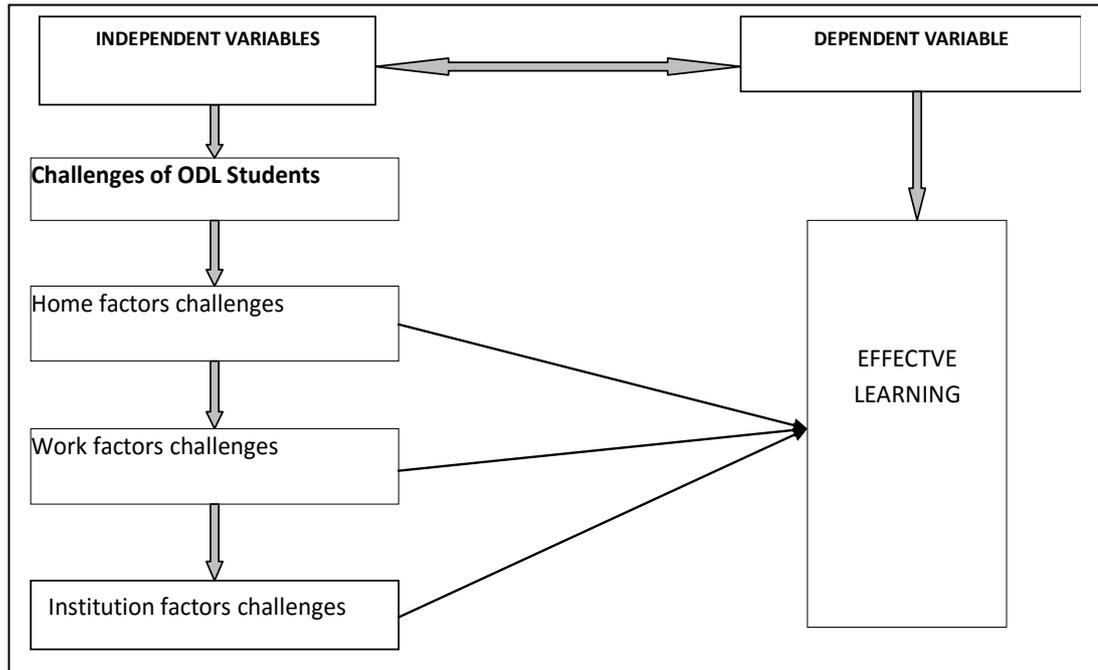


Figure 2.1: Conceptual Framework of the Study

Source: Researcher, (2019)

From the above conceptual framework home, work and institutions are independent factors that affect learners' effectiveness during learning. Effectiveness is dependent variable that link to the home, work and institutions factors affecting ODL learners at the Open University of Tanzania. Their relationship to the study is explained through the following;

2.4.1 The Home Challenges

Home related challenges are the challenges related to time constrains like balance of study time and home obligations including community and family concerns (Zirnkle,

2001). According to him Learning effectiveness depends how a learner is able to balance time for studies and other activities. ODL students are part of these challenges at the open university of Tanzania. These students face family problems when studying being at home (Cosmas and Mbwette, 2001). Even if both males and female student face challenges, females are more affected by these challenges at large.

In the study by Zirnkle (2001) found that most female students have a lot of responsibilities at home and that make have no time to revise or read on their own. He observed differently that men have a higher self-esteem than female and thus this makes them isolate freely to lecturers for consultation and thus perform higher than female students who have low self esteem. Mbukusa, (2009) include challenge of transport, greater distance to study center, poor financial capacity and lack of encouragement from family. The most cited challenge facing distance learners is lack of time with ODL students against attendance to social or community activities such as churches, funnels and children caring.

2.4.2 The Work Challenges

Effectiveness of leaning by ODL students depends on how work challenges are solved. Most of the work challenges are the major ones at ODL Learners as noted in studies by Zirnkle, (2004) His observations were ODL students face the challenge of electricity at work and lack of study space in office. According to Cross (1981) there are three distinct categories of challenges facing ODL as related to job. These include lack electricity at work and study space. In US, where it is anticipated that distance education technology is widely used, distance learners reported being frustrated, confused and their interest in learning was reduced due to the lack of experience in

technology applications and space for study when working in ODL. In order for effective learning to occur challenges related to technology, are reported as personal challenges, which would be solved. Studies in USA indicate that computer vision is a syndrome, finger that joint pain, backaches, headaches, and dizziness due to occasional long periods of computer use to compensate for limited access (Mushi, 2001).

In India, it was revealed that students might have wanted to be browsing web pages but some of them indicated that they did not know how to operate a computer (Hussein, 2005). The study by UNESCO, (2004) distance learners in developing countries are not only challenged by lack of experience in the application of technology but also, scarce of that technology. The open university of Tanzania student faces this challenge. It is therefore wise to agree that learning effectiveness in open and distance learning depends on number of work challenges being solved.

2.4.3 The Institution Challenges

Institutional challenges are related to students' learning effectiveness. Zirnkle (2001) identified specific institutional challenges facing distance learners as programme costs, lack of equipment and infrastructure, instructional concerns and poor technical assistance. Also Zirnkle says inadequate feedback and poor teacher contact, alienation and isolation, and poor student support service relate to ineffective teaching. Ukpo (2005) found that ODL students fail to receive training materials on time because the Open University teachers have not posted the materials on time. According to Kamau (2007) Institutional related challenges are lack of study materials; lack of students support services and inadequate academic support services at the regional centre cause

poor learning. Kamau (2007) found that, without effective learners' support services system that provides onsite face to face, timely feedback on students' performance and access to library services, student achievement is undermined and dropout rates and low completion rates exist.

2.5 Empirical Literature Review

2.5.1 The Home Factors Challenging ODL Students

Home related challenges are the challenges related to time constrains like balance of study time and home obligations. Various studies have been conducted worldwide on the challenges facing distance learning students. ODL students face family problems when studying being at home for instance, in the study by Zirnkle (2001) titled "Utilization of distance education in two-year colleges: Implications for technical education: American Technical Education Association" found that most female students have a lot of responsibilities at home and that make have no time to revise or read on their own.

It is also observed differently that men have a higher self-esteem than female and thus this makes them isolate freely to lecturers for consultation and thus perform higher than female students who have low self esteem. Other challenges include problem of transport, greater distance to study center, poor financial capacity and lack of encouragement from family (Mbukusa, 2009). It is obvious that, most of these individual related challenges emerge from environmental variables as depicted in the proposed theoretical framework. It is argued that the most cited challenge facing distance learners is lack of time with ODL students against attendance to social or community activities such as churches, funnels and children caring.

Again, a study by Rao and Giuli (2010) in United States accomplishes that, most students reported difficulty keeping up with deadlines and completing coursework. Similarly, data survey at the Open University UK from 1998–2000 this imply that Moreover, Open University students perceived “lack of time” as the most significant factor influencing their decision to withdraw (Tresman 2002). Other studies found similar findings regarding the problem of time, for example, Vergids and Penagiotakououlos (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.

Whereas Diran and Yoon, (2009) in Jordan establish comparable consequences; they document that students’ failure to balance time for studying and other family and job obligations is a single most cited barrier by distance learners. Additionally, lack of time is documented in other studies conducted in Africa including Tanzania. A 2005 study by Ukpo in Nigeria shows that failure rates for teachers enrolled in the ODL program were highly attributed to students’ failure to balance time for study and engagement in other socio- economic activities. On the identical stratum, a study by Mungoo (2009) in Botswana cited inadequate study time as one of the drawbacks facing ODL students because of students’ juggled family and job commitments.

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 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. Studies at Open University require hard work and student must devote plenty of time to studying the realistic demands that most of the students fail to realize prior to enrollment.

According to Garland (2007) identified some home challenges for students to be persistence in distance learning. These include poor learning environment while at home with children as mother and lack of time while at home with family as father. For example, students felt that the course took more time than anticipated because they failed to judge the demands of handling the children and wife along with studies. Kember (1989) argued that poor time management due to family responsibilities leads to more challenges such as learners' inability to integrate the demands of off campus study with family, and social commitments. Students' engagement in other economic activities to supplement their family incomes and poor learner support services is a big challenge among of ODL especially where study centers are under resourced and overstretched. Lack of support from family etc had less than half (40%) agreeing.

Lack of sufficient time for study and conflicts between work and study schedule had 75% each; distance to the regional centre, financial constraints and unfavorable home learning environment had 80% each; difficulties in learning technically demanding materials (50%); and information and communication technologies barriers (70%). On the other hand, Mushi (2001) documented the following as the barriers of distance learning: problem of transport, greater distance to study center, poor financial capacity and lack of encouragement from family. Likewise, Mbukusa (2009) listed the long distance from the study center and lack of family support as sub-themes of barriers

cited by distance learners at Namibia University. This confirms that all what is found in these studies affect learning.

2.5.2 The Work Factors Challenging ODL Students

Notwithstanding the expanding growth of ODL and its benefits, students who enroll with ODL have been shown to face many challenges related to work. Work related challenges are the challenges related to time constrains like balance of study time versus work (Kamau, 2007). According to Cross (1981) there are three distinct categories of challenges facing ODL students as Situational, institutional and dispositional. Zirnkle, (2004) explains that student lack experience and/or training with instructional technology is a big challenge to ODL learners, which affect their completion. In US, where it is anticipated that distance education technology is widely used, distance learners reported being frustrated, confused and their interest in learning was reduced due to the lack of experience in technology applications in ODL.

Challenges related to technology, are reported as computer vision syndrome, finger joint pain, backaches, headaches, and dizziness due to occasional long periods of computer use to compensate for limited access (Mushi, 2001). Further, in India, it was revealed that students might have wanted to be browsing web pages but some of them indicated that they did not know how to operate a computer (Hussein, 2005). Moreover, it became evident that students did not even know how to use a keyboard. This is observed even in some studies of Tanzania regarding ODL.

Whilst technology applications at individual level are still a challenge in developed countries like Tanzania, the situation in developing countries is much worse than

developed ones. Distance learners in developing countries are not only challenged by lack of experience in the application of technology but also, scarce of those technology (UNESCO, 2004). In poor nations where the major issues are meeting their basic need for food, clothing, and shelter, with access to ICT is very near to the ground on their list of priorities. Therefore, it is hard to imagine that these technologies can have a positive influence on the education of learners who lack basic living resources and live with an underdeveloped educational infrastructure in poor countries.

According to Cross, situational challenges include job and responsibilities that reduce time for study. Lack of experience in ODL studies and/or training with instructional technology causes students to fail to study while at work (Zirnkle, 2004). In connection to that, in studies conducted in Tanzania, Cosmas and Mbetwe (2009) show that, along with that problem even there is no electricity in rural schools for ODL learners so that they can work while studying at their own time when they are not busy. He argues further that in the middle of other issues, students are reluctant to change, i.e. to adopt new changes especially those related to the use of ICT as well, lack of limited knowledge of ICT.

Similarly in developing countries like Tanzania the issues related to experiences of modern educational technologies is more of a vision than authenticity which ODL learners may benefit. The question by Cosmas and Mbetwe (2009) is how can we blame the students that are reluctant to change while the institutions themselves are ill-prepared to lead these changes with technology? How about inadequate socio economic infrastructures such as unreliable power supply and lack of internet services

that hinder accessibility of ICT services to most of the rural dwellers? Xenos (2004) postulated that traveling costs and other socio economic problems account for 27% of the reasons for students' attrition at Hellenic Open University. Because the institutions are not ready to install electricity at work places student of ODL continue to suffer in studies while they are at work together with bundle of the employers activities to accomplish.

2.5.3 Institutional Factors Challenging ODL Students

Institutional related challenges include poor logistics system or a lack of appropriate advising (Kruger and Casey, 2000). Zirnkle (2001) identified specific institutional challenges facing distance learners as programme costs, lack of equipment and infrastructure, instructional concerns and poor technical assistance. Other challenges documented by Zirnkle are inadequate feedback and poor teacher contact, alienation and isolation, and poor student support service. Ukpo (2005) found that teachers who enrolled in the ODL face challenges related to failure of trainees to receive training materials on time because the Open University teachers have not posted the materials on time.

According to Kamau (2007) Institutional related challenges are lack of study materials; lack of students support services in areas of guidance and counseling; and inadequate academic support and administrative services at the regional centre. Kamau (2007) found that, without effective learners' support services system that provides onsite face to face, timely feedback on student performance and access to library services, student achievement is undermined and dropout rates and procrastination increase. ODL also presents new challenges in information

dissemination, especially in developing countries, which is caused by the poor infrastructure of the university. It is argued that some of the students barriers identified by Selim (2007) include instructors' attitudes and teaching styles, students' motivation, students' technical competence, student–student interaction, ease of access to the technology, infrastructure reliability, and lack of support at the postsecondary level.

Likewise, Becker (2000) found the following barriers to technology use by instructors was a problem: some older teachers were prone to teach using traditional means the so called hardcopy, novice teachers with limited training were less likely to use the technology, a lack of commitment to a constructivist pedagogy, a lack of available professional development, and a low level of contact between teachers who have little experience using technology. Nash, (2005) suggests that infrastructure barriers such as those presented by equipment and processing requirements have raised substantial arguments against their full use, stating that these barriers are not limited to external factors but also include internal ones, such as attitudinal barriers. Some users consider them confident and knowledgeable in the use of ICT; whereas, others are more uncertain and hence have a greater propensity to reject the technology in their classrooms (Looker & Thiessen, 2003).

With a study by Selim (2007) and Zirnkle (2001) show that institutional related challenges facing ODL students are higher due to lack of knowledge of ICT by old teachers. Over 65% of the respondents felt that institutional challenges greatly affected their performance and progress. The distribution of responses delay lack of study materials (95%); accessing administrative services (70%); lack of an effective

institutional network of technical assistance (60%); lack of responsiveness from regional centre / ZOU headquarter administrative staff (90%); lack of appropriate students services support (80%); and lack or delayed important information (70%).

Other findings in the same study show that selected respondents strongly agree the issue of study materials where by most of the respondents (95%) received study materials late or never got them. In this situation students are affected academically, psychologically, and financially. Lack of study materials may force students to submit assignments that are not properly written and they are likely to get to examinations without enough preparation resulting in poor performance. Such poor performance may not be the true reflection of their academic abilities. Some students may persist at slow pace, resulting in late completion of programmes.

2.6 Research Gap

In review of various literatures there many studies conducted on the challenges facing ODL students across the world. But how these challenges and learning technologies impact students' learning is not yet well studied in Tanzania that is why study is important to be conducted.

CHAPTER THREE

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.1 Introduction

This chapter describes how the study is designed and how it was done. This chapter presents the research methodology used in the study. It discusses the research design, approaches, techniques for data collection, the sample size, study area, the sampling procedures, and the population of the study, the sampling, instruments, and data collection procedures with the consideration for data validity and reliability of instruments. Finally it presents the data analysis and presentation.

3.2 Research Approaches

This study adopted mixed methods approach, which is a procedure for collecting, analyzing data using both quantitative and qualitative procedures (Creswell, 2002; Ivankova, 2005). The validation for mixing approach is that neither quantitative nor qualitative methods are sufficient by themselves to capture the trends and details of the situation, such as difficult issues pertaining to challenges facing learners in distance learning environment. The combination of both quantitative and qualitative approaches compensates each other. This study was based on qualitative and quantitative data, which mean textual analysis while quantitative analysis means statistical or numerical analysis (Willis, 2008).

3.3 Research Design

The research design is the researcher's plan of enquiry that puts paradigms of interpretation on how to proceed in gaining an understanding of a phenomenon in its

natural setting (Bogdan & Knopp, 2006). The purpose of a research design is to provide, an appropriate mode of inquiry, the most valid and accurate answers possible to the research question (Denzin & Lincoln, 2000,) Schumacher (2001) and Saunders et al. (2007), defines research design as the general plan of how the research questions would be answered. Mouton (2003) defined a research design as a plan or blue print of how a researcher intends to conduct a research. In this study a survey research design was used.

Thomas (2003) defines survey questionnaire as a process that involves gathering of information using questions about the current status of some target variable within a particular and reporting on the findings. The survey was used to collect data from the targeted population and to be able to identify trends and patterns with relation to the challenges facing ODL learners. Using the survey was appropriate because was possible to get a large number of respondents, to standardize questions so that they are relatively free from some kind of errors and because it is cheaper and relatively easy to administer (Kelly, Clack, Brown & Ciczia, 2003).

3.4 Study Area

The study was conducted in Kigoma region at the Open University of Tanzania (OUT) in Kigoma with reference to Kigoma Regional Center. The study aimed to be conducted at Kigoma/Ujiji Municipality Council because of the following reasons: The area has enough required population to cover the study. Secondly, it was purposely selected as an area for the study for the reason that it undertakes studies through distance learning. Kigoma Ujiji Municipality is located at the North-Eastern shore of the second deepest Lake in the World, Lake Tanganyika at the latitude of

4.52° South and longitude of 29.35° East in Western Tanzania. It is also the Western terminal of Central Railway line about 1200 km away from Dar es Salaam. On the western part the Municipal borders the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), to the South, East and North it boards with Kigoma District council. The sketch map of Kigoma/Ujiji Municipal Council.



Figure 3.1: A sketch Map of Kigoma /Ujiji Municipality

Source: Kigoma/ Ujiji Municipality Director's Office (2019)

3.5 Target Population

The study population is that population to which a researcher sought to generalize the results of the study (Kothari, 2003). Thus, a population study is a study of a group of individuals taken from the general population who share a common characteristic, such as age, sex, or health condition. This group may be studied for different reasons, such as their response to a distance education. The population of this study consisted of all students who are enrolled in various degree programs offered by OUT including

graduated students as well as OUT staff at Kigoma Regional Centre. According to Krejcie and Morgan (1970) explains that as the population increases the sample size increases at a diminishing rate and remains relatively constant at slightly more than normal, using this idea, approximately a population of 150 was used to get a sample size of 106 respondents.

3.6 Sampling and Size

Kothari (2004) defines sample as a part taken from a population. Basing on the definition there are number of ways we can get the sample from population; such as simple random sampling, purposive and snowball sampling. This study drew a sample size of 106 respondents from a population of 150 that consists of continuing students, graduated students and OUT staff for a study.

3.6.1 Sample Size

The sample size for this study was 106 as reflected in the above and appears in the table summary in below. According to Krejcie and Morgan (1970) as the population increases the sample size increases at a diminishing rate and remains relatively constant at slightly more than. This was appropriate to have a sample of 106 respondents' from 150 population.

Table 3.1: The Sample Size of the Study

Category	Sample Size	Percentage (%)
Staffs at Kigoma	6	5.7
Graduated Students	20	18.8
Continuing Students	80	75.5
Total	106	100

Source: Researcher (2019)

3.7 Sampling Techniques

The study used both purposive, snowball and random sampling techniques. Both techniques are explained below.

3.7.1 Purposive Sampling

The purposive sampling implies intentionally selecting individuals to learn to understand the central phenomenon (McMillan & Schumacher, 2006). Purpose sampling was used to get respondents from continuing, graduated students and the academic staff for interviews. The purposive method was because of the nature of respondents (OUT staff) who are knowledgeable to key information than any person. Twenty (20) respondents were selected through snowball: (80) were continuing students, the other (6) were the academic staff how were they sampled because of their positions at OUT. The first idea is to select respondents purposely, who would best answer the research questions and who were "information-rich" persons (Patton, 1990). The second is to select individuals by any means that would avoid bias this is called random sampling, while the third is to select individuals where the first student graduated is able to chain to another student who also graduated for snowball data.

3.7.2 Random Sampling

Kothari (2008) describes that "We can write the name of each element of a finite population on a slip of paper, put a slip of paper so prepared in to a box or a bag and mix them and then draw without looking the required number of slips for the sample without replacement". Random sampling was used to select continuing students. Therefore in this study random sampling was used to select continuing students from OUT.

3.7.3 Snowball Sampling

Snowball sampling is a no probability sampling technique where existing study subjects get future subjects from among their acquaintances (Govan, 2004). This sampling technique was used the hidden sample from a population of graduated students because snowball sampling is that it helps researchers find more participants for studies than would be possible by other methods. The process is cheap, simple and cost-efficient. This sampling technique needs little planning and fewer workforce compared to other sampling techniques

3.8 Data Collection Methods

The study used Interview, questionnaire, and documentations.

3.8.1 Interview

Interview method yields a great deal of useful information and allows the researcher to use verbal and non-verbal cues to adapt their questions as necessary, clarify doubts (Leedy & Ormrod, 2005). It ensures that the interviewee's responses are clearly understood by repeating or rephrasing their answers to questions. Face-to-face semi structured interviews was used because they provide deeper understanding of the study and supplement the main data gathering technique. The study engaged interview with 3 (75%) academic staffs OUT of 4 staffs at OUT Kigoma to get data on challenges facing ODL students in course of their studies.

3.8.2 Documentary Review

According to Gillham, (2008) Documentary review is a type of qualitative research in which documents are reviewed by the analyst to assess an appraisal theme. Dissecting

documents involves coding content into subjects like how focus group or interview transcripts are investigated. In this study various documents including OUT official documents, students' enrollment records, study materials, students' academic progressive reports at Kigoma regional center was reviewed. Some of these were obtained from books and dissertations. The findings were of mixed results whereby institutional, work and home challenges face ODL students.

3.8.3 Questionnaire

A questionnaire is a research instrument consisting of a series of questions for the purpose of gathering information from respondents (Gillham, 2008). Although questionnaires are often designed for statistical analysis of the responses, this is not always the case. The questionnaires have been used because they have advantages over some other types of surveys in that they are cheap, do not require as much effort from the questioner as verbal or telephone surveys, and often have standardized answers that make it simple to compile data. This study used two sets of questionnaires to obtain information from continuing and former distance learners. However, the researcher administered a questionnaire into one language due to nature of respondents.

3.9 Validity and Reliability of the Instruments

3.9.1 Validity

Validity determines whether the research truly measures 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 is supposed to measure. The data collection instruments tested on a small sample at OUT in Tabora Regional center. The response

from that pre-test became the basis for reviewing questions that provided useful answers.

3.9.2 Reliability

Reliability refers to 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 following strategies as proposed by McMillan & Schumacher (2006) were taken into consideration: Researcher ensured that the questions designed are based on the specific objectives and major area of the study; data collection methods are being reviewed by researcher, contact was made to meet with professionals and expert. Triangulation strategy was also employed which include interview, questionnaire and documentation.

3.10 Data Analysis and Procedures

The data were collected from all respondents and analyzed using SPSS 16.0 version quantitatively for the closed questions. Frequency distributions and descriptive statistics were used to check the correctness of the entries analysis because the techniques are capable of indicating data that are out of the expected range of possible entries. The responses were grouped according to each question; and calculated in percentages, being presented in tables. Qualitative data such as, interview, open questions and documentation were summarized and conclusions was made from the findings.

CHAPTER FOUR

DATA ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION

4.1 Introduction

This chapter presents the research findings and discussion based on three research objectives developed in chapter one. The objectives of the study were: to examine the home factors challenging ODL students towards effective learning at the Open University of Tanzania, to examine the work factors challenging ODL students' towards effective learning at the Open University of Tanzania and to examine the institution factors challenging ODL students towards effective learning at the Open University of Tanzania.

4.2 Home Factors Challenging ODL Students

The purpose of this objective was to examine the home factors challenging ODL students towards effective learning at the Open University of Tanzania. Under this subsection respondents were asked to put on what they think should be Home factors challenging ODL students at the open university of Tanzania. This question was responded through closed and open ended question to ODL students and interview question to staffs. From what staffs and students provided as their best answers the following major characteristics were found. The responses from graduated and continuing students were presented as they were asked through YES and No question to show what they think should be the home factors challenging ODL students at the open university of Tanzania and how they affect their learning. The responses from continuing students and staff have been summarized in Table 4.1, in statistics were as follows; 66 % agreed of family responsibilities being among of challenges affecting

students learning at the Open University, money 60.4 %, lack of privacy and area for study while at home affect ODL students at 54.7% and 57.5% distance from home to center affects. Therefore the leading majority who answered that question (66%) said that family responsibilities affect students learning at the Open University. Other findings in open ended and interview were that family responsibilities may prevent studies example when the wife is admitted where you have to attend her carefully. Women have home duties, which are always there for them.

Table 4.1: Home Factors Challenging ODL Students

Home Factors Challenging ODL Students	Frequencies of Respondents					
	YES		NO		Total	
	No	%	No	%	No	%
Family responsibilities affect students learning at the Open University	70	66	36	34	106	100
Financial capacity to meet food, clothing, shelter and studies affect ODL students	64	60.4	42	39.6	106	100
Lack of privacy and area for study while at home affect ODL students	58	54.7	48	45.3	106	100
The distance from home to center affects learning of ODL students	61	57.5	45	42.5	106	100

Source: Field Data (2019)

From the Table 4.2 it shows 66 % agreed of family responsibilities being among of challenges affecting students learning at the Open University. One of the women interview said that:

“I fail to balance studies and duties at home which includes caring of children, sometimes I’m pregnant and yet I have to do exam and attend my husband and children wash”.

Through open questions it was found that students lack good infrastructure such as electricity at their homes to support learning at night. Other findings noted is of lack of privacy and area for study while at home affect ODL students in their learning and the long distance that student to go for study at the center along with financial capacity that affect transport 57.5%. These responses collected from the field are related to those of other researchers from number of studies.

The study by Cosmas and Mbwette, (2001) accepts these facts that ODL students face family problems when studying being at home. He explained that challenges related to time constrain like balance of study time and home obligations are more dominant. In the other study by Zirnkle (2001) found that most female students have a lot of responsibilities at home and that make them to have no time to revise or read on their own. Zirnkle also observed differently that men have a higher self-esteem than female and thus this makes them isolate freely to lecturers for consultation and thus perform higher than female students who have low self esteem. We found other challenges such as problem of transport, greater distance to study center, poor financial capacity and lack of encouragement from family are more serious to many of the study.

A study by Rao and Giuli (2010) in United States (US) accomplishes that, most students reported difficulty keeping up with deadlines and completing coursework. Similarly, data survey at the Open University of UK from 1998–2000 this imply that Open University students perceived “lack of time” as the most significant factor influencing their decision to withdraw (Tresman 2002). We also found similar cases in other studies regarding the problem of time, for example, Vergids and Penagiotakououlos (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. Whereas this issue was related to what was found in Diran and Yoon, (2009) in Jordan who established comparable consequences; 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.

Additionally, lack of time is documented in other studies conducted in Africa including Tanzania. We discovered that in the 2005 study by Ukpo in Nigeria failure rates for teachers enrolled in the ODL program were highly attributed to students' failure to balance time for study and engagement in other socio- economic activities. We related this in the study by Mungoo (2009) in Botswana that cited inadequate study time as one of the drawbacks facing ODL students because of students' juggled family and job commitments. Moreover, on this question of time we concluded that 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 Nigeria, and Basaza et al (2010) in Uganda.

In the other side researcher's findings were related to other studies done before as a case of infrastructure and time for studies at home was concerned. According to Garland (2007) identified some home challenges for students to be persistence in distance learning. These include poor learning environment while at home with children as mother and lack of time while at home with family as father. For example, students felt that the course took more time than anticipated because they failed to

judge the demands of handling the children and wife along with studies. This fact was confirmed in one of the interview with OUT staff who was in support of the argument in Kember (1989) who argued that poor time management due to family responsibilities leads to more challenges such as learners' inability to integrate the demands of off campus study with family and social commitments. Students' engagement in other economic activities to supplement their family incomes and poor learner support services is a big challenge among of ODL especially where study centers are under resourced and overstretched. Lack of support from family etc had less than half (40%) agreeing. Lack of sufficient time for study and conflicts between work and study schedule had 75% each; distance to the regional centre, financial constraints and unfavorable home learning environment had 80% each; difficulties in learning technically demanding materials (50%); and information and communication technologies barriers (70%).

On the other hand, Mushi (2001) was somehow different from the former. He documented the following as the barriers of distance learning: problem of transport, greater distance to study center, poor financial capacity and lack of encouragement from family. Likewise, Mbukusa (2009) listed the long distance from the study center and lack of family support as sub-themes of barriers cited by distance learners at Namibia University. We concluded that time management is important for Open University student.

4.3 Work Factors Challenging ODL Students

The rationale of this objective was to examine the work factors challenging ODL students' towards effective learning at the Open University of Tanzania. In this sub

section information obtained involved all respondents. The information summarized in Table 4.2 shows ODL staffs and students' responses while the responses shown by ODL staffs presented in qualitative form in comparison of what presented as the responses of graduated and continuing students. Therefore respondents in Table 4.3 below were asked to show work factors challenging ODL students at the Open University. The finding reveals that lack of balance between job and studies obstruct ODL students' studies as agreed by 55.7%. The leading factor was unfavorable work environment, e.g. absence of study space, lack of electricity at work, affect ODL students especially in rural areas. They also showed when workplace environment is used as studying place any interruption can happen and hinder studies. So many activities assigned to you may prevent studies undertaking. Others said employer can refuse to grant study permission in time. Others were lack of experience in the application of technology but also, scarce of those technology 68.9%. All these affect learners' studies. The results are presented in Table 4.2.

Table 4.2: Work Factors Challenging ODL Students

Work Factors Challenging ODL Students	Frequencies of Respondents					
	YES		NO		Total	
	No.	%	No	%	No	%
Lack of balance between job and studies obstruct ODL students' studies	59	55.7	47	44.3	106	100
Unfavorable work environment, e.g. absence of study space, lack of electricity at work affect my studies	61	57.5	45	42.5	106	100
Work duties, lack of experience using technology affect my learning	73	68.9	33	31.1	106	100

Source: Field Data (2019)

As it has been presented in Table 4.2 about the responses of OUT staffs and students on the work factors challenging ODL students at the open university of Tanzania. According to the likert scale analysis (YES, NO) it has been observed that both staffs and students responded positively on the factors introduced as it is seen in the table above. The overall responses of OUT students as it is seen in Table 4.2 were lack of balance between job and studies obstruct ODL students' studies 55.7%. The leading factor was unfavorable work environment, e.g. absence of study space, lack of electricity at work, affect ODL students especially in rural areas. They also showed when workplace environment is used as studying place any interruption can happen and hinder studies. So many activities assigned to you may prevent studies undertaking. Others said employer can refuse to grant study permission in time. All these were observed as challenge to learners' studies. These scores to OUT staff signify that the overall responses were positive though there were many factors as it is indicated in Table 4.2. Meanwhile to OUT staff interview side the overall responses were positive though by looking one factor to another it can be observed that most of them as indicated in Table 4.2 responded positively. These responses were discussed as follows.

Though on both side of OUT staffs and students it has observed that their overall average of responses are positive they have found together alerting that work factors are challenging to ODL students whereby work environment, for example has absence of study space, lacks electricity and employers threats, affect ODL students. This response simply means that to both OUT staffs and students they see that these factors can influence poor leaning.

On the other hand some of the factors authenticated by OUT staff that they threatened by employer against work duties assigned to student who is preparing for examination affect her dream to pass. We compared these responses to those from other researches done before and found that shown to face many challenges related to work, work related challenges are the challenges related to time constrains like balance of study time versus work (Kamau, 2007).

According to Cross (1981) there are challenges facing ODL students than work factors. He included three distinct categories of challenges facing ODL students as Situational, institutional and dispositional. Zirnkle, (2004) explains that student lack experience and/or training with instructional technology is a big challenge to ODL learners, which affect their completion. When we compared all the findings we found that in US, where technology is widely used, distance learners reported being frustrated, confused and their interest in learning was reduced due to the lack of experience in technology applications in ODL. We discovered that challenges related to technology, are reported as computer vision syndrome, finger joint pain, backaches, headaches, and dizziness due to occasional long periods of computer use to compensate for limited access (Mushi, 2001).

Further, in India, it was revealed that students might have wanted to be browsing web pages but some of them indicated that they did not know how to operate a computer (Hussein, 2005). Moreover, it became evident that students did not even know how to use a keyboard. This is observed even in some studies of Tanzania regarding ODL by interview with OUT staff and student through open questionnaire. We therefore

concluded that ODL Learners are challenged by lack of experience in the application of technology but also, scarce of those technology.

According to Cross, situational challenges include job and responsibilities that reduce time for study (Zirnkle, 2004). In connection to that, in studies conducted in Tanzania, Cosmas and Mbetwe (2009) show that, along with that problem even there is no electricity in rural schools for ODL learners so that they can work while studying at their own time when they are not busy. He argues further that in the middle of other issues, students are reluctant to change, i.e. to adopt new changes especially those related to the use of ICT as well, lack of limited knowledge of ICT.

Similarly in developing countries like Tanzania the issues related to experiences of modern educational technologies is more of a vision than authenticity which ODL learners may benefit. The question by Cosmas and Mbetwe (2009) is how can we blame the students that are reluctant to change while the institutions themselves are ill-prepared to lead these changes with technology? How about inadequate socio economic infrastructures such as unreliable power supply and lack of internet services that hinder accessibility of ICT services to most of the rural dwellers? Xenos (2004) postulated that traveling costs and other socio economic problems account for 27% of the reasons for students' attrition at Hellenic Open University. Because the institutions are not ready to install electricity at work places student of ODL continue to suffer in studies while they are at work together with bundle of the employers activities to accomplish. These findings were similar to those from the field in sense that apart from job responsibilities face ODL students in their studies lack of experience, scarcity of technology was observed from both old staffs and students. We discovered

that the question by Cosmas and Mbetwe (2009) on how can we blame the students that are reluctant to change while the institutions themselves are ill-prepared to lead these changes with technology was important to address the challenges students and Open University facing. After comparing ideas of respondents and those from other researches we can conclude that with reduced challenges facing student completion in time is the issue that student may solve alone.

4.4 Institution Factors Challenging ODL Students

The purpose of this objective was to examine the institution factors challenging ODL students towards effective learning at the Open University of Tanzania. This section presents findings concerning the third objective of the study, which intended to investigate the Institution factors challenging ODL students. This was responded by all respondents involved in this study. In this objective, OUT staffs and students responded through closed and interview designed in questionnaires while other respondents responded through open questionnaires.

The responses for each question asked was as follows' (1) on the question of challenges in displaying students profiles 52.8% said YES and 47.2% said NO (2) on the question of lack of display of study materials on time 77.4% said YES and 22.6% said NO (3) While the question on ODL staff who have no technical abilities in use of ICT mostly 87.7% responded YES where as 12.3% said NO. (4) In the question related to lack of physical facilities such as books, lectures, hall, chairs, tables, playgrounds, library and Television affect OUTS dents 68.9% said YES and others said NO (31.1%). More findings on this objective were on how lack of feedback, poor logistic system, poor teacher contact and students services affect learning of ODL

students 96.2% said Yes where as 3.8% said NO. The results are presented in the Table 4.4.

Table 4.3: Institution Factors Challenging ODL Students

Institution Factors Challenging ODL Students	Frequencies of Respondents					
	YES		NO		Total	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Inadequate student profiles display	56	52.8	50	47.2	106	100
Lack of materials sent on time	82	77.4	24	22.6	106	100
Old staff who have no technical abilities in use of ICT	81	76.4	25	23.6	106	100
Facilities such as books, lectures, hall, chairs, tables, playgrounds, library	73	68.9	33	31.1	106	100
Lack of feedback, poor logistic system, teacher contact and students services	102	96.2	04	3.8	106	100

Source: Field Data (2019)

In Table 4.3 according to the likert scale analysis it has been observed that on the side of students they responded positively in some of the challenges meanwhile they shown negative to some challenges introduced while on the side of students they responded negatively to the challenges introduced. The research findings presented in Table 4.3 indicate that Lack of Physical facilities such as books, lectures, hall, chairs, tables, playgrounds, library and television affect ODL students, lack of feedback and poor logistic system, poor teacher contact and students services, lack of display of study materials on time with inadequate to display of student profiles both affect ODL students. The researcher discovered that these field findings on the institution factors challenging ODL students are interconnected with other studies done by many researchers like Zirnkle (2001) who identified specific institutional challenges facing distance learners as programme costs, lack of equipment and infrastructure, instructional concerns and poor technical assistance. Other challenges documented by

Zirnkle are inadequate feedback and poor teacher contact, alienation and isolation, and poor student support service.

In other findings by Ukpo (2005) establishes that teachers who enrolled in the ODL face challenges related to failure of trainees to receive training materials on time because the Open University teachers have not posted the materials on time. These facts by former researchers was viewed in the work of Kamau (2007) who identified Institutional related challenges as lack of study materials; lack of students support services in areas of guidance and counseling; and inadequate academic support and administrative services at the regional centre. With some of the OUT staff interviewed to confirm these facts said that:

“without effective learners’ support services system that provides onsite face to face, timely feedback on student performance and access to library services, student achievement is undermined and dropout rates and procrastination increase”.

ODL also are challenged with information dissemination, especially in developing countries, which is caused by the poor infrastructure of the university. It is argued that some of the student barriers identified by Selim (2007) include instructors’ attitudes and teaching styles, student motivation, student technical competency, student–student interaction, ease of access to the technology, infrastructure reliability, and lack of support at the postsecondary level. Likewise, Becker (2000) found the following barriers to technology use by instructors was a problem: some older teachers were prone to teach using traditional means the so called hardcopy, novice teachers with limited training were less likely to use the technology, a lack of commitment to a

constructivist pedagogy, a lack of available professional development, and a low level of contact between teachers who have little experience using technology.

Having heard of views from respondents and those of other scholars we discovered that infrastructure barriers such as those presented by equipment and processing requirements have raised substantial arguments against their full use, stating that these barriers are not limited to external factors but also include internal ones, such as attitudinal barriers. Some users consider them confident and knowledgeable in the use of ICT; whereas, others are more uncertain and hence have a greater propensity to reject the technology in their classrooms (Looker & Thiessen, 2003). Over 65% of the respondents felt that institutional challenges greatly affected their performance and progress.

The distribution of responses delay lack of study materials (95%); accessing administrative services (70%); lack of an effective institutional network of technical assistance (60%); lack of responsiveness from regional centre / ZOU headquarter administrative staff (90%); lack of appropriate students services support (80%); and lack or delayed important information (70%). Other findings in the same study show that selected challenges strongly agree the issue of study materials where by most of the respondents (95%) received study materials late or never got them. In this situation students are affected academically, psychologically, and financially. Lack of study materials may force students to submit assignments that are not properly written and they are likely to get to examinations without enough preparation resulting in poor performance. Such poor performance may not be the true reflection of their academic abilities. Some students may persist at slow pace, resulting in late completion of

programmes. Others withdraw from studies. The public (employers included) may question the individual student's academic abilities on the ground that why does it take him /her long to graduate. Also, the quality of education provided through ODL becomes questionable. Delayed or lack of study materials may affect students economically as they waste resources in terms of money and time; patiently waiting for the arrival of study materials and sometimes travelling to regional centre to make follow- up, but find nothing.

Additionally, a study by Selim (2007) and Zirnkle (2001) show that institutional related challenges facing ODL students are higher due to lack of an effective institutional network of technical assistance (60%); lack of responsiveness from regional centre / ZOU headquarter administrative staff (90%); lack of appropriate students services support (80%); and lack or delayed important information (70%). Other finding in the same study show that selected Challenges Strongly Agree the issue of study materials where by Most of the respondents (95%) received study materials late or never got them. In this situation students are affected academically, psychologically, and financially. Lack of study materials may force students to submit assignments that are not properly written and they are likely to get to examinations without enough preparation resulting in poor performance. Such poor performance may not be the true reflection of their academic abilities. We concluded that more improvement of Open University infrastructure is important.

CHAPTER FIVE

SUMMARY, CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1 Introduction

This chapter presents conclusion and provides recommendations for addressing the challenges facing learners in open distance learning. The conclusion is based on key points observed in findings and literature.

5.2 Summary

5.2.1 Home Factors Challenging ODL Students

Major findings revealed that by 66 % of family responsibilities affecting students' learning at the Open University of Tanzania. Interview findings by 12 (48%) out of 25 interviewee confirmed that family responsibilities for women such as childcare prevent their studies to be successful. This implies that home challenges facing ODL students are everywhere at home; students of ODL are therefore advised to care for both studies and home matters by balancing their timetable.

5.2.2 Work Factors Challenging ODL Students

Findings on work factors challenging ODL students reveals that unfavorable work environment, such as absence of study space, lack of electricity at work both affect ODL students especially in rural areas. Also workplace interruption including assigned tasks hinders their studies. These facts presented by 57% of all respondents involved in the study. Interview findings by 20 (80%) out of 25 respondents presented that immediate supervisors refuse to grant study permission in time while lack of experience in the application of technology constituted 68.9%.

5.2.3 Institution Factors Challenging ODL Students

The major findings show that institution factors such as lack of physical facilities such as books, lectures, hall, chairs, tables, playgrounds, library and television affect ODL students by 96.2%. However, lack of feedback and poor logistic system, poor teacher contact and students' services shown its effects by 68.8%, whereby study inadequate of study materials was by 47%. Interview by ODL staffs, documentary review indicated that there are some old staffs that lack knowledge in computer and therefore they fail to attend the students' works in softcopy.

5.3 Conclusions

5.3.1 Home Factors Challenging ODL Students

Majority of respondents said that family responsibilities such as funerals, ceremonies and attending sick persons affect ODL learning at the Open University. This study concludes that continuing students need to have informal training from graduated students and staffs from ODL as a way to gain experiences about ODL learning.

5.3.2 Work Factors Challenging ODL Students

Findings identified work factors as the major challenges facing open and distance learners for effective learning. Work challenges involved lack of space for study and lack of permission to attend regular discussion with other students in distant districts along with assigned duties by immediate supervisor. The study concludes that when students balances work studies may have improved learning outcome.

5.3.3 Institution Factors Challenging ODL Students

Lack of physical facilities such as books, lectures; hall, chairs, enough libraries, lack of feedback, poor logistic system, poor teacher contact, inadequate materials both

affect ODL students. This study concludes that poor students' completion rates results from institutional challenges which holdback students' efforts in meeting completion period.

5.4 Recommendations

Based on the research findings, the following recommendations grounded from the study.

- (i) To employers; employers in Tanzania should plan with its sub sectors located in different workplaces to encourage open distance learning in their workplace by providing favorable work environment, which among of them include study space, electricity at work, and quick permission to attend their studies.
- (ii) To the Open University of Tanzania Students; they should learn how to balance time for study and a home duty which always affect their learning at the Open University. Again, there should be improvement in students support services in the area of guidance and counseling regarding to their learning.
- (iii) To the Open University of Tanzania: The institution should improve provision of feedback on the issues raised by students, also teacher contact, learning infrastructure in some examination centers as well as physical facilities such as books, lectures halls, chairs, tables, playgrounds, library and television are important in improving ODL.

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APPENDICES

QUESTIONNAIRE FOR CONTINUING & GRADUATED STUDENTS

I am currently a Master's degree student at The Open University of Tanzania at Kigoma Regional center. My Master's *degree on the " Challenges for effective Learning Among Open and Distance Learners: Experiences from The Open University of Tanzania Students Kigoma Municipality'* I kindly request you, to voluntarily respond to this questionnaire appropriately according to your own understanding and experience in your job career. I wish to assure you that all information you give will be treated very confidentially. In case you have extra information that may contribute to the success of my study, please feel free to write at the end of the questionnaire on separate sheet. Kindly complete the following questions by putting a cross (X) in the appropriate box.

SECTION A: The home factors challenging ODL students

(i) Home factors such as family responsibilities and can affect learning of the ODL students. Yes No

(ii) Explain how family responsibilities affect students learning at the Open University

(iii) Do you agree that family responsibilities affect students learning at the Open University?

Yes No

If any specify.....

(iv) Who among of the following affected your learning? Wife [] Husband [] parents [] friends [] (Please tick)

If any specify please.....

(v) Financial capacity to meet food, clothing, shelter and studies affect ODL students

Yes No

(vi) Lack of infrastructure and privacy while at home affect ODL students

Yes No

(vii) The distance from home to center affects learning of ODL students

Yes No

SECTION B. The work factors challenging ODL students

(i) Lack of balance between job and studies obstruct ODL students' success in their studies Yes No

(ii) Unfavorable work environment, e.g. absence of studying space, lack of electricity at work, may affect ODL student?

Yes No

(iii) Explain how Unfavorable work environment, e.g. absence of studying space, lack of electricity at work, may affect ODL student

.....
.....

(iv) Please, explain how workload may affect ODL student

.....
.....

(v) Explain briefly how threats by employer affect ODL students

.....
.....

(Vi) Work responsibilities affect OUT students?

Yes No

SECTION C: The institution factors challenging ODL students

(i) Explain how institution factors face ODL students at the Open University in pursuing of their studies

.....
.....

(ii) Explain how lacks of study materials affect ODL students at the Open University

.....
.....

(iii) Suggest major Strategies to deal with challenges facing ODL students

1).....2).....3)

.....4).....5)

(iv) Lack to display of student profiles challenges ODL studies at OUT

Yes No

(v) Lack of display of study materials on time affect OUT students

Yes No

(vi) OLD staff who have no technical abilities in use of ICT affect student leaning in relating to hardcopy than softcopy. Example some OUT staff supervise their student through hardcopy

Yes No

(vii) Lack of Physical facilities such as books, lectures, hall, chairs, tables, playgrounds, library and Television affect Outs dents.

Yes No

(vii) Lack of feedback and poor logistic system, poor teacher contact and students services affects ODL students in their studies

Yes No

APPENDIX; B

INTERVIEW SCHEDULE FOR OUT STAFF AT KIGOMA

1. In your opinion what do you think are unsolved challenges that limit ODL students in their studies?
2. What challenges to students at OUT face in terms based on
 - 1) Instructional related challenges
 - 2) Home related challenges
 - 3) Work related challenges
3. How is the use of social media and other information and communication technologies help to reduce the challenge in case of learning?