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## A STUDY ON ATTITUDE OF STUDENTS TOWARDS HIGHER EDUCATION SYSTEM

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### Abstract:

*This study aims to study the attitude of students towards the higher education system in India and the impact that students' demographic and social characteristics have towards shaping their attitude. The demographic and social characteristics included in the study are: gender, year in graduation, age, past academic performance, educational background of parents and religion. The study is based on a survey that was conducted, for which the sample consisted of undergraduate students from various colleges of the University of Delhi. The findings of the study showed that the undergraduate students in Delhi University do not have a statistically favourable attitude towards the education system. It was also found that the students' attitude is not significantly affected by their gender, year in graduation, age, past academic performance, educational background of parents and their religion.*

### KEYWORDS:

Attitude, Higher Education System, Students, t-test, ANOVA.

### INTRODUCTION

*"What is the difference between an obstacle and an opportunity? Our attitude towards it. Every opportunity has a difficulty, and every difficulty has an opportunity." — J. Sidlow Baxter*

The above-mentioned quotation by the famous British author and theologian, aptly brings out the significance of 'attitude' in our lives - attitude can transform any difficulty into an opportunity, but vice versa could also be true. In the higher education sector, the attitudes that students hold towards the education sector are a crucial determinant of the quality and quantum of education imparted, as students are at the centre stage of the education system and constitute the backbone of any university since successful completion and enhancement of students' education are the reasons for existence of the universities. This is particularly true at the undergraduate (UG) level, as it is the first time that students come out of the protective environment in schools and are henceforth expected to pursue studies on their own. Under the circumstances, the attitudes held by students towards the system that they face at UG level, gain critical significance. Furthermore, in the last few years, reforms in the higher education sector have dominated economic planning. Today, with the outcomes of the education sector directly impacting economic development, it becomes even more important to unravel crucial aspects of the higher education system in the country, so as to identify obstacles to achieving a higher growth path. Therefore, it is imperative to investigate the attitude of students towards, and their concerns, about university education, which can not

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only reveal shortcomings in the system but also provide suggestions for policy formation.

Keeping this in view, it appears prudent to explore the attitudes of students of one of the country's finest, most diversified university towards the university education, particularly since there have been several initiatives by the government to improve the university education in the nation. The rationale for this study emanated from under-representation of students in developing the framework for university education and, also, dearth of such studies based in India.

### LITERATURE REVIEW

Attitude is defined as "a learned predisposition to respond in a consistently favorable or unfavorable manner with respect to a given object" (Fishbein & Ajzen, 1975). It can be formed from a person's past and also from the present. It is measurable and changeable, and is capable of influencing a person's behaviour in the future. For this reason, perception and attitudinal studies in education have been used to unravel crucial aspects about a particular issue, concept or an idea (Khunyakari, et al., 2009).

Wood (1998) investigated whether attitude of students towards a subject affects the extent of effort put in by them to learn the subject. He used correlation technique to analyse the relation between science-related attitudes and levels of effort put forth by high school students while undergoing a computer-based science program, along with paired sample t-test to determine if a student's science-related attitudes would become more positive after completing the program. The sample consisted of 26 high school biology students in grades nine and eleven enrolled at a girls' school. The students took the Test of Science-Related Attitudes (TOSRA) before and after the completion of the program. TOSRA was originally developed by Fraser (1978) to measure attitudes and subsequently underwent some modifications. The students rated the statements regarding science-related attitudes on a scale of strongly disagree (1) to strongly agree (5). To measure students' efforts, each student was to rate herself and the other members in her group. The results indicated that science-related attitudes and effort put forth by high school students are positively correlated. However, the science-related attitudes did not significantly differ before and after completion of the program.

Kilic (2001) conducted a study at Indiana University during 1998-99 to study the effect of using telecommunication technologies on pre-service teachers' attitudes towards computers and communicating on computers. For this purpose, students' attitudes toward computers were studied by taking a sample of two groups – one sample consisted of 43 students and the other 42 students. The first group had access to two telecommunication technologies integrated with their course, which the second group did not have. Quantitative data was collected by pre-test and post-test through a survey administered both groups at the beginning and end of the semester. All the items in the survey were Likert type items with six categories: Strongly Disagree, Disagree, Barely Disagree, Barely Agree, Agree, and Strongly Agree. These were coded 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, and 6 respectively. Negatively worded items were reversed. The data was analysed through descriptive statistics and use of the t-test. The results showed that use of telecommunication technologies did not affect students' attitudes toward computers and their attitudes toward communicating on computers. In fact, the students were already positive about computers and also with respect to communicating on computers, and stayed positive at the end of the study.

Pathan (2001) investigated the attitude of students to study if type of educational institute (coeducational institutions and single-sex institution) or gender (male/female) affected students' preference towards co-education system. She employed a questionnaire cum attitude scale approach as the main tool of her research. 1106 students from junior colleges in Pune city participated in the survey. The survey collected both qualitative and quantitative data. The results indicated that overwhelming majority of students from both co-education as well as single-sex institutions and both the genders (male and female) preferred the system of co-education.

Kotwani (2012) observed that the percentage of educated women is very low in India as compared to men. Generally there is a negative attitude towards education of girls, but girls' education is the need of the hour. He studied the attitude of parents towards girls' education. He also analysed the impact of gender, education and location (urban or rural) of parents on their attitude towards girls' education. Descriptive survey method was used. The sample consisted of 200 parents from urban and rural areas of Akola and Amravati districts of Maharashtra chosen randomly. The sample included literate and illiterate parents. The t-test for difference in mean scores of parents showed that there was no significant difference in the attitude of parents on account of gender, education and location. It was found that parents had a positive attitude towards girls' education.

## OBJECTIVES

### The broad objectives of the study are:

to examine the attitudes of students of University of Delhi towards university education at undergraduate level.

to examine the impact of demographic and social characteristics, viz. gender, year in graduation, age, marks at higher secondary level, parents' educational qualifications and religion, on the attitude of students towards the university education system.

## RESEARCH HYPOTHESES

This study tests the following hypotheses to study the impact of demographic and social attributes on the attitude of students towards the education system:

Gender of the students has an impact on their attitude towards the education system.

Year of study in graduation affects the attitude of the students towards the university education system.

Age of the students has an impact on their attitude towards the education system.

Past academic performance of the students has an impact on their attitude towards the university education system.

Educational background of the parents has an impact on the attitude of the students towards the university education system.

Religion of the students has an impact on their attitude towards the university education system.

## RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The study employed the survey method to examine differences, if any, in students' attitudes towards the university education system at the undergraduate level, based on their demographic and social characteristics of the students. The data was collected through a questionnaire consisting of 30 statements related to university education. The questionnaire comprised of both negatively-worded and positively-worded items, with a 5-point Likert scale where a higher score represented a more favourable level of attitude. Thus, the students' responses to the scale items were assigned scores ranging from 5 (highest) to 1 (lowest). Reverse scoring was done for negative statements.

For measuring the respondent's attitude, his/her score against each item in the questionnaire was added. The attitude score obtained in this way was analyzed through the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) 20.0 software program package. Descriptive statistics were used to indicate the trends in students' attitude scores, which helped to make systematic estimates and test the attitudes using inferential tools. According to the analysis results, the students' scores were found to follow a normal distribution. "Independent t-test" was carried out to determine the impact of gender on students' attitudes, while "One Way ANOVA" was employed to find the effect of other demographic and social characteristics, viz. age of the student, year in graduation, their previous academic performance and educational background of the parents.

## PARTICIPANTS

The questionnaire was administered to the students studying in University of Delhi to assess their attitude towards university education. The universe of the study consists of all the students attending undergraduate courses in University of Delhi in the year 2013. Convenience sampling technique was used for collecting data from respondents based on accessibility and availability. In the study, diversification of the sample was considered. A total of 112 responses were received. However, 21 responses were incomplete, which were deleted. Hence, the sample of the study consisted of 91 students attending 17 different colleges with differing socio-demographic backgrounds.

## PRE-TESTING

Initially, the questionnaire was pre-tested on a sample of 10 respondents who were chosen through judgment sampling, in order to assess the relevance/accuracy of the contents of questionnaire. The questionnaire was modified taking into account the feedback from the pilot run, particularly students' difficulties in filling the questionnaire, and suggestions from experts. The number of items in the

questionnaire was reduced, and multiple response questions (where students could tick more than one of the given item options) that students had found ambiguous, were modified. Wherever the wording of a question was found to be unclear, it was simplified and made clear.

**RESULTS**

**RELIABILITY**

Cronbach’s Alpha was calculated to test the internal consistency (reliability) of the study’s constructs. Since the questionnaire measured the attitude on two scales - ‘agreement’ and ‘satisfaction’-, different coefficients were calculated for analysing the reliability of the two scales, namely ‘agreement’ and ‘satisfaction’. The reliability coefficient was found to be 0.724 for measuring ‘agreement’ and 0.778 for measuring ‘satisfaction’. Since it is higher than 0.7, it was concluded that the constructs are reliable in the study.

**DESCRIPTIVE STATISTICS**

For measuring the respondent’s attitude, his/her score against each item in the questionnaire was added. As can be seen in Table 1, the highest score was  $\Sigma X = 126$ , and the lowest was  $SX = 66$ . The mean of the score was  $\bar{X} = 8.67$ .

**Table 1: Descriptive Analysis of attitude scores**

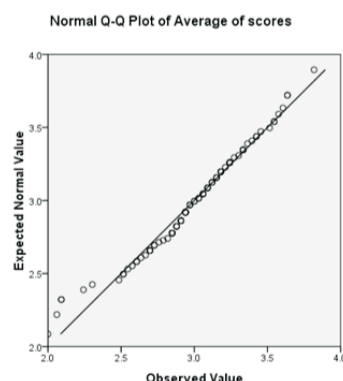
Descriptive	Statistic
Mean	98.67
Median	99
Variance	146.668
Standard Deviation	12.111
Minimum	66
Maximum	126
Skewness	-.475
Kurtosis	.502

The attitude scores of the students were tested for normality. As can be seen in Table 2, Kolmogorov-Smirnov test indicated that data scores are normally distributed. This is also confirmed by the Q-Q Plot given below. Therefore, parametric tests such as independent t-test and One-way ANOVA can be used to analyse students’ sum of attitude scores.

**Table 2: Tests of Normality for Sum of Attitude scores**

Test for Normality	Statistic	p-value
Kolmogorov-Smimov	0.97	.034

**Figure 1: Normal Q-Q Plot of Attitude Scores**



**STUDENTS' ATTITUDE ACCORDING TO THEIR GENDER**

As can be seen in Table 3, the average attitude score of female students was  $\Sigma X = 95.65$ , and that of male students was  $SX = 100.47$ . According to the independent t-test results, there is no significant difference in attitude of the students based on their gender ( $t(89) = -1.864$ ;  $p > .05$ ).

**Table 3: Independent t-test on Students' attitude related to their gender**

Gender	No. of Respondents	Mean	Standard Deviation	t-statistic	Degrees of freedom	p-value
Female	34	95.65	12.150	-1.864	89	.066
Male	57	100.47	11.826			

**STUDENTS' ATTITUDE ACCORDING TO THE YEAR IN GRADUATION**

As can be seen in Table 4, when the students' mean scores were tested with respect to their year in graduation, the highest score was obtained by the first year students ( $\Sigma X = 98.94$ ), and the lowest mean score was obtained by the second year students ( $SX = 97.80$ ). Moreover, there is no significant difference among attitude scores of the groups in relation to their year of study ( $F(2,88) = 0.065$ ,  $p > .05$ ).

**Table 4: One-Way ANOVA on the Students' attitudes towards education related to their year of study**

Year in Graduation	No. of Respondents	Mean	Standard Deviation	F-statistic	Degrees of freedom	p-value
First year	51	98.94	13.077	0.065	Between Groups : 2	0.937
Second year	20	97.80	11.674			
Third year	20	98.85	10.363		Within Groups: 88	
Total	91	98.67	12.111			

**STUDENTS' ATTITUDE ACCORDING TO THEIR AGE**

As can be seen in Table 5, when the students' mean scores were tested in relation to their age, the highest score was obtained by students below 18 years of age ( $\Sigma X = 102.55$ ), and the lowest mean score was obtained by students in the age group 18-22 ( $SX = 97.12$ ). Moreover, there is no significant difference among attitude scores of the groups in relation to their age ( $F(3,87) = 0.963$ ,  $p > .05$ ).

**Table 5: One-Way ANOVA on the Students' attitudes towards education related to their age**

Age (yrs)	No. of Respondents	Mean	Standard Deviation	F-statistic	Degrees of freedom	p-value
Below 18	11	102.55	13.441	0.963	Between Groups : 3	0.414
18-20	57	97.12	12.646			
21-22	21	100.29	9.880		Within Groups: 87	
Above 22	2	104.50	7.778			
Total	91	98.67	12.111			

**STUDENTS' ATTITUDE ACCORDING TO THEIR PREVIOUS ACADEMIC PERFORMANCE**

As can be seen in Table 6, when the students' mean scores were examined in relation to their previous academic performance, the highest score was obtained by students who scored below 85% in their boards/high school ( $\Sigma X = 99.60$ ), and the lowest mean score was obtained by students who scored above 96% ( $SX = 91.00$ ). Moreover, there is no significant difference among attitude scores of the groups in relation to their previous academic performance ( $F(3,87) = 0.549$ ,  $p > .05$ ).

**Table 6: One-Way ANOVA on the Students' attitudes towards education related to their scores in high school**

Previous Scores in School (%)	No. of Respondents	Mean	Standard Deviation	F-statistic	Degrees of freedom	p-value
Below 85	45	99.60	12.538	0.549	Between Groups : 3	0.650
85-89.99	30	98.70	10.697			
90-94.99	13	97.15	11.894			
Above 95	3	91.00	22.605			
Total	91	98.67	12.111		Within Groups: 87	

**STUDENTS' ATTITUDE ACCORDING TO THEIR PARENTS' EDUCATIONAL BACKGROUND**

As can be seen in Table 7, when the students' mean scores were examined in relation to their parents' educational background, the highest score was obtained by students whose parents were not graduates ( $\Sigma X = 101.42$ ), and the lowest mean score was obtained by students whose both parents were graduates ( $SX = 95.67$ ). Moreover, there is no significant difference among attitude scores of the groups in relation to their parents' educational background ( $F(2,88) = 1.961, p > .05$ ).

**Table 7: One-Way ANOVA on the Students' attitudes related to the educational background of their parents**

Parents' Educational Background	No. of Respondents	Mean	Standard Deviation	F-statistic	Degrees of freedom	p-value
None of the parent is graduate	24	101.42	12.552	1.961	Between Groups : 2	0.147
One parent is graduate	31	100.03	8.987			
Both parents are graduate	36	95.67	13.722			
Total	91	98.67	12.111		Within Groups: 88	

**STUDENTS' ATTITUDE ACCORDING TO THEIR RELIGION**

As can be seen in Table 8, when the students' mean scores were examined in relation to their religion, the highest score was obtained by Muslim students ( $\Sigma X = 104.86$ ), and the lowest mean score was obtained by Sikh students ( $SX = 92.43$ ). Moreover, there was no significant difference among attitude scores of the groups in relation to their parents educational background ( $F(4,86) = 1.023, p > .05$ ).

**Table 8: One-Way ANOVA on the Students' attitudes towards education related to their religion**

Religion	No. of Respondents	Mean	Standard Deviation	F-statistic	Degrees of freedom	p-value
Hindu	71	98.42	12.145	1.023	Between Groups : 4	0.400
Christian	3	101.33	14.189			
Muslim	7	104.86	12.280			
Sikh	7	92.43	12.040			
Any Other	3	102.00	7.000			
Total	91	98.67	12.111		Within Groups: 86	

**CONCLUSIONS**

The results show that the undergraduate students of the University of Delhi do not have a statistically favorable attitude towards the university education system. Statistically, the students should show a favourable attitude towards the higher education system as it may help the students to learn better and benefit fully from the education being imparted. The results point towards the need for a review of the higher education system.

It was found that there is no significant difference in the attitude of students towards higher education system on account of their gender. This is possibly due to the fact that in metropolitan cities like Delhi, gender discrimination is relatively low, especially with respect to education. In other words, modern families view education as gender neutral and this outlook is passed on to the children. Even in earlier studies (Pathan, 2001; Kotwani, 2012), it was found that gender had no significant impact on the attitude of



## A STUDY ON ATTITUDE OF STUDENTS TOWARDS HIGHER EDUCATION SYSTEM

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students towards education.

The results of this study also indicated that there is no significant difference in the attitude of students towards higher education system based on the year of graduation (First, Second or Third Year) in which are studying. This can be ascribed to peer influence which is extremely high in young students. Thus, students generally agree with their peers who may be in different years of the UG courses. Even otherwise, juniors in college are greatly influenced by their seniors. Therefore, all students tend to have similar views towards the education system irrespective of the year in graduation. It is important to note that this finding could also be due to a majority of first-year respondents (56%) in the sample.

Similarly, no significant difference was found in the attitude of students towards higher education system based on their age. This could be attributed to the fact that there is not much difference in age of UG students of the university. The data shows that almost 60% of the students are between 18-22 years of age. Since people reach adulthood by the age of 18 years, most developmental psychologists put people above 18 years of age in a single age group with similar level of maturity and thought processes.

It was found that that academic performance of students in 12th class did not significantly impact their attitude towards higher education system. This is perhaps because admission process in the Delhi University is so competitive that most students who get admitted to the undergraduate courses already have a high level of competency. For this reason, their scores in 12th class do not affect their attitude towards higher education system once they are in college. Again, peers' influence also contributes to the students developing a similar mind-set.

The analysis revealed that the educational qualification of parents did not significantly affect the attitude of students towards the education system. The reason could be that the questionnaire measured the parents' educational qualifications in terms of being a graduate or not. These days, either one parent, or both, are usually graduates. This is also borne by descriptive data which show that more than 75% of the respondents had at least one parent who is a graduate. Therefore, most parents and their children are expected to have a similar outlook towards the higher education system.

In metro cities, people generally tend to have a broad outlook, especially towards education, irrespective of their religion. The main reason is that with increasing urbanisation and advancements in technology, people acknowledge the importance of education. This view is imbibed by the children as well. This could explain the last finding of the study that there is no significant difference in students' attitude towards the higher education system on account of their religion.

In brief, the results of the study showed that the undergraduate students do not have a statistically favorable attitude towards the university education system. Also, their attitude is not significantly affected by gender, year in graduation, age, past academic performance, educational background of parents and religion of the students.

### LIMITATIONS AND SCOPE FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

The total number of undergraduate students in Delhi University is very large; hence, the study can be conducted with a bigger sample, in order to make the sample more representative. Similarly, additional questions could be included in the questionnaire, such as relevance of the curriculum to today's requirements; income level and profession of the parents; and location of the students in terms of whether their families live in rural or urban areas. Inter-temporal studies could also be conducted, so as to study past attitudes and changes, if any, over time. Since the present study is based exclusively on Delhi University, future research could cover other universities as well, in order to make the findings more generalized.

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