

ANALYSIS OF THE FACTORS WHICH INFLUENCED VIDEO CONFERENCING BY HEALTH SERVICES MANAGEMENT STUDENTS AT UNISA

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ABSTRACT

In the past, students registered at Unisa for Health Services Management (HSM) (previously known as Nursing Administration) annually received a group visit (discussion class) at Unisa's regional offices. The purpose of the discussion classes was to establish personal contact between the teaching staff and students registered for HSM.

The purpose of this study is to explore the factors that influence the attendance of HSM/HMA students at video-conference sessions that are held at Unisa centres. The objective is to identify factors that encourage or inhibit students from attending these sessions.

A quantitative approach will be used to collect data from the participants. The design will be exploratory and descriptive. A questionnaire will be distributed to all participants via Tutorial HMAVAK.

All students registered for Health Service Management modules in 2012 at Unisa will be included in the study. No student will be coerced to participate.

Keywords: Health Service Management, students, Unisa, video conference

INTRODUCTION

In the past, students registered for Health Services Management (HSM) (previously known as Nursing Administration) annually received a group visit (discussion class) at Unisa's regional offices. The purpose of the discussion classes was to establish personal contact between the teaching staff and students registered for HSM. Students were invited to come prepared to the discussion classes and to discuss any uncertainties and problems with the visiting lecturers.

With the development of technology, Unisa decided to look at other ways to accomplish contact between lecturers and students without requiring lecturers or students to travel. In about 1996-1997, Unisa invested in modern, fully equipped video-conference facilities. Currently Unisa has 27 video-conference classrooms in South Africa and one in Ethiopia. Video conferencing promotes interaction between lecturers and students at remote locations, while saving on time and on travelling and accommodation costs. Because it is a live broadcast, students have the opportunity to interact with lecturers and fellow students at various locations.

Unisa is a dedicated Open Distance Learning educational institution. Open Distance Learning (ODL) entails a student-centred approach that gives students flexibility and choice over what, when, where and how they learn, and provides them with extensive student support. As a comprehensive university, Unisa offers both vocational and academic programmes, many of which have received international accreditation. Unisa is an internationally recognised university with an extensive geographical footprint, giving its students recognition and employability in many countries the world over.

The number of adult students who participate in online learning has grown rapidly in the last two decades due to online learning's many advantages (Park & Choi 2009:207). ODL connects students across geographical boundaries through the support of the internet and learning management systems like video conferencing. Students nowadays can conveniently learn and communicate online. Students do not merely seek course-related information, but participate and interact with peers and educators in discussions (Bing & Ping 2008:3).

HSM students are adults who are registered with an ODL institution. They are required to interact online, and specifically to attend video conferences. By offering them video conferences, the ODL institution they have registered with has granted them an opportunity to study and be supported by educators. Video conferencing offers a convenient method of teaching and learning, and makes it possible for students to meet

their educators and other students and to resolve their study challenges, irrespective of geographical barriers.

STATEMENT OF THE RESEARCH PROBLEM

Currently students and educators are faced with challenges of understanding information communication technology driven world which is characterised by constant innovations and revolutionising the manner in which education is conducted (John & Wheeler 2008:128). These assumptions were a concern of HSM educators that is why this study. This study will explore the factors that influence attendances of video conferencing at Unisa. For the past three years there has been a poor attendance in all centres on video conferencing despite being reminded by emails, sms, telephone and tutorial letters. The 2011 statistic showed that only 14% (N= 214) of students out of 1907 attended the sessions in eight regions as shown in Table 1. [NB: not provided in electronic copy]

PURPOSE

The purpose of the study is to explore the factors that influence HSM/HMA students to attend or not attend video-conference sessions which are held at Unisa centres.

RESEARCH OBJECTIVES

To identify factors that encourage or inhibit students from attending video-conference sessions.

RESEARCH DESIGN

The study will follow a quantitative approach, using a survey to collect data from all students who are registered for any modules under the HSM discipline. Quantitative research refers to a general set of orderly, disciplined procedures which allow deductive reasoning in order to generate predictions that are tested in the real world (Polit & Beck 2008). The survey provides a numeric description of trends. Creswell (2009:145) describes a survey as a design that quantitatively describes the opinions of the population. The researcher selects a sample of respondents from a population and administers a standardised questionnaire to gather data about their opinions. In this study, a survey will be used to gather data about the factors which influence attendance at video-conference sessions by HMA/HSA students at Unisa.

SAMPLING

All students are invited to participate to the study, so sampling will not be applicable; students will not be coerced to participate. Only those students who are available and willing to participate will be included in the study.

The population will be all Unisa students registered for HMA modules, except HMA 2603 which is a practical module.

ADMINISTERING THE DATA COLLECTION INSTRUMENT

The questionnaire will be distributed via Tutorial Letter 103 to all HMA students who are registered in 2012. The information document and informed consent form will be attached to the tutorial letter. All students will be informed of the confidentiality of the survey and its benefits. It will be emphasised that participation is voluntary and there will be no negative consequences for those who do not wish to fill in the questionnaire.

DATA MANAGEMENT AND ANALYSIS

Data will be analysed using the descriptive statistics by applying Statistical Package of Social Sciences (SPSS) Version 11. For each of the variables to be analysed, univariate descriptive statistics will provide an overall picture of the data (Polit & Beck 2008:567). For continuous variables, selected percentiles will be presented to summarise the range and distribution of the data for the years of training among the population of interest. Inferential statistics will be used to make inferences about the population of interest (Polit & Beck 2008:556). The estimate of the mean and confidence interval will be used, based on a statistical mode that controls for the possible correlation of observations within the population. Tables displaying cell frequencies and percentages of total numbers of valid respondents (non-missing) for each of the possible question responses will be used to display the findings.

ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS

Freedom from harm

Freedom from harm refers to doing no psychological, physical, emotional, social, and/or economical harm to the study respondents. In this project the researchers will ensure that the respondents are not exposed to psychological harm by ensuring that content

validity is in place and that the way in which the questions are written is easy to read and understandable. The respondents will also not be exposed to any economic risks in any way. The purpose and process of the project will be fully explained to the respondents, and they will also be informed that they can withdraw from the project at any time if they feel uncomfortable with the research process.

Freedom from exploitation

The respondents will be assured that they will not be victimised and that the information they provide will not be used against them, and that their participation in the research does not place them at any disadvantage whatsoever (Polit & Beck 2008:171). The questionnaire will not be presented to the students during closing dates for assignments and the examination time, but they will be asked to complete it when they are ready to do so.

Principle of respect for human dignity

This principle includes the right to self-determination and the right to full disclosure (Polit & Beck 2008:171). The principle of self-determination means that the respondents have the right to decide voluntarily whether or not to participate in the study without coercion (Polit & Beck 2008:172).

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