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# INVESTIGATING THE ASSESSMENT EXPERIENCES OF DISTANCE LEARNERS: A CROSS- SECTIONAL SURVEY

**Mubeshera Tufail**

Department of Early Childhood Education and Elementary Teacher Education, Allama Iqbal Open University, Islamabad, Pakistan

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of the study was to analyze assessment experiences of students enrolled in distance education programs. All students enrolled in graduate program were the population for this study. Sample of the study consisted of 518 distance learners selected through stratified random sampling technique. Assessment Experience Questionnaire (AEQ) was used to collect data from students. The results of study were reported in terms of nine sub-constructs of the study. The study concluded a statistically significant difference among students on quantity of effort to do well on the assessment with higher mean score for the students of 3rd semester and male students. The quantity and quality of feedback on the performance was experienced more positively by female students & student who have self-reported about their non-disability. The results provide significant information in order to reach the conclusion & make suitable decision about the research issues. Similarly, some appropriate recommendation have been extracted from the conclusion of study. Therefore, it was recommended to consider the characteristics of distance learners, their needs and experiences to design effective and efficient assessment system for their learning.

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Corresponding Author: Mubeshera Tufail: mubeshera.tufail@aiou.edu.pk

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## INTRODUCTION

After COVID-19, use of technological tools and techniques have provided a number innovative strategies and pathways for effective and quality learning experiences for the distance learners. Teaching-learning strategies, classroom interaction, learning activities, student motivation and engagement and their assessment of their learning may involve wide range of opportunities due to information and communication technologies. Students find distance learning engaging and convenient as well as contemporary. Nevertheless, they were concerned about the social

interaction with their teacher and class-fellows, examination, lessons and practical work. It is required to develop the digital infrastructure of universities for the better teaching & learning experiences of students (Kedraka & Kaltsidis, 2020). The distance education comes with many advantages such as online learning opportunities, digitization of content, role of student and teacher. In this connection, during COVID-19, there was improvement in digital competencies of the teacher and students, improved the online infrastructure (Gaidelys, Čiutienė, Cibulskas & Baliute, 2023), managing both the work and study simultaneously (Bakhov, Opolska, Bogus, Anishchenko & Biryukova, 2021) as well as technological tools for effective teaching-learning process.

Nevertheless, there are some challenges in distance education like socio-economic inequality among students, student motivation, workload of teacher and issues in evaluation of students' progress (Gaidelys, Čiutienė, Cibulskas & Baliute, 2023). In the open and distance learning, the students have different kinds of interactions: interaction with teacher, interaction with content, interaction with class fellows and interaction with technology. It is important for a university to consider characteristics, needs of their students for planning and designing online courses (Berg, 2020). It helps in proving prospects for students to evaluate each other's work, which can enhance learning over collaboration and offer tools that allow students to reflect on their own learning and progress. The involvement of students in the assessment process can be one of factor to improve academic performance (Thathsarani, Ariyananda, Jayakody, Manoharan, Munasinghe & Rathnayake, 2023). Thus, it is needed to understand situation and challenges faced in distance education to adopt the ways for dealing with it and improve the system. However, there is a limited involvement of students for important decision related to teaching, learning and assessment. Due to student diversity in distance education system, it is significant to examine assessment experiences. It can be used to shape supportive system for the distance learners.

### Research Objectives

1. Examine the experience of students about implications of student assessment for their learning.
2. To interpret the diverse perspective of the students about their study approach for the assessment
3. Analyze experience of students about the extent to which assessment allows to choose syllabus for study
4. Assess perspective of students about the quantity, quality and usefulness of feedback for them

## LITERATURE REVIEW

Distance education is an individualized process of learning where the teacher and the learner interact with each other through an environment that is geographically distant and in the synchronous/asynchronous format; it is mediated by modern psycho-pedagogical principles, information & communication technologies (Shevchenko, Malysh & Tkachuk, 2021). Distance education involves the delivery of instruction for learners who are not present in the traditional classroom setting. For example, students learning in online environment over online and/or

posted resources and learning materials. In distance education system, tutors check students' work, grade it and may provide feedback through the online/posted medium (Pearson, 2023). Assessment is an integral part of distance education system. It shapes and affects the students' behavior and experience more than instruction (Bloxham & Boyd, 2007). Assessment is used to track student learning over various formal or formative techniques such as examination, quiz, assignments, in-class questioning and projects. There are two types of assessment: formative assessment known as assessment for learning and summative assessment called assessment of learning.

Formative assessment monitors the learning progress of students and provides feedback to improve teaching-learning process. Summative assessment evaluates the attainment of course objectives through formal techniques such as the midterm examination, assignments and final-term exams. Still, these types are mutually distinct ones e.g., quiz can be used for formative and summative assessment purposes (Day, Admiraal & Saab, 2021). There are many techniques used in online learning environment in distance learning system such as online quiz, reports, online presentations, online quiz and online examination. However, there is a need to assess quality assurance of assessment techniques (Thathsarani, Ariyananda, Jayakody, Manoharan, Munasinghe & Rathnayake, 2023). The learning outcomes and the assessments to assess the achievement of learning outcomes by students must match with each other. For each course, the assessment activities must be designed at appropriate level. Thus, maintaining consistent communication with students about their progress and upcoming assessments.For example, if assessment activities for initial level course were designed at higher level of cognitive domain, it would be difficult to cater needs of students from diverse backgrounds in that course (Lewis, 2020).

The innovation in open and distance learning were introduced but the assessment activities remained the same due to limited resources and system constraints. Now online learning have been incorporated into open and distance learning, new assessment techniques such as self- and peer- assessment, online group work, digital portfolios, online debate, & problem-solving activities in online environment, may be used to enrich assessment system (Morgan & O'Reilly, 1999). However, due weightage for alternative assessment methods in grading and the training of faculty members for its use is necessary (Almossa, 2021). A variety of the assessment tasks might be used in a course with various difficulty and complexity levels to target students with different levels of motivation. The development of outcome-based rubrics might be helpful to support students' performance and peer feedback (Wei, Saab & Admiraal, 2021). It is vital for students to develop assessment literacy and feedback literacy so that they can understand the assessment criteria, monitor their performance, understanding the improvement areas in their performance and take actions to improve it (Day, Admiraal & Saab, 2021). Clear, constructive, current, contextualized, equal and criterion-based feedback is effective (University of Reading, 2023).

## RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Quantitative survey method was employed to analyze experiences of students with student assessment practices and feedback in distance and online learning programs. All the students

studying in graduate and postgraduate programs in distance and online learning system were population for this study. In total, 518 students submitted their response for this study through Google Forms. The Assessment Experience Questionnaire (AEQ) (V3.3) (TESA Tools, 2019) was used to collect responses of students studying in distance and online education system about their experiences with the student assessment and feedback. It was adopted after consent from developers of this tool. The Cronbach's alpha value of reliability for AEQ was .811. It was a five -point Likert scale with twenty-eight statements. There were nine negatively scored statements in this research instrument. There were five possible options against each statement: strongly agree (score=05), agree (score=04), neutral (score=03), disagree (score=02) & strongly disagree (score=01), Besides one statement about the satisfaction, the statements were grouped into the following nine areas: Quantity of Effort (02 statements), Coverage of Syllabus (04 statements), the Quantity and Quality of Feedback (03 statements), the Use of Feedback (03 statements), Appropriate Assessment (03 statements), Clear Goals and Standards (03 statements), Surface Approach (03 statements), Deep Approach (03 statements) and Learning from the Examination (03 statements).

## FINDINGS OF STUDY

**Table 1**

*Descriptive Analysis of Responses of Students on Assessment Experiences Questionnaire*

| Factor | Sample (N) | Mean (M) | (SD) |
|---|---|---|---|
| Quantity of Effort | 518 | 3.87 | .66 |
| Coverage of Syllabus | 518 | 3.25 | .48 |
| Quantity and Quality of Feedback | 518 | 3.16 | .80 |
| Use of Feedback | 518 | 4.09 | .58 |
| Appropriate Assessment | 518 | 2.23 | .62 |
| Clear Goals and Standards | 518 | 3.55 | .55 |
| Surface Approach | 518 | 3.98 | .57 |
| Deep Approach | 518 | 4.26 | .55 |
| Learning from the Examination | 518 | 4.33 | .55 |
| Satisfaction with the Quality of course | 518 | 2.46 | 1.38 |

Table 1 showed the descriptive analysis of responses of students. The highest mean score was observed on use of the feedback, deep study approach and learning from the examination. It indicated that the students adopted deep study approach, used the feedback received from the teacher, and learnt from the examination. The mean score for the quantity of effort, coverage of syllabus, quality and quantity of feedback, clear goals and surface approach was higher than that of appropriate assessment and satisfaction with the quality of examination. It showed that students received the feedback on their work, and knew about the goalmouths and standards for their work to be submitted for the assessment. However, the mean score of surface study approach was high amongst these factors. It indicated that although students' mean score was very high upon deep study approach, surface study approach was also used by majority of the students.

**Table 2**

*Responses of Students on Assessment Experiences Questionnaire Regarding the Degree Program*

| Factor | Program | N | Mean | SD | MR | CS | DF | SIG |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Quantity of Effort | BS/BBA | 38 | 3.68 | .73 | 228.28 | 3.404 | 3 | .333 |
| | BEd (1.5/ 2.5/4 years) | 432 | 3.88 | .67 | 258.77 | | | |
| | MA/MSc | 31 | 3.98 | .49 | 283.48 | | | |
| | MS/MPhil | 16 | 4.03 | .49 | 290.81 | | | |
| Coverage of Syllabus | BS/BBA | 38 | 3.30 | .48 | 284.03 | 8.069 | 3 | .045 |
| | BEd (1.5/ 2.5/4 years) | 432 | 3.23 | .48 | 253.85 | | | |
| | MA/MSc | 31 | 3.20 | .37 | 252.23 | | | |
| | MS/MPhil | 16 | 3.59 | .53 | 351.75 | | | |
| Quantity and Quality of Feedback | BS/BBA | 38 | 3.13 | .49 | 252.17 | 2.468 | 3 | .481 |
| | BEd (1.5/ 2.5/4 years) | 432 | 3.17 | .80 | 262.79 | | | |
| | MA/MSc | 31 | 3.05 | .78 | 237.55 | | | |
| | MS/MPhil | 16 | 3.00 | .70 | 214.44 | | | |
| Use of Feedback | BS/BBA | 38 | 4.05 | .58 | 251.43 | .554 | 3 | .907 |
| | BEd (1.5/ 2.5/4 years) | 432 | 4.10 | .56 | 260.63 | | | |
| | MA/MSc | 31 | 3.98 | .76 | 242.82 | | | |
| | MS/MPhil | 16 | 4.12 | .57 | 264.28 | | | |
| Appropriate Assessment | BS/BBA | 38 | 2.26 | .56 | 264.50 | 2.150 | 3 | .542 |
| | BEd (1.5/ 2.5/4 years) | 432 | 2.23 | .64 | 258.37 | | | |
| | MA/MSc | 31 | 2.14 | .43 | 238.15 | | | |
| | MS/MPhil | 16 | 2.48 | .68 | 303.25 | | | |
| Clear Goals & Standards | BS/BBA | 38 | 3.55 | .60 | 254.12 | .253 | 3 | .969 |
| | BEd (1.5/ 2.5/4 years) | 432 | 3.55 | .54 | 259.99 | | | |
| | MA/MSc | 31 | 3.56 | .57 | 259.42 | | | |
| | MS/MPhil | 16 | 3.44 | .67 | 243.09 | | | |
| Surface Approach | BS/BBA | 38 | 3.99 | .55 | 258.09 | 2.120 | 3 | .548 |
| | BEd (1.5/ 2.5/4 years) | 432 | 3.98 | .57 | 257.19 | | | |
| | MA/MSc | 31 | 4.14 | .63 | 294.47 | | | |
| | MS/MPhil | 16 | 3.88 | .60 | 241.44 | | | |
| Deep Approach | BS/BBA | 38 | 4.20 | .44 | 234.16 | 1.928 | 3 | .587 |
| | BEd (1.5/ 2.5/4 years) | 432 | 4.27 | .56 | 259.65 | | | |
| | MA/MSc | 31 | 4.34 | .55 | 282.35 | | | |
| | MS/MPhil | 16 | 4.23 | .57 | 255.28 | | | |
| Learning from Examination | BS/BBA | 38 | 4.06 | .71 | 202.21 | 6.391 | 3 | .094 |
| | BEd (1.5/ 2.5/4 years) | 432 | 4.35 | .53 | 263.26 | | | |
| | MA/MSc | 31 | 4.36 | .54 | 268.35 | | | |
| | MS/MPhil | 16 | 4.38 | .47 | 260.84 | | | |
| Satisfaction with Quality of the course | BS/BBA | 38 | 2.97 | 1.4 | 313.80 | 9.274 | 3 | .026 |
| | BEd (1.5/ 2.5/4 years) | 432 | 2.40 | 1.4 | 252.41 | | | |
| | MA/MSc | 31 | 2.39 | 1.4 | 252.29 | | | |
| | MS/MPhil | 16 | 3.00 | 1.3 | 319.88 | | | |

Table 2 showed the analysis of responses of students with respect to the degree programs they were enrolled in. There was no statistically significant difference in response of students with respect to degree program on quantity of effort, quantity & quality of advice, use of feedback,

appropriate assessment, clear goals, standards, surface approach, deep approach and learning from examination. There was statistically significant difference amid students of many degree programs on response about coverage of syllabus. It means that students of MPhil programs have to study their entire syllabus to perform well in valuation as compared to other students. There was a statistically significant difference among responses of students of different degree programs on their satisfaction with the quality of course. It indicated that the students of MPhil programs were more satisfied with quality of course as compared to students of other degree programs.

**Table 3**

*Responses of Students on Assessment Experiences Questionnaire Regarding their Locality*

| Factor | Region | N | Mean | SD | MR | CS | DF | SIG |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Quantity of Effort | Urban | 230 | 3.83 | .72 | 252.19 | 3.958 | 2 | .138 |
| | Rural | 219 | 3.95 | .59 | 273.46 | | | |
| | Semi-Urban | 69 | 3.78 | .67 | 239.55 | | | |
| Coverage of Syllabus | Urban | 230 | 3.25 | .50 | 259.69 | .046 | 2 | .977 |
| | Rural | 219 | 3.25 | .46 | 260.39 | | | |
| | Semi-Urban | 69 | 3.24 | .44 | 256.05 | | | |
| Quantity and Quality of Feedback | Urban | 230 | 3.18 | .82 | 263.61 | .380 | 2 | .827 |
| | Rural | 219 | 3.15 | .79 | 257.45 | | | |
| | Semi-Urban | 69 | 3.12 | .79 | 252.32 | | | |
| Use of Feedback | Urban | 230 | 4.06 | .62 | 251.32 | 11.513 | 2 | .003 |
| | Rural | 219 | 4.18 | .53 | 281.55 | | | |
| | Semi-Urban | 69 | 3.97 | .51 | 216.77 | | | |
| Appropriate Assessment | Urban | 230 | 2.25 | .61 | 266.38 | 1.438 | 2 | .487 |
| | Rural | 219 | 2.20 | .64 | 250.47 | | | |
| | Semi-Urban | 69 | 2.25 | .60 | 265.20 | | | |
| Clear Goals and Standards | Urban | 230 | 3.54 | .56 | 258.32 | .152 | 2 | .927 |
| | Rural | 219 | 3.54 | .54 | 258.73 | | | |
| | Semi-Urban | 69 | 3.59 | .53 | 265.86 | | | |
| Surface Approach | Urban | 230 | 3.93 | .60 | 247.25 | 5.791 | 2 | .06 |
| | Rural | 219 | 4.06 | .54 | 277.55 | | | |
| | Semi-Urban | 69 | 3.94 | .53 | 243.07 | | | |
| Deep Approach | Urban | 230 | 4.20 | .58 | 246.20 | 3.947 | 2 | .139 |
| | Rural | 219 | 4.32 | .52 | 273.52 | | | |
| | Semi-Urban | 69 | 4.28 | .52 | 259.35 | | | |
| Learning from Examination | Urban | 230 | 4.31 | .56 | 253.51 | 2.354 | 2 | .308 |
| | Rural | 219 | 4.38 | .52 | 270.42 | | | |
| | Semi-Urban | 69 | 4.26 | .62 | 244.82 | | | |
| Satisfaction with Course | Urban | 230 | 2.59 | 1.4 | 274.20 | 6.113 | 2 | .047 |
| | Rural | 219 | 2.31 | 1.4 | 241.26 | | | |
| Quality | Semi-Urban | 69 | 2.51 | 1.3 | 268.40 | | | |

Table 3 showed the comparative analysis of responses of students from urban, rural and semi-urban areas. There was no statistically significant difference between responses of students on quantity of effort, coverage of syllabus, quantity, quality of feedback, appropriate assessment,

clear goals and standards, surface approach, deep approach and learning from examination. There was a statistically significant difference among students' responses on use of feedback. It indicated that students from rural areas used feedback they received on their work more than the students from other areas. There was a statistically significant difference among responses of students on satisfaction with the quality of the courses. It means that the students from rural areas were least satisfied with quality of courses as compared to students from other areas of study.

**Table 4**

*Responses of Students on Assessment Experiences Questionnaire Regarding their Residential Area*

| Factor | Region | N | Mean | SD | MR | CS | DF | SIG |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Quantity of Effort | AJ&K | 67 | 3.86 | .64 | 254.76 | 14.389 | 6 | .026 |
| | Islamabad | 37 | 3.64 | .83 | 218.95 | | | |
| | Balochistan | 20 | 4.00 | .67 | 292.85 | | | |
| | Punjab | 296 | 3.84 | .63 | 249.03 | | | |
| | KP | 53 | 4.04 | .69 | 293.94 | | | |
| | Sindh | 28 | 4.05 | .68 | 296.21 | | | |
| | Gilgit-Baltistan | 16 | 4.16 | .57 | 330.72 | | | |
| Coverage of Syllabus | AJ&K | 67 | 3.30 | .49 | 277.73 | 5.860 | 6 | .439 |
| | Islamabad | 37 | 3.15 | .45 | 225.88 | | | |
| | Balochistan | 20 | 3.29 | .56 | 258.85 | | | |
| | Punjab | 296 | 3.24 | .45 | 257.70 | | | |
| | KP | 53 | 3.27 | .54 | 252.89 | | | |
| | Sindh | 28 | 3.35 | .49 | 299.84 | | | |
| | Gilgit-Baltistan | 16 | 3.09 | .55 | 230.16 | | | |
| Quantity and Quality of Feedback | AJ&K | 67 | 3.29 | .68 | 285.82 | 5.813 | 6 | .445 |
| | Islamabad | 37 | 3.02 | .97 | 237.41 | | | |
| | Balochistan | 20 | 3.00 | .97 | 238.98 | | | |
| | Punjab | 296 | 3.19 | .79 | 263.84 | | | |
| | KP | 53 | 3.09 | .82 | 242.36 | | | |
| | Sindh | 28 | 3.07 | .82 | 238.09 | | | |
| | Gilgit-Baltistan | 16 | 2.98 | .75 | 223.75 | | | |
| Use of Feedback | AJ&K | 67 | 4.16 | .50 | 273.96 | 11.621 | 6 | .071 |
| | Islamabad | 37 | 3.85 | .62 | 190.55 | | | |
| | Balochistan | 20 | 3.93 | .54 | 218.40 | | | |
| | Punjab | 296 | 4.12 | .58 | 265.17 | | | |
| | KP | 53 | 4.15 | .56 | 270.35 | | | |
| | Sindh | 28 | 4.00 | .68 | 245.89 | | | |
| | Gilgit-Baltistan | 16 | 4.17 | .59 | 276.66 | | | |
| Appropriate Assessment | AJ&K | 67 | 2.22 | .58 | 257.29 | 3.345 | 6 | .764 |
| | Islamabad | 37 | 2.30 | .73 | 275.50 | | | |
| | Balochistan | 20 | 2.17 | .65 | 239.88 | | | |
| | Punjab | 296 | 2.26 | .60 | 265.25 | | | |
| | KP | 53 | 2.15 | .62 | 241.58 | | | |
| | Sindh | 28 | 2.14 | .78 | 240.50 | | | |
| | Gilgit-Baltistan | 16 | 2.14 | .64 | 226.44 | | | |

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|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Clear Goals and Standards | AJ&K | 67 | 3.55 | .50 | 263.69 | 2.266 | 6 | .894 |
| | Islamabad | 37 | 3.57 | .58 | 263.01 | | | |
| | Balochistan | 20 | 3.50 | .37 | 233.38 | | | |
| | Punjab | 296 | 3.54 | .56 | 255.31 | | | |
| | KP | 53 | 3.58 | .45 | 270.40 | | | |
| | Sindh | 28 | 3.68 | .56 | 285.45 | | | |
| | Gilgit-Baltistan | 16 | 3.46 | .75 | 246.44 | | | |
| Surface Approach | AJ&K | 67 | 4.06 | .57 | 277.71 | 1.888 | 6 | .930 |
| | Islamabad | 37 | 3.94 | .70 | 255.46 | | | |
| | Balochistan | 20 | 4.02 | .59 | 265.08 | | | |
| | Punjab | 296 | 3.97 | .58 | 254.29 | | | |
| | KP | 53 | 3.99 | .45 | 259.46 | | | |
| | Sindh | 28 | 4.05 | .54 | 272.55 | | | |
| | Gilgit-Baltistan | 16 | 3.92 | .61 | 243.06 | | | |
| Deep Approach | AJ&K | 67 | 4.32 | .52 | 271.84 | 4.893 | 6 | .558 |
| | Islamabad | 37 | 4.26 | .68 | 265.45 | | | |
| | Balochistan | 20 | 4.08 | .82 | 232.15 | | | |
| | Punjab | 296 | 4.24 | .54 | 253.14 | | | |
| | KP | 53 | 4.30 | .47 | 263.63 | | | |
| | Sindh | 28 | 4.43 | .55 | 304.41 | | | |
| | Gilgit-Baltistan | 16 | 4.23 | .39 | 237.53 | | | |
| Learning from the Examination | AJ&K | 67 | 4.44 | .48 | 282.30 | 2.977 | 6 | .812 |
| | Islamabad | 37 | 4.28 | .54 | 239.46 | | | |
| | Balochistan | 20 | 4.35 | .42 | 255.55 | | | |
| | Punjab | 296 | 4.32 | .56 | 254.83 | | | |
| | KP | 53 | 4.33 | .60 | 260.81 | | | |
| | Sindh | 28 | 4.33 | .63 | 261.36 | | | |
| | Gilgit-Baltistan | 16 | 4.38 | .54 | 278.03 | | | |
| Satisfaction with the Quality of the course | AJ&K | 67 | 1.97 | 1.2 | 206.97 | 9.274 | 3 | .030 |
| | Islamabad | 37 | 2.76 | 1.5 | 285.85 | | | |
| | Balochistan | 20 | 2.35 | 1.5 | 242.60 | | | |
| | Punjab | 296 | 2.56 | 1.4 | 271.80 | | | |
| | KP | 53 | 2.47 | 1.4 | 259.82 | | | |
| | Sindh | 28 | 2.18 | 1.4 | 227.13 | | | |
| | Gilgit-Baltistan | 16 | 2.44 | 1.5 | 251.53 | | | |

Table 4 showed comparative analysis of students from various regions about their assessment experiences in the courses they took in distance education system. There was no statistical difference among responses of students from various regions on coverage of syllabus, quantity and quality of the feedback, use of feedback, appropriate assessment, clear goals & standards, surface approach, deep approach and learning from the examination. There was the statistical significant difference among students' responses on quantity of effort to perform well in the assessment. It means that the students from Gilgit-Baltistan had to make a lot of effort to do well in the assessment. Still, students from Islamabad perceived that it involved less amount of effort as compared to students from other regions to do well in assessment. There was also a statistical significant difference among students' responses on their satisfaction with quality of

course with highest mean score for students from Islamabad & lowest score for students from AJ&K.

**Table 5**

*Responses of Students on Assessment Experiences Questionnaire Regarding their Age Group*

| Factor | Age Group | N | Mean | SD | MR | CS | DF | SIG |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Quantity of Effort | 16-20 years | 41 | 3.72 | .63 | 228.80 | 4.121 | 4 | .390 |
| | 21-25 years | 297 | 3.87 | .64 | 257.02 | | | |
| | 26-30 years | 130 | 3.95 | .72 | 277.49 | | | |
| | 31-35 years | 28 | 3.78 | .76 | 248.75 | | | |
| | 36-45 years | 21 | 3.88 | .57 | 257.55 | | | |
| Coverage of Syllabus | 16-20 years | 41 | 3.38 | .42 | 308.71 | 10.341 | 4 | .035 |
| | 21-25 years | 297 | 3.21 | .46 | 249.89 | | | |
| | 26-30 years | 130 | 3.24 | .48 | 255.71 | | | |
| | 31-35 years | 28 | 3.26 | .55 | 256.82 | | | |
| | 36-45 years | 21 | 3.49 | .57 | 326.90 | | | |
| Quantity and Quality of Feedback | 16-20 years | 41 | 3.27 | .85 | 277.13 | 2.111 | 4 | .715 |
| | 21-25 years | 297 | 3.18 | .78 | 263.35 | | | |
| | 26-30 years | 130 | 3.09 | .84 | 249.58 | | | |
| | 31-35 years | 28 | 3.04 | .78 | 235.57 | | | |
| | 36-45 years | 21 | 3.19 | .89 | 263.81 | | | |
| Use of Feedback | 16-20 years | 41 | 4.04 | .53 | 249.00 | 5.304 | 4 | .257 |
| | 21-25 years | 297 | 4.13 | .56 | 267.90 | | | |
| | 26-30 years | 130 | 4.08 | .59 | 258.54 | | | |
| | 31-35 years | 28 | 3.90 | .59 | 206.77 | | | |
| | 36-45 years | 21 | 4.03 | .67 | 236.98 | | | |
| Appropriate Assessment | 16-20 years | 41 | 2.19 | .52 | 252.79 | 7.737 | 4 | .102 |
| | 21-25 years | 297 | 2.23 | .64 | 260.75 | | | |
| | 26-30 years | 130 | 2.19 | .62 | 245.66 | | | |
| | 31-35 years | 28 | 2.21 | .47 | 259.13 | | | |
| | 36-45 years | 21 | 2.60 | .62 | 341.00 | | | |
| Clear Goals and Standards | 16-20 years | 41 | 3.60 | .56 | 269.48 | 1.362 | 4 | .851 |
| | 21-25 years | 297 | 3.52 | .55 | 255.54 | | | |
| | 26-30 years | 130 | 3.60 | .52 | 266.47 | | | |
| | 31-35 years | 28 | 3.44 | .60 | 242.27 | | | |
| | 36-45 years | 21 | 3.57 | .60 | 276.02 | | | |
| Surface Approach | 16-20 years | 41 | 3.91 | .55 | 237.70 | 11.019 | 4 | .026 |
| | 21-25 years | 297 | 4.05 | .57 | 275.18 | | | |
| | 26-30 years | 130 | 3.92 | .57 | 244.75 | | | |
| | 31-35 years | 28 | 3.89 | .62 | 247.77 | | | |
| | 36-45 years | 21 | 3.71 | .53 | 186.50 | | | |
| Deep Approach | 16-20 years | 41 | 4.18 | .52 | 233.88 | 5.780 | 4 | .216 |
| | 21-25 years | 297 | 4.30 | .56 | 271.66 | | | |

| | | | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | 26-30 years | 130 | 4.22 | .57 | 248.73 | | | |
| | 31-35 years | 28 | 4.19 | .44 | 224.18 | | | |
| | 36-45 years | 21 | 4.22 | .59 | 250.71 | | | |
| Learning from Examination | 16-20 years | 41 | 4.02 | .70 | 191.18 | 14.132 | 4 | .007 |
| | 21-25 years | 297 | 4.39 | .53 | 272.70 | | | |
| | 26-30 years | 130 | 4.32 | .52 | 256.41 | | | |
| | 31-35 years | 28 | 4.19 | .54 | 219.84 | | | |
| | 36-45 years | 21 | 4.43 | .45 | 277.60 | | | |
| Satisfaction with Quality of course | 16-20 years | 41 | 2.85 | 1.4 | 303.59 | 6.090 | 4 | .193 |
| | 21-25 years | 297 | 2.45 | 1.4 | 259.16 | | | |
| | 26-30 years | 130 | 2.33 | 1.4 | 245.97 | | | |
| | 31-35 years | 28 | 2.21 | 1.2 | 241.39 | | | |
| | 36-45 years | 21 | 2.86 | 1.7 | 286.12 | | | |

Table 5 displayed comparative analysis of responses of students of various age groups about their assessment experiences. There was no statistically significant difference among students of various age groups on quantity of effort, quantity and quality of feedback, use of feedback, appropriate assessment, clear goals and standards, deep approach and satisfaction with the quality of course. There was a statistically significant difference among students on coverage of syllabus with highest mean score for age group 36-45 years and lowest mean score for age group 21-25 years. It indicated the perception of students of age group 36-45 years that they had to prepare entire syllabus to well on the assessment. There was the statistically significant difference among students for adopting surface study approach to prepare for assessment with highest mean score for age group 21-25 years and lowest mean score for age group of 36-45 years. There was a statistically significant difference among students on learning from the examination with highest mean score for age group of 36-45 years and lowest mean score for age group of 16-20 years. The highest mean score of age group 36-45 years on learning from the examination that may be connected to their highest mean score response on the coverage of the syllabus.

**Table 6**

*Responses of students on Assessment Experiences Questionnaire Regarding Semester of Study*

| Factor | Semester | N | Mean | SD | MR | CS | DF | SIG |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Quantity of Effort | 1st | 271 | 3.92 | .63 | 266.49 | 12.626 | 6 | .049 |
| | 2nd | 40 | 3.78 | .68 | 233.31 | | | |
| | 3rd | 71 | 3.94 | .70 | 276.01 | | | |
| | 4th | 65 | 3.79 | .73 | 248.52 | | | |
| | 5th | 36 | 3.68 | .67 | 207.92 | | | |
| | 6th | 15 | 3.57 | .78 | 208.30 | | | |
| | Alumni | 19 | 4.10 | .52 | 315.34 | | | |
| Coverage of Syllabus | 1st | 271 | 3.22 | .46 | 250.45 | 15.929 | 6 | .014 |
| | 2nd | 40 | 3.26 | .51 | 269.29 | | | |

| | | | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | 3rd | 71 | 3.31 | .50 | 274.84 | | | |
| | 4th | 65 | 3.35 | .50 | 293.48 | | | |
| | 5th | 36 | 3.27 | .44 | 270.38 | | | |
| | 6th | 15 | 2.87 | .31 | 137.83 | | | |
| | Alumni | 19 | 3.22 | .43 | 256.21 | | | |
| Quantity and Quality of Feedback | 1st | 271 | 3.23 | .80 | 273.20 | 9.206 | 6 | .162 |
| | 2nd | 40 | 3.02 | .90 | 239.65 | | | |
| | 3rd | 71 | 2.99 | .76 | 226.56 | | | |
| | 4th | 65 | 3.18 | .84 | 260.57 | | | |
| | 5th | 36 | 3.26 | .68 | 270.53 | | | |
| | 6th | 15 | 2.96 | .63 | 209.80 | | | |
| | Alumni | 19 | 2.93 | .93 | 230.08 | | | |
| Use of Feedback | 1st | 271 | 4.15 | .56 | 271.67 | 9.809 | 6 | .133 |
| | 2nd | 40 | 3.99 | .56 | 235.98 | | | |
| | 3rd | 71 | 3.99 | .56 | 229.70 | | | |
| | 4th | 65 | 4.09 | .64 | 265.15 | | | |
| | 5th | 36 | 4.07 | .56 | 244.40 | | | |
| | 6th | 15 | 3.82 | .64 | 198.30 | | | |
| | Alumni | 19 | 4.24 | .52 | 290.87 | | | |
| Appropriate Assessment | 1st | 271 | 2.20 | .64 | 253.93 | 2.219 | 6 | .899 |
| | 2nd | 40 | 2.19 | .54 | 256.15 | | | |
| | 3rd | 71 | 2.24 | .65 | 254.77 | | | |
| | 4th | 65 | 2.25 | .63 | 263.44 | | | |
| | 5th | 36 | 2.36 | .62 | 288.19 | | | |
| | 6th | 15 | 2.29 | .45 | 278.80 | | | |
| | Alumni | 19 | 2.28 | .63 | 266.97 | | | |
| Clear Goals and Standards | 1st | 271 | 3.56 | .55 | 259.70 | 1.536 | 6 | .957 |
| | 2nd | 40 | 3.55 | .54 | 257.40 | | | |
| | 3rd | 71 | 3.54 | .45 | 257.45 | | | |
| | 4th | 65 | 3.53 | .66 | 260.22 | | | |
| | 5th | 36 | 3.61 | .54 | 277.67 | | | |
| | 6th | 15 | 3.51 | .43 | 245.90 | | | |
| | Alumni | 19 | 3.40 | .57 | 229.03 | | | |
| Surface Approach | 1st | 271 | 3.98 | .59 | 259.56 | 6.082 | 6 | .414 |
| | 2nd | 40 | 4.04 | .49 | 268.96 | | | |
| | 3rd | 71 | 3.90 | .54 | 239.23 | | | |
| | 4th | 65 | 4.05 | .60 | 274.68 | | | |
| | 5th | 36 | 3.87 | .52 | 233.61 | | | |
| | 6th | 15 | 3.91 | .58 | 241.17 | | | |
| | Alumni | 19 | 4.19 | .55 | 312.53 | | | |
| Deep Approach | 1st | 271 | 4.29 | .55 | 267.42 | 8.660 | 6 | .194 |
| | 2nd | 40 | 4.27 | .48 | 255.48 | | | |
| | 3rd | 71 | 4.13 | .60 | 224.38 | | | |

| | | | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | 4th | 65 | 4.31 | .54 | 271.70 | | | |
| | 5th | 36 | 4.26 | .54 | 250.81 | | | |
| | 6th | 15 | 4.04 | .63 | 203.87 | | | |
| | Alumni | 19 | 4.39 | .46 | 291.24 | | | |
| Learning from the Examination | 1st | 271 | 4.36 | .54 | 265.64 | 13.916 | 6 | .031 |
| | 2nd | 40 | 4.12 | .73 | 218.84 | | | |
| | 3rd | 71 | 4.25 | .46 | 228.10 | | | |
| | 4th | 65 | 4.46 | .58 | 296.60 | | | |
| | 5th | 36 | 4.35 | .49 | 259.90 | | | |
| | 6th | 15 | 4.11 | .62 | 203.13 | | | |
| | Alumni | 19 | 4.42 | .44 | 278.03 | | | |
| Satisfaction with Quality of the course | 1st | 271 | 2.21 | 1.3 | 231.77 | 28.434 | 6 | .000 |
| | 2nd | 40 | 2.93 | 1.4 | 308.91 | | | |
| | 3rd | 71 | 2.87 | 1.4 | 304.49 | | | |
| | 4th | 65 | 2.35 | 1.4 | 248.44 | | | |
| | 5th | 36 | 2.86 | 1.6 | 296.99 | | | |
| | 6th | 15 | 3.07 | 1.2 | 331.70 | | | |
| | Alumni | 19 | 2.63 | 1.4 | 279.03 | | | |

Table 6 depicted the comparative analysis of students' responses from various semesters about their assessment experiences. There was no statistically significant difference among students on quantity and quality of feedback, use of feedback, appropriate assessment, clear goals and standards, surface approach and deep approach. There was a statistically significant difference among students on quantity of effort with highest mean score for students of 3rd semester and alumni, and lowest mean score for students of 6th semester. It indicated that the students from 3rd semester perceived to put a lot of effort to do well on assessment. There was a statistically significant difference among students on coverage of syllabus and learning from examination with highest mean score for students of 4th semester and lowest mean score for students of 6th semester. The responses on factors can be connected to each other, as students covering entire syllabus to do well on examination may perceive higher learning from the examination. There was statically significant difference among students on satisfaction with quality of examination with highest mean score for students of 6th semester and lowest mean score for students of 1st semester.

**Table 7**

*Gender wise Analysis of Response of Students on Assessment Experiences Questionnaire*

| Factor | Gender | N | Mean | SD | MR | SR | MUU | Z | SIG. |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| QE1 | Male | 112 | 3.99 | .67 | 287.29 | 32176.00 | 19400.00 | -2.394 | .017 |
| | Female | 404 | 3.84 | .66 | 250.52 | 101210.00 | | | |
| CS2 | Male | 112 | 3.20 | .49 | 243.97 | 27325.00 | 20997.0 | -1.184 | .236 |
| | Female | 404 | 3.25 | .46 | 262.53 | 106061.00 | | | |
| QQF3 | Male | 112 | 2.97 | .89 | 227.84 | 25518.50 | 19190.50 | -2.483 | .013 |
| | Female | 404 | 3.21 | .77 | 267.00 | 107867.50 | | | |

| | | | | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| UF4 | Male | 112 | 4.14 | .55 | 267.96 | 30012.00 | 21564.00 | -.775 | .439 |
| | Female | 404 | 4.09 | .58 | 255.88 | 103374.00 | | | |
| AA5 | Male | 112 | 2.09 | .58 | 222.07 | 24872.00 | 18544.00 | -2.980 | .003 |
| | Female | 404 | 2.26 | .63 | 268.60 | 108514.00 | | | |
| CGS6 | Male | 112 | 3.52 | .46 | 242.16 | 27121.50 | 20793.50 | -1.343 | .179 |
| | Female | 404 | 3.56 | .57 | 263.03 | 106264.50 | | | |
| SA7 | Male | 112 | 4.05 | .54 | 275.96 | 30908.00 | 20668.00 | -1.430 | .153 |
| | Female | 404 | 3.97 | .58 | 253.66 | 102478.00 | | | |
| DA8 | Male | 112 | 4.29 | .56 | 267.18 | 29924.00 | 21652.00 | -.715 | .474 |
| | Female | 404 | 4.26 | .55 | 256.09 | 103462.00 | | | |
| LE9 | Male | 112 | 4.37 | .49 | 266.93 | 29896.00 | 21680.00 | -.700 | .484 |
| | Female | 404 | 4.32 | .56 | 256.16 | 103490.00 | | | |
| S6 | Male | 112 | 2.50 | 1.5 | 258.86 | 28992.00 | 22584.00 | -.030 | .976 |
| | Female | 404 | 2.45 | 1.4 | 258.40 | 104394.00 | | | |

SD= Standard Deviation; QE1=Quantity of Effort; CS2=Coverage of Syllabus; QQF3= Quantity and Quality of Feedback; UF4=Use of Feedback; AA5=Appropriate Assessment; CGS6=Clear Goals and Standards; SA7= Surface Approach; DA8= Deep Approach; LE9= Learning from the Examination; S6= Satisfaction

Table 7 showed gender wise analysis of student responses about their assessment experiences. There was no statistically significant difference among male and female students on coverage of syllabus, use of feedback, clear goals & standards, surface approach, deep approach, learning from examination & satisfaction with quality of the course. There was a statistically significant difference amid students on quantity of effort with higher mean for male students. It means that male students perceived to work harder to do well on assessment. There was a statistically significant difference in students on quantity and quality of feedback with higher mean score for female students. Male students' response for quantity of effort may be linked to lower mean score on quantity, quality of feedback they received on work. There was statistically significant difference among students on appropriate assessment with the higher mean score for female students.

**Table 8**

*Analysis of Response of Students on Assessment Experiences about Self-report about Disability*

| Factor | Sample | N | Mean | SD | MR | SR | MWU | Z | SIG. |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| QE1 | Consider Disable | 77 | 3.96 | .65 | 278.97 | 21481.00 | 15479.00 | -1.283 | .199 |
| | Not Consider Disable | 441 | 3.86 | .66 | 256.10 | 112940.00 | | | |
| CS2 | Consider Disable | 77 | 3.19 | .45 | 247.03 | 19021.50 | 16018.50 | -.805 | .421 |
| | Not Consider Disable | 441 | 3.26 | .48 | 261.68 | 115399.50 | | | |
| QQF3 | Consider Disable | 77 | 2.96 | .79 | 222.12 | 17103.50 | 14100.00 | -2.399 | .016 |
| | Not Consider Disable | 441 | 3.19 | .80 | 266.03 | 117318.00 | | | |
| UF4 | Consider Disable | 77 | 4.12 | .66 | 268.44 | 20670.00 | 16290.00 | -.580 | .562 |
| | Not Consider Disable | 441 | 4.09 | .56 | 257.94 | 113751.00 | | | |
| AA5 | Consider Disable | 77 | 2.13 | .60 | 240.11 | 18488.50 | 15485.50 | -1.256 | .209 |
| | Not Consider Disable | 441 | 2.25 | .62 | 262.89 | 115932.50 | | | |
| CGS6 | Consider Disable | 77 | 3.53 | .51 | 259.66 | 19993.50 | 16966.50 | -.010 | .992 |

| | | | | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | Not Consider Disable | 441 | 3.55 | .55 | 259.47 | 114427.50 | | | |
| SA7 | Consider Disable | 77 | 4.08 | .58 | 283.32 | 21816.00 | 15144.00 | -1.545 | .122 |
| | Not Consider Disable | 441 | 3.97 | .57 | 255.34 | 112605.00 | | | |
| DA8 | Consider Disable | 77 | 4.22 | .52 | 241.66 | 18607.50 | 15604.50 | -1.165 | .244 |
| | Not Consider Disable | 441 | 4.27 | .56 | 262.62 | 115813.50 | | | |
| LE9 | Consider Disable | 77 | 4.31 | .55 | 258.38 | 19895.00 | 16892.00 | -.074 | .941 |
| | Not Consider Disable | 441 | 4.34 | .55 | 259.70 | 114526.00 | | | |
| S6 | Consider Disable | 77 | 2.36 | 1.3 | 251.29 | 19349.00 | 16346.00 | -.540 | .589 |
| | Not Consider Disable | 441 | 2.47 | 1.4 | 260.93 | 115072.00 | | | |

SD= Standard Deviation; QE1=Quantity of Effort; CS2=Coverage of Syllabus; QQF3= Quantity and Quality of Feedback; UF4=Use of Feedback; AA5=Appropriate Assessment; CGS6=Clear Goals and Standards; SA7= Surface Approach; DA8= Deep Approach; LE9= Learning from the Examination; S6= Satisfaction

Table 8 showed comparative analysis of student responses about their assessment experiences with respect to self-report about disability. There was no statistically significant difference among students on quantity of effort, coverage of syllabus, use of feedback, fitting assessment, clear goals and standards, surface approach, deep approach, learning from the examination and satisfaction with quality of course. There was a statistically significant difference among students on quantity and quality of feedback with higher mean score for students who did not consider themselves as disabled. It means that the students, who considered themselves as the disable, were concerned about the quantity and quality of the feedback they received on their work.

## DISCUSSION

Students from Gilgit-Baltistan, students studying in their 3rd semester and male students were of the view that they had to put a lot of effort to perform well in the assessment, as compared to the students from other residential areas, semesters and female students. It was reported that management of time & effort could be helpful factors for academic success of distance learners (Neroni, Meijs, Gijselaers, Kirschner & Groot, 2019). Teachers' guidance from the first year can be helpful in this process. The students who had to study entire syllabus to prepare for the assessment, learnt from the examination. Students of MPhil degree program, age group 36-45 years, and 4th semester has to go through syllabus to perform well in assessment, and learnt more from the examination as compared to students of other degree programs, age groups and semesters. It is evident that learning course concepts in details are helpful for real performance in the examination but it is also linked to increased learning of the students as a result of the examination.

Urban students and students from Islamabad were more satisfied with quality of examination. The possible reason may be the exposure to learning resources and their self-management of the learning process. Surface study approach was prevalent more among students of age group 21-25 years as compared to students of other age groups. Assignments may be challenging but clear about what kind of task it involved (Gibbs, 2010). Aristeidou and Cross (2021) reported that the students facing difficulty to manage their workload, and having limited interaction

with their teacher and class fellows, might have negative association with their study habits. The study level of the students, their personal health, employment issues, childcare and caring responsibilities were also found associated with their study habits (Aristeidou & Cross, 2021). The distance learners were anxious about their lectures and examination. However, students with the self-discipline can deal with the learning process in an effective manner (Demirbilek, 2023).

Female students considered the assessment appropriate for their learning as compared to male students. The male students had to put higher amount of effort to perform in the assessment as compared to female students. The female students perceived that they received quantity and quality of feedback more than male students, as highlighted in the findings of this study. Rural students used the feedback they received on their performance, to improve their learning. Student learning can be promoted through effective feedback on their performance. It was reported that management of time and effort could be helpful factors for the academic success of the distance learners (Neroni, Meijs, Gijselaers, Kirschner & De Groot, 2019). Besides written feedback, human connection is important to understand the feedback comments for distance learners (Mitchell, Borgstrom, Murphy, Campbell, Sieminski & Fraser, 2023). Therefore, peer feedback and feedback through online tools can be helpful because it would provide action-oriented and customized feedback keeping in view assessment criteria (Day, Admiraal & Saab, 2021).

## CONCLUSION

The purpose of study was to interpret the assessment experiences of distance learners studying in graduate programs in distance education system. The study found that there was difference in the experiences of students based on academic degree program they were enrolled, semester of study program, age group, locality, residential area, gender, employment status, academic performance & their self-report about disability/no disability. While there was no statistically significant difference among students on basis of their employment status and their academic performance in the previous semester, experiences of students of MPhil program, age group 36-35 years and 4th semester were different than students of other programs, other age groups and other semesters, respectively, on coverage of syllabus and learning from examination. The students belonging to urban areas and Islamabad, and studying in 6th semester were satisfied with the quality of examination then other students. The students belonging to Gilgit-Baltistan, students studying in 3rd semester & male students had to put more effort to perform well in the assessment.

Quality and quantity of feedback was higher for female students and students who reported themselves with no disability than male students and students with disability, respectively. Based on study results, it is recommended to involve students in designing the quality student assessment system. Distance learners have limited interaction with their teachers, institutions, therefore, some scheduled survey through LMS about their ongoing and previous semester' experiences may be helpful to provide them in-time and due support for their learning process and assessment system. The experiences and needs of students in different degree program,

semester, gender, locality and age group may be different. There is need to collect information about the students and their experiences in every semester as there was a difference in their perspective about various aspects of student assessment based on semester they were studying in. Study involved a survey design with a relatively small sample size. The future studies may involve larger sample size with other research instruments to collect detailed data about this phenomenon. Involvement of teachers & university management may offer important insights about it.

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