Recognition of Call Centre as an Effective E-Student Support Service in Open Distance Learning (ODL)

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Abstract

Technology has brought innovations in education systems all over the world. Call centres are for students' facilitation in the field of open and distance learning. This study was carried out on recognition of call centre as an effective e-student support service in open distance learning (ODL). Data was collected by structured questionnaire with the help of call center director, staff of call centre and distance learner. It was conducted with the help of faculty of distance learning education, director, call centre staff and with the help of students who filled the questionnaire to define the key duties and key performance indicators they had in managing their call centre, along with how call centre was structured and functional. The purpose of this study was to see the effectiveness of call centre 200 students and 10 employees were selected from the population using random sampling technique. The data was analyzed by using descriptive statistics, mean-test and one-way ANOVA. The evaluation of answers given by call Centre staff and students questionnaire was used as a data collection tool. Results shows that, likewise student affairs, a call centre in education serves as a solution Centre which drives to resolves all sorts of matter of learner. It is considered a bridge between learner and teachers. It was concluded that without a call and support centre, the distance education process will face a lot of problems in various communication matters.

Keywords: *Call Center, Student's Support Services, Distance Education, Open Distance Learning*

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Introduction

Distance education has proved an exciting support for the students in quality education that full of tension and imposed duties in our present scenario. Under these situations, a student seeks an easy way of learning in which he can complete the course assignments besides running parallel to his duties. In the mid-1990s, Open and distance learning change the dynamics for the learners to get higher education. The advancement in technology and access to the internet make it easy for students to learn online through a distance with the help of different student support services. Call Centre is a basic support which helps distance learners in gaining education. It helps to solve many problems related to admission process, course assignments, examinations, study Centre etc.

The word distance education is used to explain different kinds of studies at various levels. One of chief feature of it is has discontinuous role of teachers. However, its planning, supervision and lectures are through tutorials on by various mediums. Distance education is a process in which a person who is far from the student carries out the main part of teaching Mario and Toni (2001). It means that various mediums are used to keep in contact the teachers and students. The mediums used by this system are media, correspondence material, audio-video cassettes, radios, and TV shows. For students who want effective teaching, it is necessary for them to understand the structure of content and media. Practical had proved that the most suitable type of structure is quite separate from books. While the role of books is to highlight the writer's intent, and the role of distance learning content is to motivate the students for such activities which make them able to understand (Harris, 2007).

Call Centre is defined as a virtual operation that shrinks communication between an institute and students, especially in an open distance learning system. In modern word, many educational institutes are providing support to their learners through Call centers so a learner can easily get education with the help of this student support service. In the open distance learning system, many universities use this support service for their students. UK open university initiated this service among all institutes. (Li, 2023)

In recent years, the evolution of information technologies has made education more economical especially by making call Centre help desk for learners to handling their problems and provide solvable support on calls. (Aksin, Armony, & Mehrotra,2007, p. 665). The AIOU, when set up in 1974, was the second Open University on the planet and first in Asia and Africa. It, hence, talks about the foreknowledge of the arrangement producers of that Africa. It, hence, talks about the foreknowledge of the

arrangement producers of that time. As these previous years of AIOU have demonstrated, Distance Education has opened new open doors for millions, especially ladies, and supplemented the endeavours of the elected and common governments bigly and that too without turning into a weight on their assets. Distance Education expected more noteworthy importance and acknowledgment in Pakistan because of the elements of neediness and relative hardship of ladies. The Online Complaint Management Centre of Allama Iqbal Open University (AIOU) set up at its fundamental grounds is completely operational to take care of questions and grumblings of distance education on quick track premise. Inquiries are dealt with progressively, while the grievances or proposals got through the Centre are given critical consideration by the pertinent office. A normal of 8,000 calls is gotten every month. (AIOU, 2023).

Statement of the Problem
The quality and nature of numerical skills in developing countries, especially in Pakistan, may not be very encouraging when it comes to the role of non-formal education systems regarding the numerical skills of young learners. As far as the school systems in the private sector are concerned, in Pakistan, one can argue, and rightly so, that the quality and nature of education are both good and up to date. On the contrary, when it comes to the public sector, both the quality and the nature of education may not be up to the mark. Even worse, the standard of non-formal education systems from the perspective of numerical skills on the part of learners may need a lot more attention (Farooq, Feroze, & Kai, 2017). Keeping in view this scenario, this study was focused on exploring numeracy skills developed by BECS.

Objectives of the study
The objective and research questions are as following:
1. To find out the services provided by the call centre for students support services at AIOU.
2. To investigate the problems regarding students and support services at AIOU.
   RQ1: Is there any significant difference among male and female employees' opinions regarding indicator about call centre?
   RQ2: Is there any significant difference among rural and urban students' problems faced regarding indicator of call centre?
   RQ3: Is there any significant impact of class level on student's opinion regarding   indicator of call centre?

RQ4: Is there any significant impact of qualification on employee's opinion regarding indicator?

Research Methodology
This study used survey, and it was descriptive in nature.

Research Design
This study was descriptive and quantitative in nature. Researchers used questionnaires as a data collection tool. Information was gained by using a Likert scale-based questionnaire.

Population of the study
The population for this study consisted of all students of distance learning who call for solution of their problem and the staff (employee) of call center of AIOU. So, it constituted 200 students and 10 employees.

Sampling Technique
Simple random sampling technique was used by the researcher to select the sample. Using this technique, the researcher randomly selected 100 males and 100 females who made call at call center of Allama Iqbal Open University Islamabad and all employee who take the call in call center.

Research Tool
Data was collected through a researcher made questionnaire that was based on literature review.

Development of research Tool. Two questionnaires were constructed for collection of data. One was prepared for learners and the other was for employees. The researchers with the consultation of experts constructed questionnaires. Both tools were further validated through experts' opinion and refined according to their suggestion. All necessary information and views of learners and staff for this study were obtained through the questionnaire. The first questionnaire that was for learners contained 41 items and the employee's questionnaire contained 26 items.

Data collection
A total of 200 sets of questionnaires were distributed among students who made calls in the call Centre. In such a way, 10 sets of questionnaires were distributed among employees. The researcher visited the call center personally and administered the questionnaire to employees and administered the questionnaire to students. Students and staff were briefed before the distribution of the questionnaires. Co-operation of Director of

call Centre was also sought before the administration of the questionnaires. Almost all students and employees were co-operative.

Data Analysis. The data was analyzed through descriptive statistics. For data analysis statistical package for social science SPSS 22 version was used. Mean, Standard Deviation, t-test and ANOVA were applied for data analysis. Findings, conclusion and recommendation were made based on results.

RESULTS
Following section describes the results of this project:

RQ1.1: Is there any significant difference among male and female employees' opinion regarding the infrastructure of call centre?

Table 1
Difference among Male and Female employees' opinions regarding Infrastructure

Indicator	Gender	N	Mean	SD	t	p
Infrastructure	Male	7	3.44	.68	1.28	.021*
	Female	3	2.31	.81		

*P<0.05

In the table 1, an independent sampled t-test was applied to explore the difference among male and female employees' opinions regarding infrastructure. It was analyzed that there is a difference exist between male (M =3.44, SD =.68) and female (M =2.31, SD =.81; t =1.28, p = .02) employees' opinions regarding infrastructure. So, many participants answered in positive. Another significant difference was found among the opinions of male and female employees regarding infrastructure of call centre. As the males' opinions regarding the observation were stronger than that of the value of female respondents, so the data from male side was more justified than that of male side.

Folling are results on RQ1.2: Is there any significant difference among male and female employees' opinion regarding the training about call centre?

Table 2

Difference among Male and Female employees' opinions regarding Training

Indicator	Gender	N	Mean	SD	t	p
Training	Male	7	4.62	.50	1.44	.001**
	Female	3	3.87	.82		

**P <0.01

In the table 2, an independent sample t-test was applied to explore the difference among male and female employees' opinions regarding training. The results show that there is a significant difference exists between male (M =4.62, SD =.50) and female (M =3.87, SD =.82; t =1.44, p = .001) employees' opinions regarding training about call centre. So, the research question was that "is there any significant difference among male and female employees' opinions regarding training about call centre?" in the response, a significant difference was found between the opinions of male and female employees regarding training about call centre. As the males' opinions regarding the observation were stronger than that of the value of female respondents, so the data from male side was more justified than that of male side.

Folling are results on RQ1.4: Is there any significant impact of experience on employees' opinions regarding infrastructure?

Table 3

Impact *Experience on Employees' Opinions regarding Infrastructure*

Infrastructure	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	f	Sig.
Between Groups	1.34	2	1.071	5.196	.001**
Within Groups	3.44	7	.206		
Total	4.78	9			

**P<0.01

In table 3, ANOVA was applied to explore the impact of experience of employees' opinions regarding infrastructure. It revealed a significant difference in the experience of employees regarding the infrastructure of the call centre. F (2, 1.071) =5.19, P =.001. A significant difference was found between the experience of employees and infrastructure of the call centre.

Folling are results on RQ1.5: Is there any significant impact of experience on employees' opinions regarding training?

Table 4
Impact Experience on Employees' Opinions regarding Training

Training	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	f	Sig.
Between Groups	1.125	2	1.97	3.23	.041*
Within Groups	4.588	7	.61		
Total	5.714	9			

*P<0.05

In table 4, ANOVA was applied to explore the impact of experience of employees' opinions regarding training. It revealed a significant difference in the experience of employees regarding the training at the call centre. $F (2, 7) = 3.23$, $P =.04$. A significant difference was found among the experiences of employees regarding training at the call centre.

Following are results on RQ3.6: Is there any significant difference in making calls to call centre between rural and urban students' problems faced regarding mailing books?

Table 5
Difference *among Urban and Rural Students Opinions regarding Mailing Books*

Indicator	Gender	N	Mean	SD	t	*p*
mailing books	Urban	94	4.00	.58	.97	.33
	Rural	106	3.89	.88		

In table 5, t-test was applied to explore the difference of making calls to call centre between urban and rural students' opinions regarding mailing books. The results show that there is a significant difference exist between call centre and urban (M =4.00, SD =.58) and rural (M =3.89, SD =.88; t (198) =, p = .33) students' opinions regarding mailing books. The research question that "is there any significant difference of making calls to call centre between urban and rural students' opinions regarding admission?" answered in positive. A significant difference was found between the opinions of urban and rural students regarding information about mailing books to the call centre. As the urban respondents' opinions regarding the observation were stronger than that of the value of rural respondents, so the data from urban side was more justified than that of rural side.

Folling are results on RQ2.2: Is there any significant difference of making calls to call centre between rural and urban students' opinions regarding personal opinions?

Table 6

Difference *among Urban and Rural students' Opinions regarding Personal Opinions*

Indicator	Gender	N	Mean	SD	t	*P*
Personal opinions	Urban	94	3.55	.42	1.73	.085
	Rural	106	3.44	.50		

In the table 6, t- test was applied to explore difference of making calls to call centre among urban and rural students' personal opinions. The responses show that there is a significant difference exists between call centre and urban (M =3.55, SD =.42) and rural (M =, 3.44, SD = .50; t (198) =, p = .000) students' opinions regarding admission. So, the research question that "is there any significant difference of making calls to call centre between urban and rural students' personal opinions?" participants answer in positive statement, so it was analyzed that there was a significant between the personal opinions of urban and rural students with call centre. As the urban respondents' opinions regarding the observation were stronger than that of the value of rural respondents, so the data from urban side was more justified than that of rural side.

Folling are results on RQ3.9: Is there any significant impact of call level on students' opinions when making calls regarding mailing books?

Table 7

Impact *of Classes on Students' Opinions regarding Mailing Books*

Mailing books	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	f	Sig.
Between Groups	19.02	4	4.757		
Within Groups	95.38	195	.489	9.726	.000**
Total	114.41	199			

**P<0.01

In table 7, ANOVA was applied to explore the impact of call centre on students' opinions regarding mailing books belong to different class level. It revealed a significant difference among the students of different classes

regarding the collected data. F (4, 4.75) =9.72, P =.000. A significant difference was found among the opinions of students belonging to different classes regarding information about mailing books from call centre.

Folling are results on RQ2.3: Is there any significant impact of classes on students' opinions regarding personal opinions?

Table 8

Impact *of Classes Students' opinions regarding Personal Opinions*

Personal opinions	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	f	Sig.
Between Groups	4.284	4	1.071		
Within Groups	40.193	195	.206	5.196	.001**
Total	44.477	199			

**P<0.01

In table 8, ANOVA was applied to explore the impact of classes on students' personal opinions belong to different class levels. It revealed a significant difference among the students of different classes regarding the collected data. F (4, 1.071) =5.19, P =.001. A significant difference was found among the personal opinions of students belong to different classes with call centre.

Findings and Discussions

Significant difference between male and females' views found regarding infrastructure of call centres. In table 1, an independent sample t-test was employed to investigate the disparities in the opinions of male and female employees on infrastructure. It was shown that there were significant differences in the views of male (M =3.44, SD =.68) and female (M =2.31, SD =.81; t () =1.28, p =.02) people towards infrastructure. Therefore, there was a good response to the survey question, "Is there any significant difference between the opinions of male and female employees regarding infrastructure?" It was discovered that there were substantial differences between the views held by male and female workers about the infrastructure of the call center.

Regarding training in call centres, significant difference between male and females' views were found. Table 2 uses an independent sample t-test to examine how male and female employees differ in their perceptions about training. The findings demonstrated a significant difference in the

perspectives of male (M =4.62, SD =.50) and female (M =3.87, SD =.82; t () =1.44, p =.001) staff members regarding contact center training. As a result, the study question, "Is there any significant difference between male and female employees' opinions regarding training about call centers?" had a good response. There were discovered to be significant differences between the opinions held by male and female personnel about call center training.

Regarding experience of employees and infrastructure of the call centre significant difference was found. In table 3, ANOVA was applied to explore the impact of experience of employees' opinions regarding infrastructure. It revealed a significant difference in the experience of employees regarding the infrastructure of the call centre. F (2, 1.071) =5.19, P =.001. A significant difference was found between the experience of employees and infrastructure of the call centre.

Regarding employees' training there was found significant difference. In table 4, ANOVA was applied to explore the impact of experience of employees' opinions regarding training. It revealed a significant difference in the experience of employees regarding the training at the call centre. F (2, 7) = 1.97, P =.04. A significant difference was found among the experiences of employees regarding training at the call centre.

The perceptions of urban and rural students about information about shipping books on call centers were found to differ significantly. To investigate the differences in call center perspectives on sending books between urban and rural students, an independent sample t-test was used in table 5. The results showed that the opinions of contact center and urban (M =4.00, SD =.58) and rural (M =3.89, SD =.88; t (198) =, p =.33) students regarding shipping books differed significantly. Therefore, the study question, "Is there any significant difference between urban and rural students' opinions regarding admission when making calls to call centers?" was answered in the affirmative. The perceptions of urban and rural students about information about shipping books on call centers were found to differ significantly.

Significant difference between rural and urban students' experiences in call centre was found. To investigate the differences in the personal attitudes of urban and rural students on calling a call center, an independent sample t-test was used in table 6. The results showed that the call center and the attitudes of urban (M =, 3.55, SD =.42) and rural (M =, 3.44, SD =.50; t (198) =, p =.000) students about admission differ significantly from one another. Therefore, the study question, "Is there any significant difference between urban and rural students' personal opinions when making calls to call centers?" was answered in the affirmative.

Students from rural and urban areas had quite different personal experiences with call centers.

In table 7, ANOVA was applied to explore the impact of call centre on students' opinions regarding mailing books belong to different class level. It revealed a significant difference among the students of different classes regarding the collected data. $F_{(4, 4.75)} = 9.72$, $P = .000$. A significant difference was found among the opinions of students belong to different classes regarding information about mailing books from call centre.

There was significant difference of students belonging to different levels and classes. In table 8, ANOVA was applied to explore the impact of call centre on students' personal opinions belong to different class level. It revealed a significant difference among the students of different classes regarding the collected data. $F_{(4, 1.071)} = 5.19$, $P = .001$. A significant difference was found among the personal opinions of students belong to different classes with call centre.

Conclusions and Recommendations

The study's outcomes demonstrate that male and female students' perceptions of the call center as an E support differ significantly from one another. The findings showed a substantial difference in the views of male and female students about information about mailing books to contact centers, as well as a large difference in the views of male and female students about call centers personally. The findings indicate a noteworthy disparity in the perspectives held by students from urban and rural areas with respect to sending books and personal experiences with contact centers. The findings showed that there are notable differences in the perspectives of students from various grades concerning the information about books that are mailed by contact centers.

The findings demonstrated that there are notable differences in the individual viewpoints of students from various grades who use call centers. The findings showed that male and female employees' perceptions of the call center's infrastructure differed significantly. The findings showed a substantial disparity in the perspectives of male and female staff members regarding contact center training. The findings showed that male and female employees had somewhat different perceptions about how clear the information about the call center is. The findings showed that there were notable differences between the call center's infrastructure and employee experience. The findings demonstrated that there are notable variations in the experiences of staff members about call center training.

Recommendations
In the light of findings, following recommendations are made:

- It is suggested to improve the function of the call centre of AIOU so that proper information is conveyed to respondents. The feedback is needed from the stakeholder and students to improve the performance and services of the call Centre. More call centers are needed to provide quick responses to respondents. The study may be conducted in other universities for the equivalence of provided information. Modern equipment and technical staff are needed at call centre to improve the quality of calls. All the call and equipment's used for the guidance of students may be auto answer so that students have not to wait for long time for unwanted calls. Proper feedback may be provided to students, staff and concerned authorities to make the system more comfortable.

- The staff and employees may be upgraded in a timely manner to motivate them and make system better. The call centre facility may be provided 24 hours and 7 days for the students.

- The call centre staff may be provided with the proper and frequent training for the emp

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