Learners Feedback on IGNOU e- Material: A Corona Lockdown Survey

Abstract

The paper is based on the feedback of students on the usefulness of e-content SLM for preparation of assignments and term end examination. During Corona lockdown, to motivate learners, IGNOU decided to allow them download e-content SLM available on the university website under e-Gyankosh link. The finding of the study clearly indicates that digital divide was instrumental and proved crucial for allowing learners to avail or not avail e-content SLM for their pursuit to learning.

1.0 Introduction

Open and Distance Learning (ODL) facilitates its learners by providing academic and administrative Student Support Services (SSS) so that they can continue their pursuit to learning without much hindrance, Therefore, ODL essentially promotes learner centric approach by meeting their study requirement using multimedia for programme delivery. One of the most important tasks is to provide Self Learning Material (SLM) in print from to the learners immediately after the confirmation of admission to the respective programme so that they can continue their learning activities including reading of SLM for developing assignments and also for participation in counseling sessions and preparation of Term End Examination (TEE).

Indira Gandhi National Open University (IGNOU), which is one of the mega open university of the world with a network of 67 Regional Centres (RSs), more than 3000 Learners Support Centres (LSCs) and number of Partner Institutions (PIs) established across the world, enrolls more than a million learners to cross section of discipline with a variety of programmes in a calendar year. Thus, dispatch of SLM to such a huge number of learners is a herculean task. In order to provide SLM to the learners in Pan India jurisdiction, this not only require advance planning, but also its meticulous execution and proper management. The monotonous approach in printing and distribution of SLM would lead to tremendous increase in the grievances pertaining to non-receipt of study material. IGNOU was managing the distribution of SLM to its learners effectively through its Regional Warehouses established almost at all the Regional Centres across the country, however, the authority of the university reversed the process and

took a decision to centralize the distribution SLM, resulting in non-receipt of SLM by a large number of learners during January and July 2018 session thus, increasing the students grievances.

Although, the university administration was continuously making sustained efforts to overcome this situation and took several initiatives including empanelment of more printing press and even doing away with its traditional policy of procurement printing papers from the market and distribution of the same to printers as it was considered an important hurdle to ensure smooth follow of SLM from printing press to its store and further distribution to the learners. It has also been argued that the procedure was useful when the numbers of learners were manageable and university policy to do away with procurement of printing papers would certainly save more time for SLM distribution management. Nevertheless, as a contingent measure university took a decision that the learners enrolled in July 2018 session would be given an option to opt for e-content SLM and considering the learners response same was extended in the coming sessions also. Accordingly, students were informed through various channels including SMSs, e-mails and even placing the information on the website and face book page of the university and its RCs with an advice to the learners to exercise the option for e-content SLM. In order to encourage the learners an incentive of 15% fee refund for July 2018 learners and discount of the same in further sessions was continued from January 2019 session onwards. Thus, in the present research an attempt has been made to critically analyze the feedback of the learners to point out the pros and cons of the e-content SLM available on university website.

IGNOU has two academic sessions and approximately 40- 45% of its learners take admission during January session. The university was undertaking the operation to dispatch SLM to the learners enrolled during January session, but enforcement of nation-wise lockdown forced the university to suspend its operation of distribution using different channel such as dispatching individual packets to the learners, sending in bulk SLM to LSCs and RCs for onward distribution to the learners. In the present research an attempt has been made to assess the effectiveness of the policy measures taken by the university to provide e-content SLM.

2.0 Review

Yair (2014), critically examines the role of text books and books available for the distance learners in electronic forms and emphasized that such books can be accessed using internet mobile app, laptop etc. and have contributed significantly to change the learning style in the modern era of education. Author further criticizes that there was continued reliance of distance education institutions on traditional form of print material, despite wide spread use of internet based technologies to promote e-learning. Thus, the author elaborates that with the advent of digitization, the shipping of course material has become an out fashioned problem rather the problem lies with ''encrypted download sites, web-based FTP services, etc.'' Moore et al. (2010), made clear distinction between distance learning, e-learning and online learning and emphasized that different learning environment has different characteristics and the ''learners also have different expectation and perception of learning environment.'' However, the authors have not addressed that how the issue of SLM will be resolved in different learning environment. Mehar (2019) argued that digitization has brought paradigm shift in distance education which includes impact on learning pace, more interaction opportunities among the learners and academic counselors, higher order of thinking and skills and opportunities for real time student's

assessment. However, the author has not touched how the institutions would focus on the convergence in distance learning with online education and e-learning to facilitate the learner's pursuit effectively and to resolve the issue of print material.

Nedhal Al-Saiyd el al. (2011), in their research paper emphasized that distance learning with 'integration of technology increases the quality, diversity and availability of information'. Under such circumstances the role of the teacher has changed and it has certain influence on teacher-student relationship. They further argued that ''distance e-learning system is asynchronous with pre recorded text which gives flexibility to the learners to pace the learning as per their convenience. It has also been emphasized that if ODL is synchronized with the teacher or any another learner, it will have different orientation. Finally, they argued that "distance e-learning system effectively incorporates text, audio and video materials in conjunction with e-learning course content" and would be an effective medium of curriculum transaction using online mode.

3.0 Objective
The objective of attempt was to address the following research questions:
- whether the initiative taken by the university could address the SLM requirement of the learners during lockdown?
- to what extent the learners used e-content SLM?
- do the learners satisfy with the e-content SLM available on the university website?
- usefulness of the App created to access the SLM?
- To what extend the issue of digital divide influence the initiative of the university?

4.0 Research Methodology
In order to accomplish the present research study two sets of questionnaire were developed in Google form and sent to the learners enrolled with IGNOU Regional Centre Chandigarh, during in pre COVID19 situation in 2019 and during the lockdown since 25th March. Thus, the learners from Chandigarh UT and adjoining state of Punjab and Haryana were involved in the study. In order to collect the response from the learners Google form link was sent to learners through email and SMSs. Thus, learners enrolled from July 2018 to January 2020 were involved in the process. The link was also sent through repeat SMSs and learners were reminded by sending repeat e-mail to submit the response. The questionnaires were designed in such a way that it not only contained questions on profile of the learners including sex, background, social status and economic conditions etc. The information was also collected on availability of electronic gadgets such as desktop, laptop, smartphone by placing direct question on the Google form. The learners were also asked whether they were aware about the availability of IGNOU SLM on its website and whether the same was downloaded by them for their use and to what extent they were satisfied with the SLM available in e-content. The perception of learners was also sought on the usefulness of e-content SLM during lockdown for preparing assignments and forthcoming TEE. In first set of questionnaire 355 responses were received and in second set of questionnaire which was sent to learners during lockdown 551 responses were received. The responses thus received were analyzed and placed in the coherent frame of the study.

5.0 Discussion and Analysis
5.1 While analyzing the profile of the learners it has been revealed that among the 355 learners 204 were male and 151 were female. Thus, the proportion of female learners was 42.54%. On

the other hand, 37.75% learners were from the rural areas and 62.25 % from urban areas. On the analysis of the social background of the learners it has been revealed that 12.96% learners were from SC/ST, 16.62% from OBC and 70.42% learners from the general category. On the other hand while looking on the economic background it was reported that   30.42% learners were having income upto one lakhs, 30.42 %, learners between 1.00 lakh to 2.5 lakhs, 18.87 % learners   from Rs 2.5 to Rs 5 lakhs and 15.21% learners Rs 5 lakhs and above. It is also evident to note that 64.50% learners were having income up to 5 lakhs which clearly indicates that the majority of the learners were from lower middle income group and ODL is the best choice for them to pursue higher education. More importantly, several characteristics of ODL learning suit to the profile of middle income group learners because along with their study they can also get involved in gainful employment to support their family.

Table-1: Profile of the Learners

Background	Rural	134	37.75	Medium	English	243	68.45
	Urban	195	62.25		Hindi	112	31.55
	Total	355	100.00	Annual	>Rs1 lakh	108	30.42
Category	SC/ST	46	12.96	Income	Rs 1.0 lakh to Rs. 2.5	121	34.08
	OBC	59	16.62		Rs 2.5 lakhs to Rs 5.00	67	18.87
	General	250	70.42		Rs, 5 lakhs and above	54	15.21

In order to use e-content SLM, the availability of electronic gadgets is essential. Therefore, in the present study an attempt has been made to collect information on the availability of electronic gadgets. From the Table-2, it is evident to note that majority of the learners (75.2 %) uses smartphone to access information from the university website, followed by laptop by 14.2 % learners. It may also be noted that 2.5% learners visit internet café to access the facility. On the other hand, 4.2% learners have reported that they use desktop to have access to the university website. This clearly indicates that majority of the learners use smartphones to undertake various online activities. However, in the open ended question it was also reported that the smartphone has several limitations including shortage of storage capacity and problem of stress in browsing the e-content continuously.   It has also been clarified that learners without electronic device would have not responded to our questionnaire and this would certainly have marginal impact on the finding of our result and in distribution of learner's response.

Table-2: Use of Electronic Gadgets

Type of Electronics Gadgets	No	%	No	No	%
Laptop	51	14.2	Tablet	6	1.7
Desktop	15	4.2	Smartphone	270	75.2
MAAC	2	0.6	Others	2	0.56
Internet Café	9	2.5	Total	355	100

An attempt has also been made to assess the option used by the learners to submit online admission application and fee. It may be noted that majority of the learners (67.09 %) filled and submitted online admission application form themselves and 56% used their own credit and debit credit to pay admission fee. On the other hand, the dependence of 22.6% learners was on internet café to submit online application form, as a result 9.7% learners used alternative

payment method including credit/debit card of café owners or payment by café owners using internet banking and the learners were compelled to make payment to the café owners in cash. There are instances where café owners charged extra amount from them. On the other hand a significant number of learners used relatives' cards (20.3%) to make payment towards fee.

It is evident to note that distribution of learners significantly varied with regard to submission of online application forms and use of payment method.   As revealed in Table-3, majority of the learners (87.2%) used either own or relatives credit/debit cards for submission of admission fees. However, a significant proportion of learners relied on the café owners for payment of fees as well as submission of admission form. We should also not forget that in case an application form of a student is rejected the admission fees would automatically reverted to the bank account of the café owner who can easily take advantage of learner's ignorance, resulting in exploitation of learners.   In 2018, when university decided to seek option from the learners to refund 15 % fees in case they opt for e-content SLM and sizable proportion of learners exercise the option. However, it was reported that in certain cases the cafe owner without taking the consent of the learners applied for refund and same was credited to the café owner's account resulting in receipt of several such complaint at Regional Centre. Nevertheless, from the next academic session the option was inserted in the online application form, with automatic reduction in admission fees while submitting the online application form.

Table- 3: Option Used for Submission of Admission Form along with Fees

Option Used to Submit Online Application Form			Fee Payment Option		
Method Used	No	%	Method Used	No	%
Internet Cafe	81	22.6	Using Self card	196	56.0
Self	243	67.9	Using Relative card	71	20.3
By Friends	20	5.6	Using café owners Card	34	9.7
By Relative	12	3.4	Internet Banking	32	9.1
Others	2	0.6	Others	4	1.8

Attempt was also made to analyze the feedback of learners on various attributes pertaining to availability of e-content SLM on IGNOU website and its suitability to them to continue their study in the absence hard copies. The learners were asked whether they were aware about 15% discount in admission fee if option is exercise for e-content SLM. It is evident to note that more than two-third learners (68.2%) were aware about the university policy to offer 15% discount in admission fee   in the event of option exercises for e-content SLM. It is interesting to note that 38.5% learners have exercised their option for e-content SLM. On the other hand, only 18.2% learners have received the refund. However, the cross examination of the fact at LSC level revealed that over a period of time majority of the learners received the refund, Nevertheless, the issue of refund in lieu of option for e-content SLM   in the account of café owner persisted. The feedback of the learners was also sought whether they faced any problem while downloading the SLM and 45.1% learners reported that there were some problems in downloading the SLM and the nature of problems faced by them has been further elaborated in detailed in Table 4.

 A considerable proportion of learners (47.1%) were aware about the IGNOU app for downloading the SLM and 36.5% of them used the app. It may be noted that more than three-

fourth learners (77.8%) appreciated the efforts of the university to provide online e-content SLM. Similarly, 76.9% learners reported that IGNOU website is easily accessible. However, there were 22.2% learners who do not agree with the efforts of the university and 21.6% such learners have reported that the University website is not easily accessible and this could be attributed to the internet problem faced by such learners. We should also not forget that the accessibility of internet is not uniform across the region and service providers, mainly due to its geo-physical conditions and learners hailing from hilly and remote areas of the region are bound to face such problem. It may also be noted that the learners of Chandigarh region are distributed in four states including UT, Chandigarh, Punjab, Haryana and Himachal Pradesh, therefore, the learners from remote, rural and hilly areas are likely to encounter the problem of uniform internet accessibility and this attribute has certain impact on their decision making for exercising the option for e-content SLM and the proportion of such learners is approximately 33%. Thus, we may conclude that one-third learners were deprived by university policy due to digital divide.

Table- 4: Response of Learners on Associated Attribute of SLM

Variables	Yes		No	
	No	%	No	%
Awareness about 15 % Fee Discount on IGNOU e-Content SLM	241	68,5	114	31,5
Option Given for e-Content SLM	127	38.5	203	61.5
Received Refund	53	18.2	228	81.8
Problem Faced in Downloading e-content SLM	124	45.1	151	54.1
Whether Agreed with the Efforts of the University	259	77.8	74	22.2
Accessibility on IGNOU Website	257	76.9	72	21.6
Awareness about IGNOU e-Content APP	162	47.1	182	52,9
Use of App	129	36.3	226	63.7

In the following table (Table-6) an attempt was made to assess the problem faced by the learners while downloading the SLM and using the IGNOU App developed for this purpose. The learners have reported that internet speed, easy accessibility, non availability of SLM for all courses and problem of storage capacity were some of the prominent reasons for not exercising the option. Therefore, approximately one-third learners (30.8%) reported that accessibility was one of the major reason followed by internet speed (26.2%). It may also be noted that 14.5% learners have reported that SLM for all the courses was not available on the University website. On the other hand, when the learners were asked why the app was not used by them, 26.9% learners have reported that the app was not user friendly followed by 29.9% learners having internet accessibility issue to use the App. It may also be noted that 13.9% learners have reported that the SLM for their courses was not available as a result they were reluctance to use the app.

Table- 5: Type of Problem Associated for Downloading e-Content SLM

Problem in Downloading the SLM			Problem in Using the App		
Type of Problems			Variables	No	%
Internet Speed	57	26.2	Not User Friendly	54	26.9
Not Easy Accessible	66	30.8	Poor Accessibility	60	29.9
SLM not Available for all Course	31	14.5	Medium Problem	28	13.9

Non Availability of Storage Device	10	4.7	Non Availability of Device to Store	33	16.4
Other Reason	36	16.82	Others	26	12.93

The learners' feedback on e-content SLM was contradictory; some learners have given positive feedback while other has given negative. It may be noted that 36.4% learners reported that e-content SLM can easily be accessed, while 31.1% reported it facilitate immediate start of learning, therefore, giving more time for preparation and the time lost between the confirmation of admission and the receipt of the hard copies SLM is also set aside. On the other hand, 10.2% learners reported that one can start study immediately after the confirmation of admission. Similarly 14.4% learners reported that e-content SLM give more time for preparation of assignments and examination and it is convenient to store also and provide more freedom.

Table-6: Learners Response on e-Content SLM

Reason for positive rating			Reason for negative rating		
Reasons	No.	%	Reasons	No	%
Easy Accessible	96	36.4	Comfortable with Print Material	116	55.8
Not to wait for hard copy	82	31.1	No Device Available to Store SLM	17	8.2
Continue Study Immediately After Admission	27	10.2	Internet Connectivity	21	10.1
More Time for Preparation of Assignment	38	14.4	Not Easily Readable through Device	32	15.4
Convenient to Store	11	4.2	Quality Issue with of Digitised Content	10	4.8
Other	10	3.79	Others	12	5.77

On the other hand, 55.8% learners reported that they are comfortable with hard copy of SLM which is available print form. Similarly, 15.4% learners reported that e-content SLM is not easily readable and 10.1% learners encountered the internet connectively problem. It may also be noted that 4.8% learners reported that the quality of digitized content is not readable in certain cases. From the analysis of the learners response, we may conclude that the learners have given mixed response and these responses are inclined to pose the issue of digital divide which indicate that those having easy accessibility to digital devices and internet accessibility have preferred the e-content SLM and those without such facilities still prefer hard copies of SLM.

5.2 The scope of the study was further extended by obtaining feedback from the learners during lockdown period through a questionnaire specially developed in a Google form and subsequently the link was sent to the learners through SMSs and email for obtaining their response on several attributes concerning to the use of IGNOU e-content SLM during lockdown in the absence of non- receipt of hard copies of SLM which was under dispatch from IGNOU hqrts. Accordingly, the link was sent to 6549 learners enrolled during January 2020 session under fresh enrolment and re-registration. Consequently, 551 responses were received from the learners which constitute 8.42% of the total learners enrolled during January 2020 session under RC Chandigarh. The important questions included in the questionnaire pertain to awareness about the availability of e-content SLM on IGNOU website, use of IGNOU App to

download e-content SLM from e-Gyankosh, problem faced by learners while downloading the SLM, extent to which the SLM met learning requirements of the learners and whether the SLM was helpful for preparation of assignment and TEE. The questions pertaining to assess the satisfaction level of the learners were also included.

Table-7: Learners Feedback on Usefulness of e-Content SLM

Variable	Yes		NO	
	No	%	No	%
Awareness about Availability of SLM on e-Gyankosh	365	66.2	186	37.8
Downloaded the Same from e- Gyankosh	253	45.9	298	54.1
Usefulness SLM for Preparation of Assignment	341	61.9	210	38.9
Easiness to Download e- Content SLM	306	55.5	245	44.5
Utilisation of SLM to Prepare Assignment(s)	300	54.4	251	44.6
Use of IGNOU App to Download SLM	265	48.1	286	51.9
Available SLM met Study Requirement	317	57.5	234	42.5

It may be noted that 68.2% learners were aware about the availability of IGNOU SLM in electronic form on the university website. Out of which only 45.6% learners have downloaded the SLM from e-Gyankosh. The learners were further investigated whether they faced any difficulty in downloading the SLM. It may be noted that 55.5% learners reported that the procedure for downloading the SLM was easy and accordingly 54.4% of them have used the SLM for preparation of assignment and forthcoming Term End Examination. Although IGNOU was already having its SLM on the website, nevertheless during nationwide lockdown the university made further efforts to upload SLM for the remaining courses, and such efforts were still continued and would certainly have marginal impact on the finding of our research.

During lockdown the university took a decision to encourage the learners to prepare assignment and submit the scanned copies of hand written assignments through email or in Google form link as decided by respective RC. This decision was to facilitate and motivate the learners to continue their pursuit to learning during lockdown. Accordingly learners' response was also obtained on the usefulness of e-content SLM for preparation of assignment. In our finding it has been revealed that 54.4% learners reported that the e-content SLM was helpful for preparation of assignment. We may argue that a large number of learners have used the option for submitting scanned copy of hand written and this could be substantiated from the fact that till date RC Chandigarh has received more than ten thousand assignments which is almost 60% of the expected assignments to be submitted for January 2020 session and this proportion is certainly going to increase by the time last date is over. The above statement could be supported from the feedback received from the learners also, which indicates that 57.5% learners have used the available e-content SLM for preparation of assignment and 48.15% downloaded the same using IGNOU App.

In the present study attempt was made to collect learner's feedback on number of attributes using Likert five point scale. Thus, from the analysis of feedback so collected it is revealed that 12.5% learners strongly agreed on the suitability of procedure for downloading e-content SLM and 39.9% learners agreed. On the other hand, 52.2% learners were satisfied with the procedure laid down for downloading the e-content SLM. From the Table-8, it has also been revealed that a significant proportion of learners (29.2%) have given neutral rating. If we also

include the response of the learners who have given neutral rating, we may argue that 82.1% learners have given positive response. However, further investigation of neutral response would depict the clear picture and thus it cannot be generalized. On the other hand, 17.9% learners provided negative feedback and they were not satisfied with the steps followed to download the e-content SLM.

The response of the learners was also obtained to assess their satisfaction level with the e-content SLM and its usefulness during lockdown. It may be noted that 10.5% learners strongly agreed with the usefulness of e-content SLM during lockdown. On the other hand, 32.1% learners agreed with the use of e-content SLM. In this case also a significant proportion of learners (32.3%) were neutral in their response with regard to usefulness of e-content SLM. Further investigation of this attribute would have given the exact reasons for learner's neutral approach. Nevertheless, we may conclude that (42.13%) learners were satisfied with the use of e-content SLM during lockdown for preparation of assignment and TEE. On the other hand, 24.5% learners were not satisfied with the e-content SLM and the reason for dissatisfaction could be attributed to various factors including digital divide such as non-availability of electronic gadgets, accessibility of uniform internet facilities, learners ignorance on the to use e-content SLM and lack of awareness about availability of e-content SLM. However, the response of the one-third learners who were neutral in their response is also significant which can go either side and cannot be set aside.
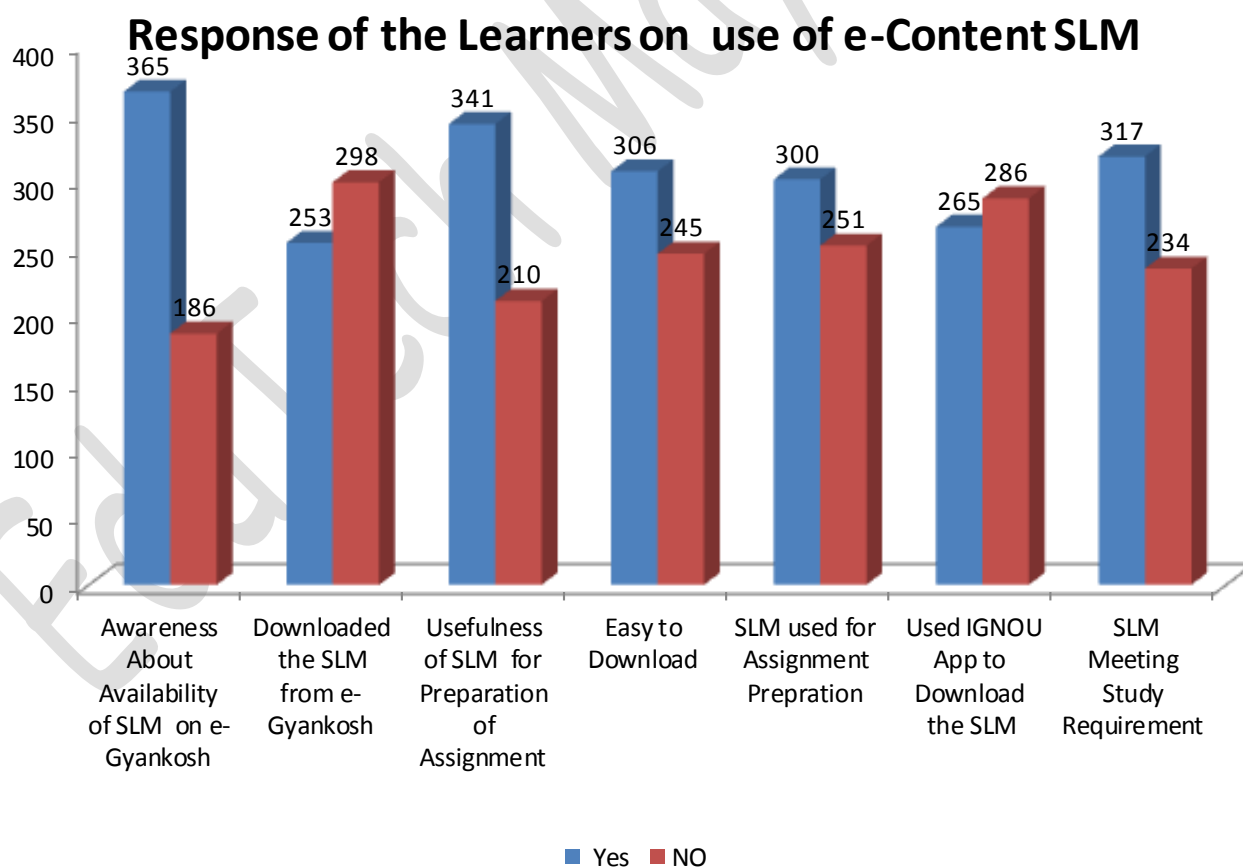

Response of the Learners on use of e-Content SLM

Category	Yes	NO
Awareness About Availability of SLM on e-Gyankosh	365	186
Downloaded the SLM from e-Gyankosh	253	298
Usefulness of SLM for Preparation of Assignment	341	210
Easy to Download	306	245
SLM used for Assignment Prepration	300	251
Used IGNOU App to Download the SLM	265	286
SLM Meeting Study Requirement	317	234

Table-8: Learners Rating on e-Content SLM

Variables	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
Rating the Procedure for Downloading the SLM	69 (12.5)	229 (39.7)	164 (29.4)	62 (11.2)	37 (6.7)
Response on Satisfaction Level with the e-content SLM	56 (10.12)	177 (32.1	178 (32.3	114 (20.7)	26 (4.7)
Usefulness of IGNOU App	75 (13.6)	223 (42.3)	150 (27.2)	63 (11.4)	30 (5.4)
Rating on Available e-Content SLM	70 (12.2	102 (18.5)	203 (36.8)	106 (19.2)	70 (12.7)
E-Content SLM Meeting Learning Requirement	60 (10.9)	256 (46.5)	127 (23.1)	81 (14.7)	26 (4.7)

Attempt was also made to obtain learners feedback on the use of IGNOU App specially designed for downloading e-content SLM. It has been revealed that 13.6% learners strongly agreed and reported that App was user-friendly. On the other hand, 42.3% learners agreed with the use of App. It may also be noted that 27.2% learners were neutral on their feedback. Nevertheless, we may presume that 55.9% learners excluding learners with neutral feedback could find the App useful. However, 11.9% learners have given negative feedback on the use of App for downloading e-content SLM.

The learners were also asked to rate the usefulness of available e-content SLM during the lockdown. It may be noted that 12.2% learners were highly agreed with the usefulness of e-content SLM. On the other hand, 18.5% learners were agreed with the quality of SLM provided online. It may also be noted that a significant proportion of learners (36.8%) were neutral on their feedback. Thus, they neither agree nor disagree with quality of e-content made available. On the other hand, 19.2% learners disagree with the quality of SLM available on the portal and its usefulness for their studies. Out of which a significant propitiation of learners (12.2%) strongly disagree with the quality of e-content SLM and negative feedback could be attributed to the learners accessibility to e-content SLM due to poor internet connectivity and partial availability of SLM.

Finally, while analyzing the feedback of learners on e-content SLM for meeting the learning requirement during lockdown, 10.9 % learners strongly agreed with our question and reported that the e-content SLM was extremely useful and met the learning requirement during lockdown followed by 46.5%, who also agreed that the SLM met the study requirement. Thus we may argue that more than 50% learners (57.5 %) reported that e-content SLM met their learning requirement during lockdown down. On the other hand, 23.1% learners were natural while providing the feedback. It may be noted that 19.4 % learners reported that e-content SLM have not met the learners' requirement during lockdown and their response could be attributed to the problem associated with accessibility of uniform of internet facilities and non-availability of electronic gadgets etc.

6.0 Findings of the Analysis

On the analysis of learner's response regarding usefulness of e-content SLM during lockdown several issues have emerged and synthesis of the same is presented below:

- Majority of learners reported the use of smartphone to browse information on the university website and also to download e-content SLM. However, the smartphone has several limitations including storage capacity and difficulties in reading the content, thus it cannot be considered as a useful device for online learning even in a crisis situation.

- More than 75% learners appreciated the efforts of the University for uploading e-content SLM on its website and offering 15% discount in admission fee for exercising option for e-content SLM. However, the problem of non-availability of required electronic gadgets, uniform internet accessibility, availability of partial e-content SLM, storage problem and learner's ignorance could be considered as important obstacles for effective use of e-content SLM.

- Despite the usefulness of the e-content SLM, a significant proportion of learners preferred hard copies of SLM in print form. Therefore, 30.42% learners were from low income group and not having suitable electronic gadget to support their study thus they were not finding it easy to continue their learning during lockdown.

- About 22% learners were dependent on the internet café for submitting online application form and 10% of them used the debit/credit card of café owner. Therefore, in case of rejection of online application due to certain discrepancies, the refund would be credited in the café owner account, resulting in learners grievances on this front.

- However, there were significant number of learners who realised that e-content SLM can be downloaded immediately after confirmation of admission and it gives more time for completion of study including preparation of assignment and Term End Examination. Thus it has been realised that in order to increase the use of e-content SLM which certainly has several advantages; the issue of digital divide could be addressed effectively.

- As far as use of SLM during lockdown is concerned, 68.2 % learners were aware about the availability of SLM on the university website and 45.6% them downloaded e-content SLM from the university website and 55.5% of them used SLM for preparation of assignment. Thus university decision to relax its policy of submitting scanned copies of assignment received positive response from the learners.

- The finding of the study further revealed that online SLM could meet the immediate learning requirement of the learners during lockdown, resulting in submission of a substantial number of assignments through online link. Thus, it may be noted that about 60% of the expected assignments were submitted by learners and they reported that the available e-content SLM was used for preparation of assignment during lockdown.

- It has also been noticed that 42.13% learners were satisfied with the e-content SLM, however, substantial proportion (32.3%) were neutral in their feedback and one-fourth learners were not satisfied with the e-content SLM and they registered their disagreement mainly due to non -availability of SLM for all courses and difficulty in downloading through app and also from website due to internet connectivity. The learners also reported in one attempt only one unit could be downloaded from the website thus the entire operation is time consuming and it should be made users friendly.

- A considerable proportion of learners (57.4%) reported that the e-content SLM met their current learning requirement during lockdown. Nevertheless, neutral response by 23.1%

learners raises some issues. However, we may conclude that about 65% learners were satisfied with the initiatives taken by the university and roughly 35% learners disagree with the efforts made by the university during lockdown and several factors were responsible for their disagreement including socio-economic and geophysical settings of the learners which make online facilities inaccessible and difficult.

7.0 Conclusion

In the present study an attempt has been made to obtain feedback from the learners on the usefulness of e-content SLM available on the university website for preparation of assignments and continuation of learning pursuit during lockdown. With the analysis of learners' feedback on number of attributes, it could be concluded that there was mix response of the learners and the same could be attributed to the issue of digital divide and division between haves and have not. The learners who have easy accessibility of internet facilities with uniform internet speed and having possession of electronic gadgets to support their learning provided positive response. On the other hand, the learners residing in remote and rural areas with poor socio-economic background and poor access to digital gadgets prevented them to make effective use e-content SLM. Moreover, their reliance on internet café further aggravated their problem as they were forced to make extra payment for availing such facilities. The redressal of this issue would have enhanced the reach of e-content SLM across geo-physical and socio-economic settings to facilitate learning.

Nevertheless, the finding of the study has some positive feedback to support the policy of the university to encourage the learners to use e-content SLM and make best use of it for preparation of assignments and further pursuance of their study during lockdown. The results of the learners perception clearly indicates that majority of the learners have used e-content SLM and also highly rated its usefulness for continuing their study during lockdown. However, availability of partial e-content SLM raised some serious issues and university efforts to upload SLM during lockdown came as a respite for the learners to complete their academic pursuit. Thus, we may finally conclude that majority of the learners agreed that the e-content SLM proved useful during lockdown and met their study requirement. However the concerned of roughly one-third learners who could not make best use of the opportunities provided to them to continue their study still persisted and policy makers cannot ignored such a substantial proportion of learners while designing the policy and this also warrant the attention of the University to accommodate the interest of this deprived segment of learners. Nevertheless the finding of this research paper indicates that the digital gap should be bridged so that all the learners can take advantage such policy to continue their pursuit to learning

8.0 References

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