UTILISATION OF MULTIMEDIA FACILITIES: LEARNER RESPONES

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Abstract

IGNOU's mandate is to reach out to learners by adopting a mix of means – electronic, conventional and innovative. This paper attempts to look at the responses received from learners and other participants in the teaching-learning process so that fund and resource (manpower, financial, infrastructure) allocation in our outreach endeavour could be optimised and rationalised. The study covers the responses received during the period (July 2004-Aug 2005) with 31st August, 2005 as the cutoff date.

The methodology includes two questionnaires administered to learners, personnel of SOUs, educational institutions, ministries, etc. The authors study the responses (both quantitative and qualitative data) to arrive at strategies appropriate to the learner requirements. The data points towards:

Given the rapid developments in access technologies, there is a real danger that time-tested ones may be rejected in favour of technologically advanced but untested ones. The thesis in the paper is that learners need to be addressed by a mix of modes, so that issues, queries and problems of a repetitive nature are addressed speedily and effectively. The study assesses the 'mix' most appropriate to the learner and his/her profile.

Benefits arising out of such a study

Would be both institutional and academic. To give one example, if a certain mode of reaching out is not being utilized at all, alternatives could be explored, given the ground realities.

Preamble

The ODL System's reliance on a variety of media presupposes technological ability on the part of all the participants in the teaching – learning process. Successful interaction and desirable outcomes are therefore reliant on machines, software and programmes, says Allyn Radford (Future of Multimedia in Education by). From here we could proceed rather rapidly to a position when the (adult) participants and target beneficiaries of the ODL have a say in the mode of educational media. Keeping these in mind, the two Questionnaires (appended) offered a chance to respondents to have their say via an open-ended final question in each. The optimistic assumption was that we would get inputs via the two questionnaires regarding delivery systems, curricula, mix of technology, evaluation systems to enable us to suggest more effective ways of offering the services of the system.

Educational media can be put into 2 categories which may be taken as being:

(a) those conveying subject content (print, audio and video tapes, TV, computer based software and CD Rom) and
(b) interactive modes like radio, teleconferencing, video conferencing and the internet (letters, emails, telephone, personal stakeholders visits, etc. may also be included here)

and we have looked at both of the categories under the head of 'multimedia resources' in our questionnaire. (Multimedia Resources and Distance Education, http://www.col.org/knowledge/ks_multimedia .html)

The specific objectives of the 2nd Questionnaire "Format For Writing To Us" were more modest – merely to state problems in four lines and to assess the areas where more attention should be paid.

Introduction

Use of Media in Distance Education

Evidence is there to prove that media have been effective in enhancing the scale and scope of learning, which in turn has made it possible to achieve other social and economic development goals. *(Sir John Daniel, Perspectives on distance education, Educational Media in Asia, COL).* That the educational media have the potential to transform the process of teaching and learning can be seen through their impact most dramatically through the emergence of large distance-teaching universities (Open Universities). Much can be learnt from the way that these institutions deploy a variety of educational media that include radio, television, teleconferencing, interactive radio, multimedia and the Web.

Initially IGNOU's courseware comprised primarily of self-instructional material, SIMS, in print supplemented by audio and video cassettes stocked at Regional and Study Centres and accessible to the students from there. Today print remains the background of both conventional and distance teaching efforts worldwide.

Educational television in India

TV arrived in 1959 when experiment telecasting started in Delhi with a small transmitter. During 1960-61 a series of social educational programmes were telecasted in collaboration with UNESCO. During 1961-65 a regular ETV programme series was launched for secondary schools in Delhi. Later on ETV programmes were produced by the State Institute of Educational Technology and coordinated by the Central Institute of Educational Technology.

The national network of higher education programmes — Gateway vide Classroom — by the Union Grant Commission was launched on August 15, 1984 in Hindi and English. With the rapid technology developments today we are now midst of knowledge explosion and the frontiers of knowledge have widened the outside spatial limit. There is enough documentation to indicate that TV today is primarily a medium of entertainment and may be viewed for some news as well—we may look to this approach in order to 'hook' our learners—EDUTAINMENT—if you will.

IGNOU's Current Offerings

Today IGNOU courseware provides tutorial and counselling support through multiple channel broadcasts and national broadcast in a variety of media. The interactive satellite based Training and Development Communication Channels (TDCC) was started initially as an experiment in 1993 jointly with ISRO. While the Regional centres/Study Centres were designed for face-to-face interaction, tutor and counselling, there were provisions for students to access the audio/video programmes through tape recorders, television and CD players and to participate in interactive tele counselling through TDCC/Gyan Darshan, TV channels as well as interactive radio counselling through AIR.

Our Outreach Efforts Today

While the Study Centers /Regional Centers are designed for face-to-face interaction, tutoring & counseling, there is also provision made for students to access the audio / video programmes pertaining to their course through tape recorders, TV & CD Players as well as participate in Interactive Tele-counselling through TDCC/ GD TV Channels as well as Interactive Radio Counseling (IRC) through the AIR. In addition, there is tutoring/ counseling support provided through the satellite based exclusive educational TV channel Gyan Darshan and the FM Radio Network

dedicated to Education & Development – the Gyan Vani. These are free-to-air channels which can be accessed by learners at their homes or at places of work.

Review of research studies conducted at IGNOU so far

There was virtually no feedback data received from learners throughout the first decade or more when the dissemination of audio video programmes of IGNOU curriculum based programmes was carried out through non broadcast cassettes via the IGNOU Regional Centres/Study Centres as well as to a limited extent through DD National Channel. A nation wide utilization study conducted by *Sisir Basu* in mid 90's indicated that though there was great potential, the reach and access of the audio video programmes to learners was inadequate. The learners were more concerned with the access of the printed SIMs of IGNOU which were rated to be of very high quality. There existed many technical and logistic barriers in reaching out even the print materials.

Interactive Radio Counselling (the AIR-IGNOU experience)

In 1998 IGNOU in co-operation with the AIR started a pilot project of 'phone-in' couselling from AIR Bhopal. A quick survey conducted in May 2001 showed that radio was a popular and powerful medium among the target audiences. This study was followed by a synchronized series of studies in these cities.

Analysis of Responses

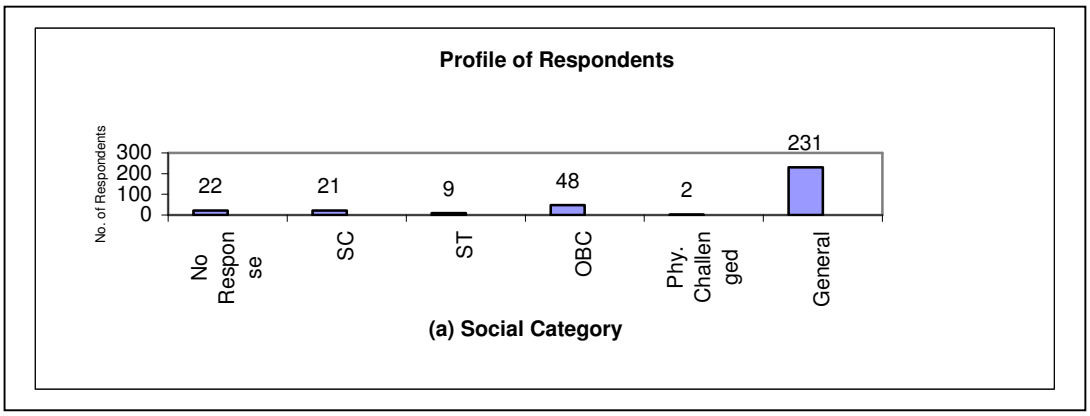
The analyzed data is based primarily from the responses from the IGNOU Students received based on the Feedback Questionnaire printed in the EMPC-IGNOU Booklet [since 2003]. The same questionnaire was printed in the IGNOU Newsletter and 2.2 lakh (English) and 40,000 (Hindi) copies printed and mailed to IGNOU students in May 2005. The total no. of filled in questionnaires found valid & analyzed was 333.

- **Profile of Respondents:**

Almost all respondents were IGNOU students. Detailed discussion follows:

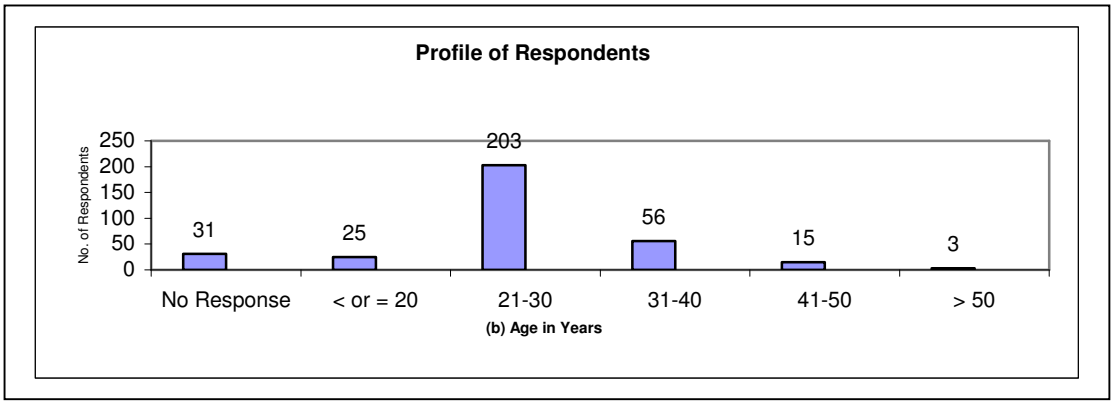
a) *Social Category (Table 1*, the social category status of the respondents was similar in ratio to their proportion in the general student population milieu. Yet there seems to be a significant bias of the majority general category on the opinion expressed. So, if the ODL system and the variety of media used in it claim to bridge the social divide, it does seem to be a long way off.

Table 1



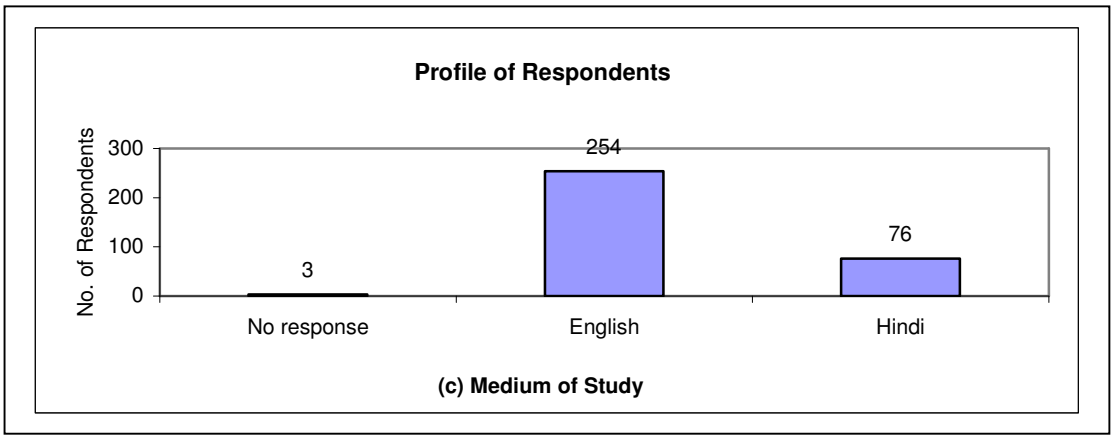
b) *Age (Table 2):* the opinions expressed may be treated as reflective of age group 21-40 (which coincides with that of average IGNOU student), the young adult population which is significant.

Table 2



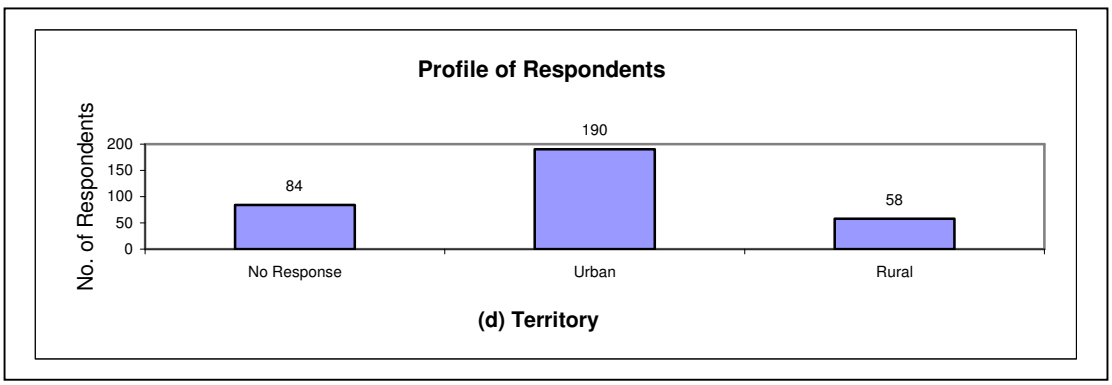
c) *Medium of Study(Table 3)*: the opinions expressed does seem to have a bias and be reflective of English medium students. The questionnaire being in English this could not be avoided. It is surprisingly similar to the gender ratio which needs to be further looked into.

Table 3



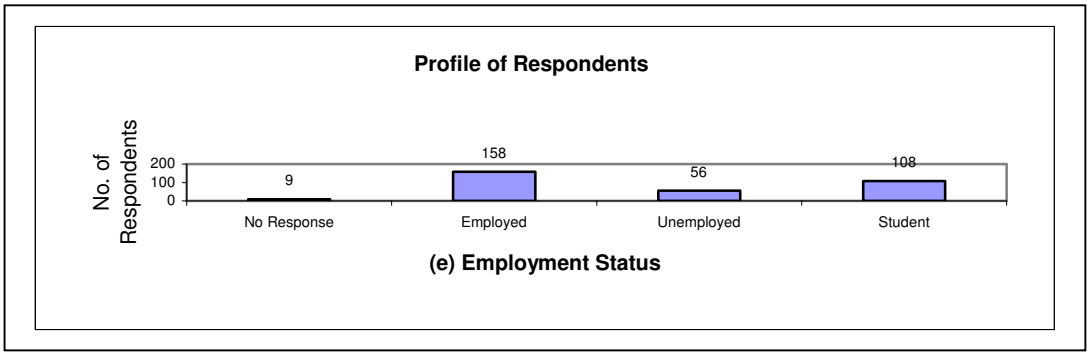
d*) Territory (Table4)*: the opinions expressed may have a urban bias. Yet again point to note is that when ODL system claims to reach out to the unreached, why does the strong urban bias still exist. The lack of response from 25% of the respondents may be due to the fact that most often rural students migrate to urban areas to access the educational facilities and may be confused to state whether they are urban or rural.

Table 4



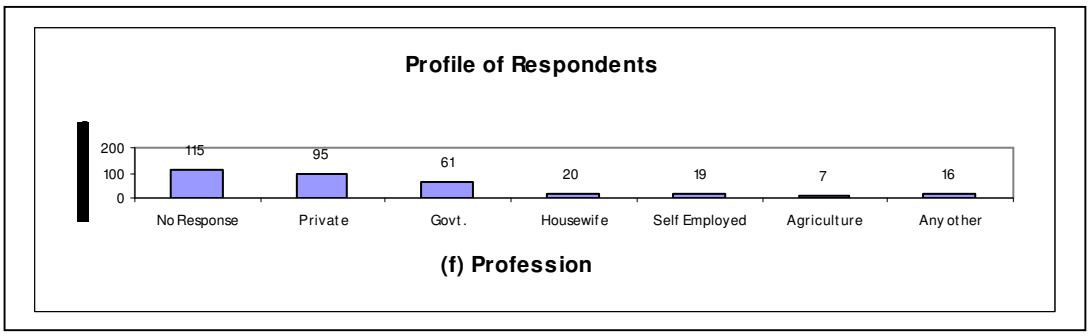
e) *Employment Status(Table 5)*: the opinions expressed may not have specific bias or be truly reflective as it was found that quite a few respondents had ticked for unemployed meaning they had no govt. job. Moreover, IGNOU students are a mix of working and non working persons anyway.

Table 5



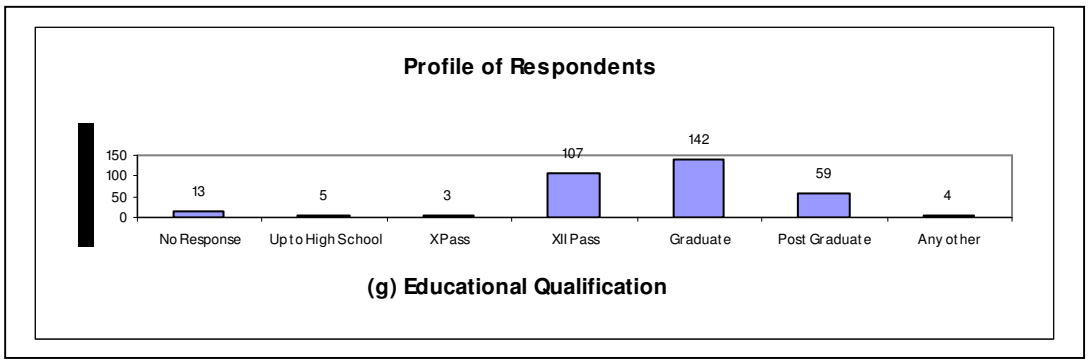
f) *Profession (Table 6):* a majority 35% not responding does indicate that they do not have a clear cut career/ profession; as such the opinions expressed does seem to be reflective of those in the organized and unorganized sector in a 50:50 ratio; which is, however, representative of their proportion within the overall IGNOU students milieu.

Table 6

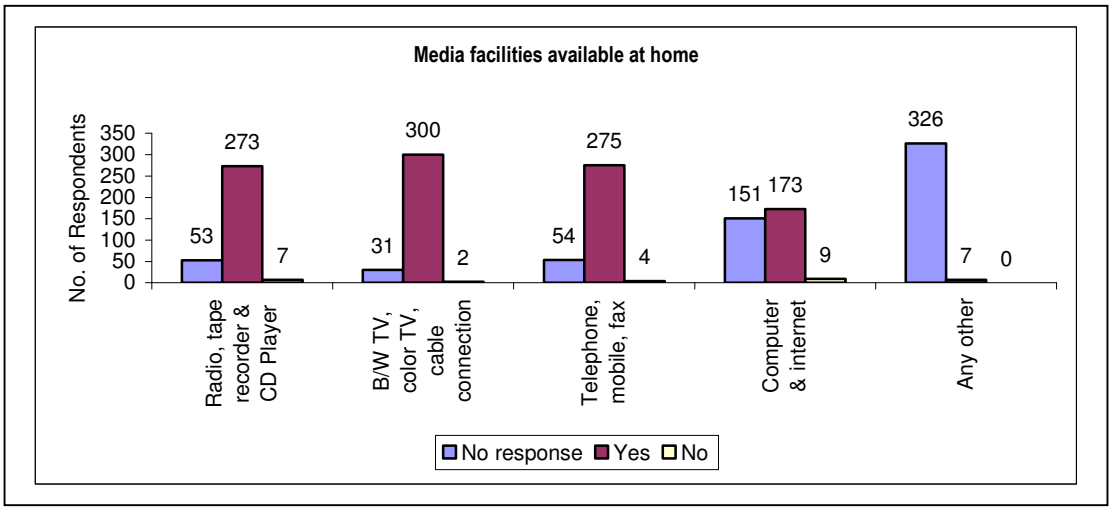


g) *Educational Status (Table 7)*: the profile does seem to match the IGNOU general student profile. However, the opinion does seem to be with significant bias towards the undergraduate learners which needs to be noted.

Table 7



Media facilities available at home (Table 8)



i. Radio, tape recorder & CD Player: majority of the respondents (~ 82%)had access to and were using audio / Radio facilities at their homes. It also indicates the immense potential this offers for the ODL system to reach out to learners through the audio cassettes, audio CDs, IRC and Gyan Vani channels which is significant. Only 2% did not possess them while 16% choosing not to respond probably means that though they possess they do not use them.

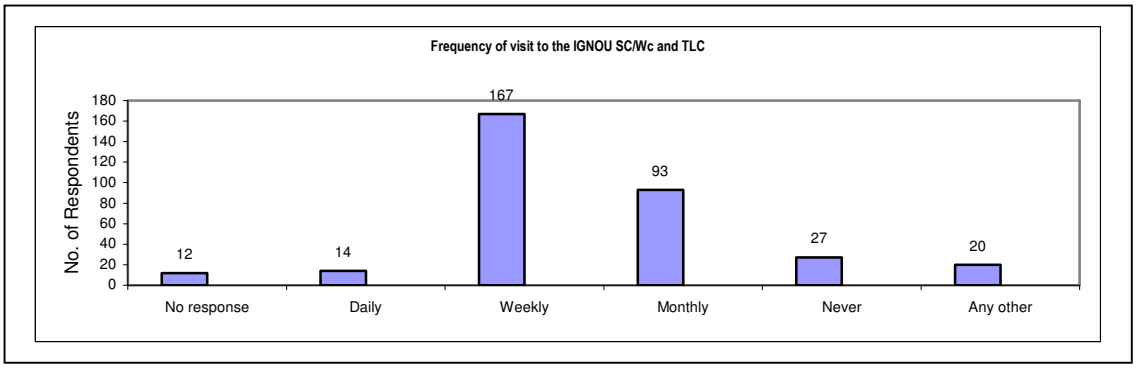
ii. B/W TV, color TV, cable connection: a vast majority of the students (~90%) possess TV (B/W TV, color TV with or without cable connection) and use them regularly at their homes. It indicates the potential that exists for the ODL system to reach out to learners through the video cassettes & CDs and Gyan Darshan channels which is significant. <1% did not have them. 31 persons (9%) did not respond.

iii. telephone, mobile, fax: a majority (83%)of students have the facility of telephone or mobile at their homes. It indicates the potential existing for the ODL learners to reach out the interactive teleconferencing and IRC facilities directly to student homes and hence is significant. 1% did not have them. 54 persons (16%)did not respond.

iv. computer & internet: This shows that computer with /without internet facilities are available with more than half the respondents (~52%)at their homes. It indicates the fast growing potential of the new technologies computer & internet as a medium for reaching out to learners in ODL system. While only a small 3% declared that they did not possess such facilities, the lack of response by a significant 45% probably means that they may not possess one at home but are using them at other places.

v. any other: access data insignificant (2%). 326 persons (98%) did not respond.

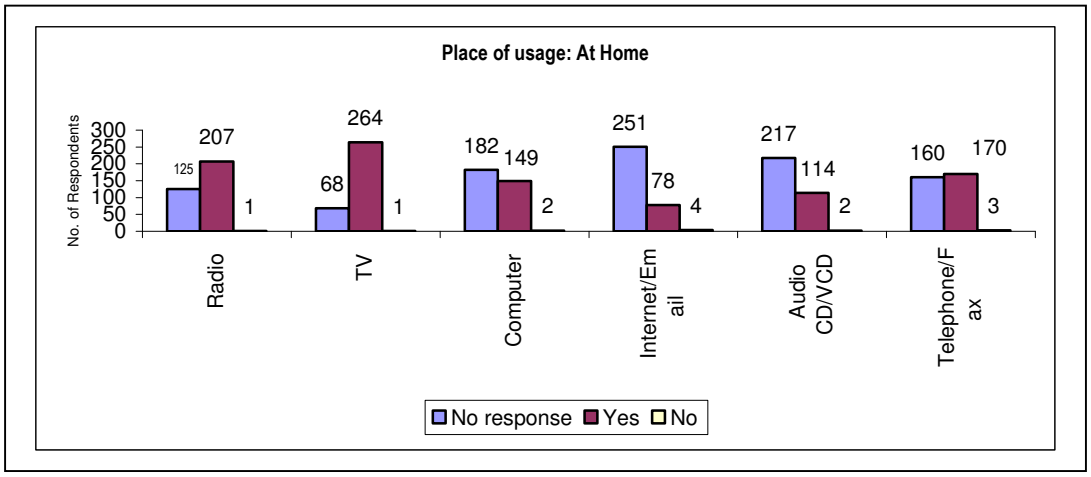
Frequency of visit to the IGNOU SC/WC/TLC (Table 9)



This indicates that a majority of students (~82%) are visiting the SC/WC/TLC regularly. And so the potential exists to reach out the multi media facilities at the SC/WC/TLC. It also goes to show that most students in India still look forward to going to a place – building, institution, center to interact with peers / teachers and study. It is a critical factor which must be borne in mind.

Place of usage of the following media facilities

i. At home (Table 10)



a. **Radio at home:** About 62% of the respondents reported using the Radio at home; 38% did not respond. This shows that while a majority of the respondents were using their Radio sets at home, those who did not respond could probably indicate that they accessed and used it elsewhere. It reflects on the media habit of the students who find it convenient to use the Radio at home and the huge potential of the medium in reaching out to ODL learners.

b. TV at home: About 79% of the respondents reported using the TV at home while 20% did not respond. This shows that television continues to be popular and used by respondents from their homes. It also indicates the media habit of the students who use TV preferably at home. It reflects on the potential of the medium in reaching out to ODL learners.

c. Computer at home: About 45% of the respondents reported using the Computer at home while 55% did not respond indicating that new media such as the computer are increasingly available at student homes and a significant numbers are using them. It definitely needs to be explored by the ODL system in reaching out to learners.

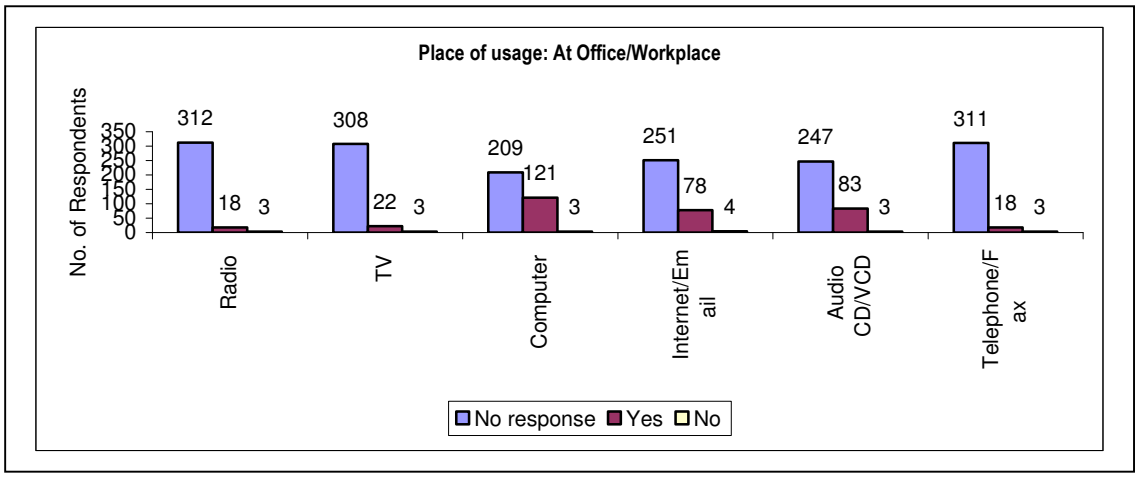
d. Internet/ Email at home: About 23% of the respondents reported using the Internet/email facility at home while 75% did not respond. It shows that interactivity via. Internet was possible by one fourth of the respondents from their homes reflecting on the growing popularity and affordability of such new media among learners. Not responding could mean they were unable to access at homes but unlike the TV & Radio, reaching out to learners accessing the computer from cybercafes, work places does not require separate arrangement / investment on the part of the provider- IGNOU in this case.

e. Audio CD/VCD at home: About 34% of the respondents reported using the Audio CD/VCD facility at home while 65% did not respond. This shows that technologies of non broadcast modes of delivery of audio and video programmes are also in demand. One third of the respondents were having facilities to access and use them from their homes. But while audio CDs/VCDs are growing in popularity and affordability, the need for them to co-exist with audio tapes /cassettes & video tapes/

cassettes will be there for some more time. A large segment not responding also could mean that broadcast modes are more popular.

f. Telephone /Fax at home: About 51% of the respondents reported using the telephone /fax facility at home while 48% did not respond. This shows that half the respondents were using telephone facility to a large extent and fax facility to a limited extent from their homes indicating the growing presence and affordability of modern communication facilities at student homes. This can enable interactivity during late evenings and early hours for working students and rest of the time for non working students. But lack of response needs to be considered - may be they need to depend on such facilities outside their homes.

ii. At office / work place (Table 11)



a. Radio at office / work place: access data insignificant (5%); 94% did not respond. This indicates that Radio at office or work places is not feasible for access especially for study purposes.

b. TV at office / work place: access data insignificant (7%); 92% did not respond. This indicates that TV at office or work places is not feasible for access especially for study purposes.

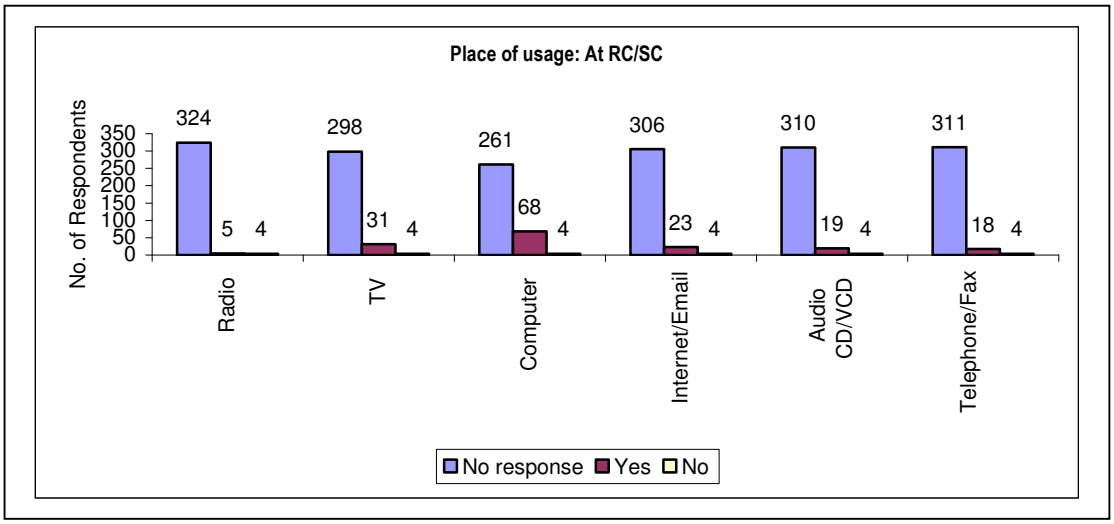
c. Computer at office/work place: 36% respondents mentioned that they have computers at workplace while 63% did not respond. This shows that unlike Radio & TV, a significant number of respondents were able to access and use computers at their work places. This indicates the potential of reaching out to limited number of working students via computers during office hours.

d. Internet/ Email at office / work place: 23% respondents mentioned that they have Internet/email facility at workplace while 75% did not respond. This shows that in addition to computers, one fourth of the respondents were able to access and use Internet at their work places. This indicates the potential of reaching out and interact with limited number of working students via Internet & Email during office hours.

e. Audio CD/VCD at office / work place: 25% respondents mentioned that they have audio CD/VCD facilities at workplace while 74% did not respond. This shows that one fourth of the respondents were able to access and use audio CD/VCDs at their work places. This indicates the potential of reaching out to limited number of working students via these media.

f. Telephone /Fax at office/work place: access data insignificant (5%),93% did not respond. The overwhelming lack of response indicates that it is not possible to expect students to interact during office hours from such communication facilities (telephone/fax).

iii. At RC/SC (Table 12)



a. Radio at RC/SC: access data insignificant (2%). 97% did not respond**.** The overwhelming lack of response is disturbing and indicates that students are facing problems in accessing Radio facility at RC/SC. A few persons saying that they are using the facility at RC/SC indicates it must be available.

b. TV at RC/SC: access data low. Only 9% were able to access TV at RC/SC while 89% did not respond. This shows that while the TV facility may be available at the RC/SC, only a minor 9% are able to access and use it. A large majority 89% choosing not to respond is disturbing.

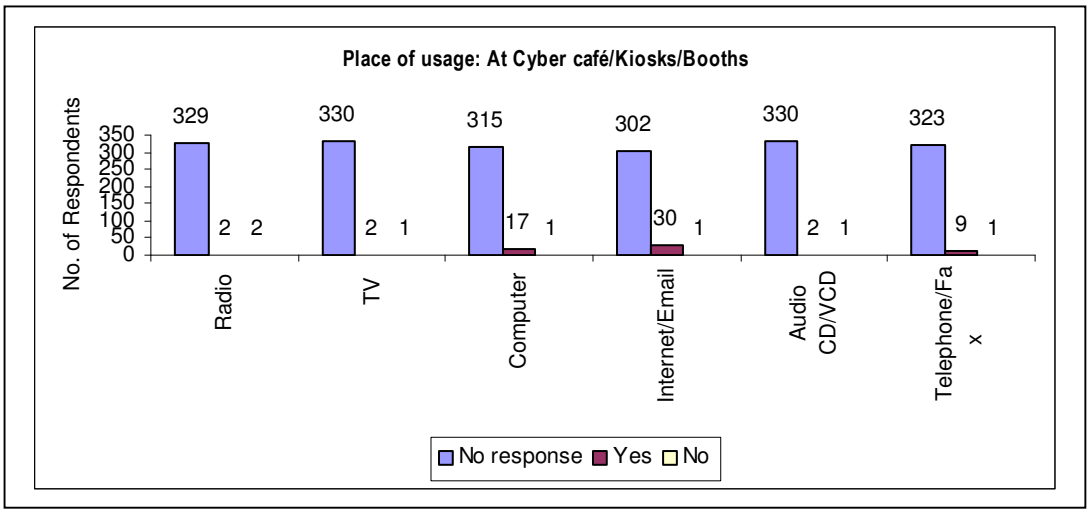
c. Computer at RC/SC: around 20% respondents were able to access Computers at RC/SC while 78% did not respond. This shows that while the computer facility may be available at the RC/SC, only 20% are able to access and use it. A large majority 78% choosing not to respond is to be noted.

d. Internet/ Email at RC/SC: around 7% respondents mentioned that they were able to access Internet & Email at RC/SC while 92% did not respond. This shows that while the Internet/email facility may be available at the RC/SC, only few persons are able to access and use it. A large majority choosing not to respond is to be noted.

e. Audio CD/VCD at RC/SC : around 6% respondents mentioned that they were able to access Audio CD/VCD facility at RC/SC while 93% did not respond. This shows that while the audio CD/VCD facility may be available at the RC/SC, only a few persons are able to access and use it. A large majority choosing not to respond is disturbing. This indicates the low access provided by RC/SC to audio CD/VCD facilities to students. And it also provides a case for marketing the same to students for use at home.

f. Telephone /Fax at RC/SC: around 5% respondents mentioned that they were able to access telephone /fax facility at RC/SC. 93% did not respond. This shows that while the telephone /fax facility may be available at the RC/SC, only a minor 5% are able to access and use it. A large majority 93% choosing not to respond is disturbing. This indicates the low access provided by RC/SC for interactivity related facilities to students. And it makes a case for exploring technologies to reach out interactive channels at the learner homes.

iv. Any Other (Table 13)



a. Radio at public places: access data insignificant. 99% did not respond. This indicates that Radio accessed from public places by students cannot serve any study purposes.

b. TV at public places: access data insignificant, 99% did not respond. This indicates that TV accessed from public places by students cannot serve any study purposes.

c. Computer at cybercafes: around 5% respondents mentioned that they were able to access Computers at Cybercafes while 95% did not respond. This indicates that Computers accessed from cybercafes by students can serve limited study purposes.

d. Internet/ Email at cybercafes: around 9% respondents mentioned that they were able to access Internet/ email at Cybercafes while 91% did not respond. This indicates that internet /email accessed from cybercafes by students can serve limited study and interactive purposes.

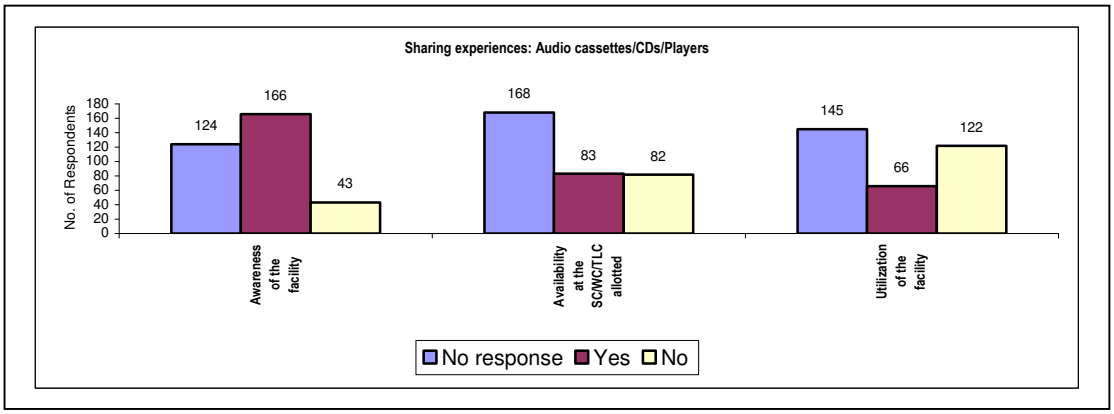
e. Audio CD/VCD at public places: access data insignificant, 99% did not respond. This indicates that Audio CD/VCD accessed from public places by students cannot serve any study purposes.

***f*. Telephone /Fax at public places/ kiosks:** around 3% respondents mentioned that they were able to access telephone /fax at public places /kiosks while97% did not respond. This indicates that telephone/fax accessed from public places /kiosks by students can serve very limited interactive purposes.

Sharing experiences regarding the following multi media facilities of IGNOU (Table 14)

i. Audio cassettes/CDs/Players

Table 14



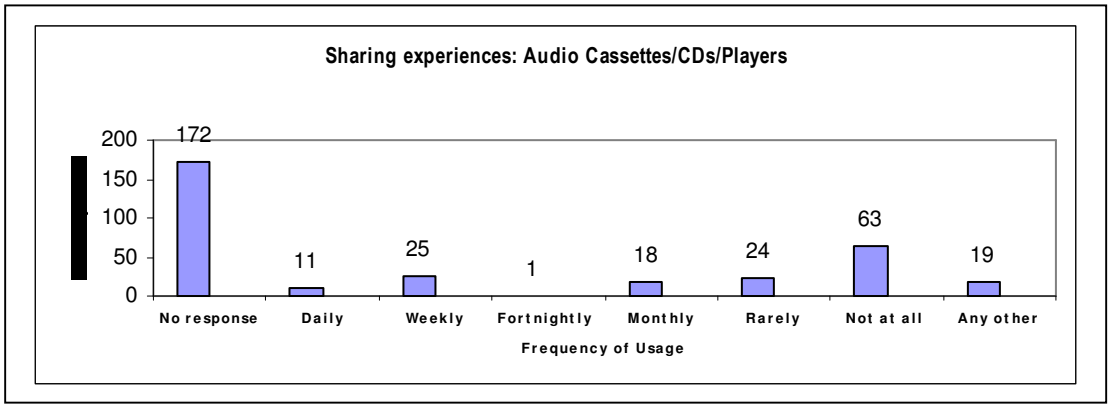
a. Awareness of the facility: 50% respondents mentioned that they were aware of facilities such as audio cassettes/CDs/players provided by IGNOU while 13% were not. 37% did not respond to the question. This shows that only half the respondents were aware of the facility. It indicates the level of awareness but also indicates the potential for student support systems for creating awareness among a majority of the students.

b. Availability at the SC/WC/TLC allotted: 25% respondents mentioned that the facilities of audio cassettes/CDs/players provided by IGNOU were available to them. Surprisingly an equal 24% mentioned it was not available to them. 50% did not respond. This shows that only half of the respondents who were aware of the facility could access it at the SC/WC/TLC. It indicates that these facilities need to be made more accessible to students. Lack of response from half the respondents is to be noted.

c. Utilization of the facility: 20% respondents mentioned that they were using the facilities of audio cassettes/CDs/players provided by IGNOU while 37% mentioned they were not using them. 44% did not respond. It indicates the further drop in the usage as compared to awareness and access levels. The clear response of not choosing to use needs to be probed further. The lack of response by quite a number of respondents is disturbing.

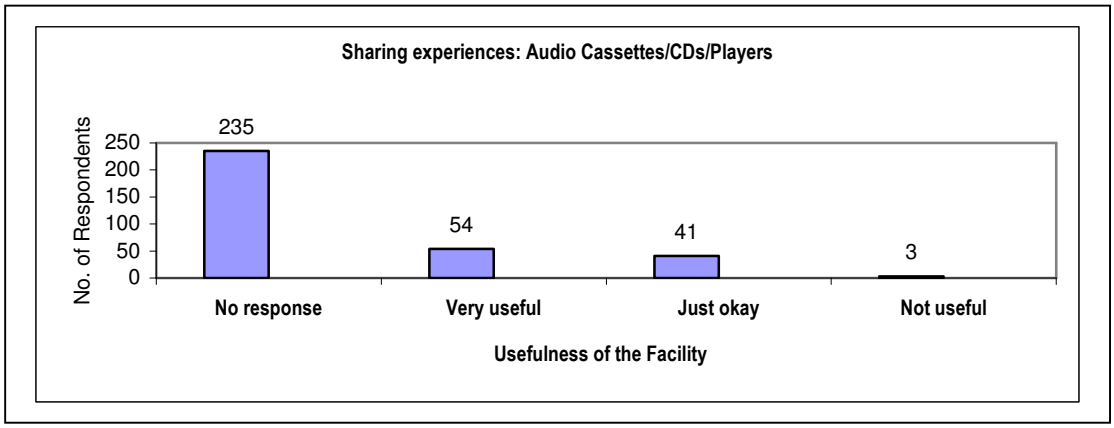
d. Frequency of the usage of the facility (Table 15) : this indicates though small a dedicated audience/users exists for the facility. But the clear response of not choosing to respond is worrying.

Table 15

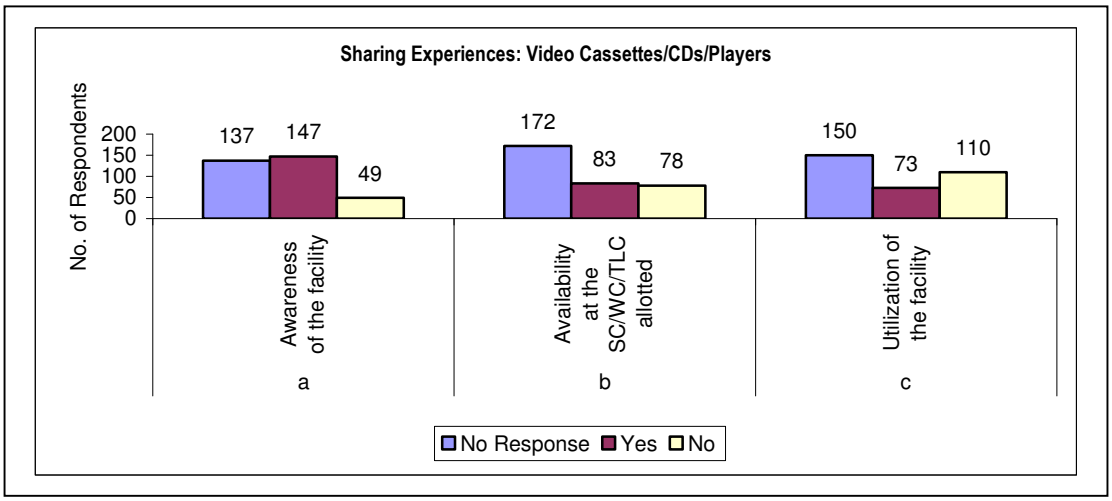


e. Usefulness of the facility (Table 16): this indicates the good to average level of usefulness of the facilities to those who used it. However, there is scope for further enhancing the same.

Table 16



ii. Video cassettes/CDs/Players (Table 17)



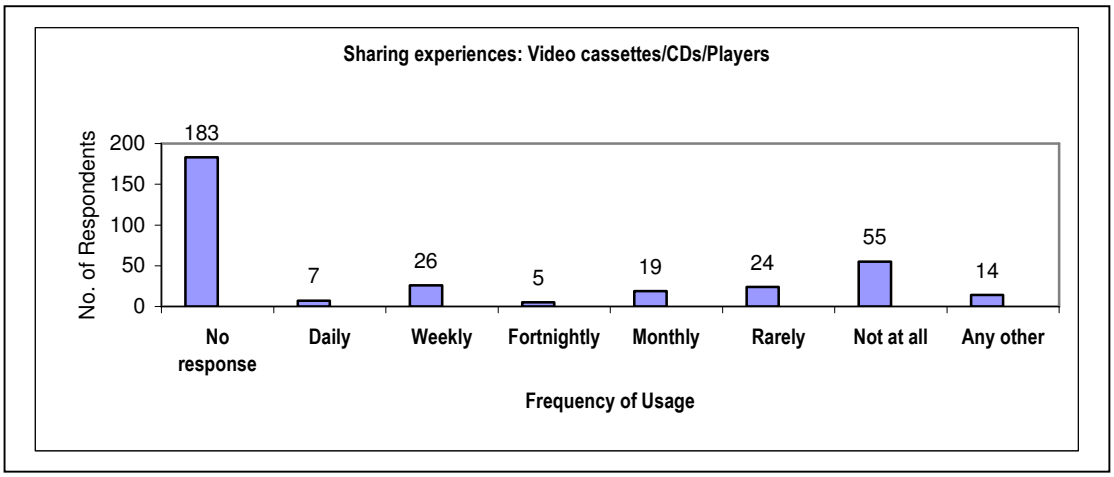
a. Awareness of the facility: 44% respondents mentioned that they were aware of facilities such as video cassettes/CDs/players provided by IGNOU. 15% respondents mentioned they were not aware of such a facility. 41% did not respond. This shows less than half the respondents were aware of the facility. It indicates the level of awareness but also indicates the potential which exists for the student support systems for creating awareness among a majority of the students. The lack of response from half the respondents is to be noted.

b. Availability at the SC/WC/TLC allotted: 25% respondents mentioned that the facilities of video cassettes/CDs/players provided by IGNOU were available to them but 23% mentioned it was not available to them. 52% did not respond. This shows a further dip in the number of respondents who could access the facility indicating the limited access to the facility at the SC/WC/TLC which seems to have a lot of scope for being reached out directly to homes.

c. Utilization of the facility: 22% respondents mentioned that they were using the facilities of video cassettes/ CDs/ players provided by IGNOU. While 33% mentioned they were not using them. 45% did not respond. This indicates the further drop in the usage as compared to awareness and access levels. And the clear response of not choosing to use needs to be found. The significant number of respondents not responding is to be noted.

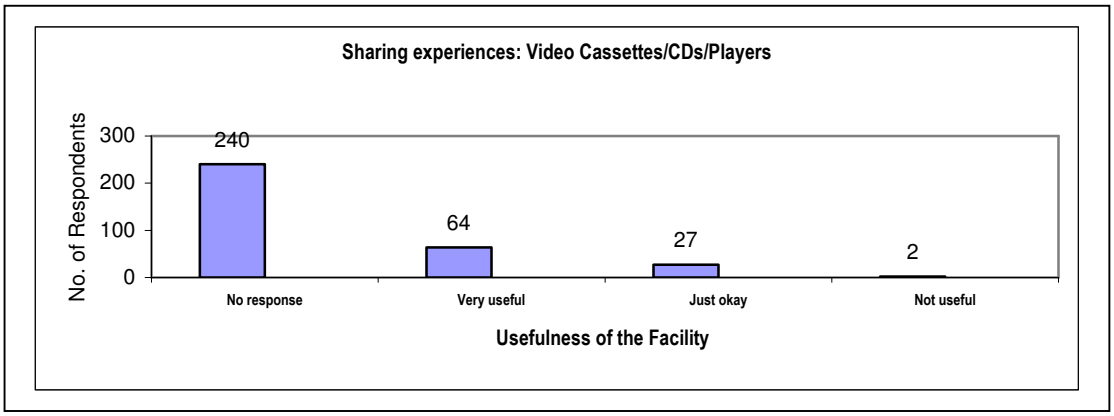
d. Frequency of usage of the facility (Table 18): this indicates that a dedicated audience/users exists for the facility.

Table 18



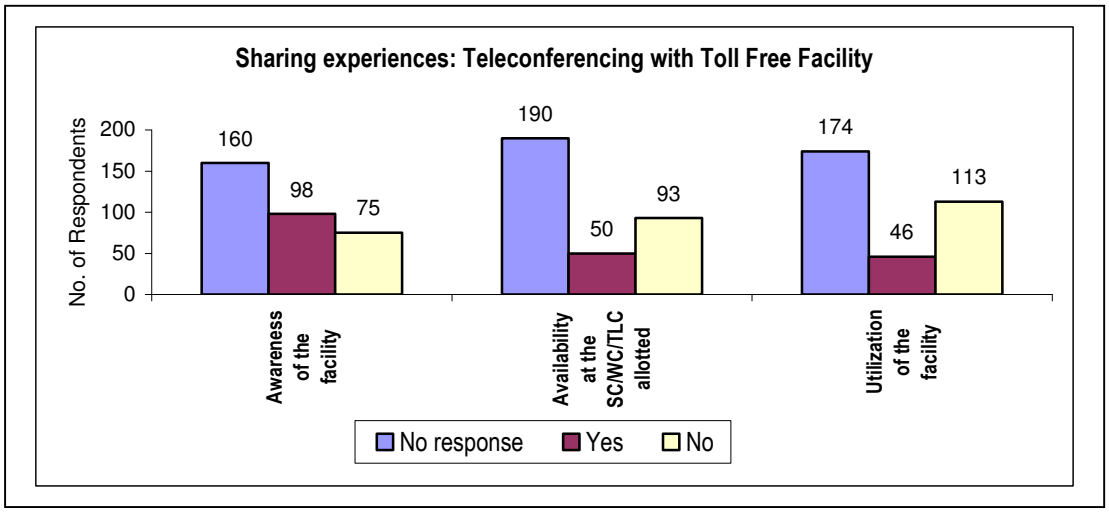
e. Usefulness of the facility (Table 19): This indicates the good to average level of usefulness of the facilities to those who used it. However, there is scope for further enhancing the same. A majority of respondents not choosing to respond is to be noted.

Table 19



iii. Interactive teleconferencing with toll free facility (Table 20)

Table 20



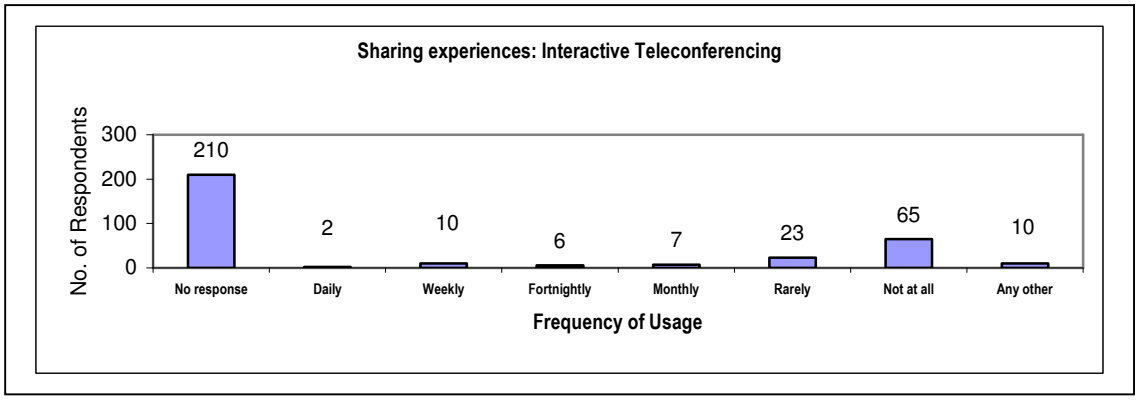
a. Awareness of the facility: 29% respondents mentioned that they were aware of facilities such as interactive teleconferencing with toll free facility provided by IGNOU. 23% respondents mentioned that they were not aware of such a facility. 48% did not respond. The low level of awareness of the long established facility is surprising and reflects poorly upon the student support systems for not creating sufficient awareness among a majority of the students.

b. Availability at the SC/WC/TLC allotted: 15% respondents mentioned that the facilities of teleconferencing with toll free number provided by IGNOU were available to them. But 28% mentioned it was not available to them. 57% did not respond. This shows only half of those aware could access the facility at the SC/WC/TLC thereby indicating that the access to these facilities was poor and offers a lot of scope for improvement.

c. Utilization of the facility: 14% respondents mentioned that they were using the facility of teleconferencing with toll free number provided by IGNOU. While 34% mentioned they were not using them. 52% did not respond to the question. This indicates the further drop in the usage as compared to awareness and access levels. And the clear response of not choosing to use needs to be found. The lack of response from half the respondents is disturbing.

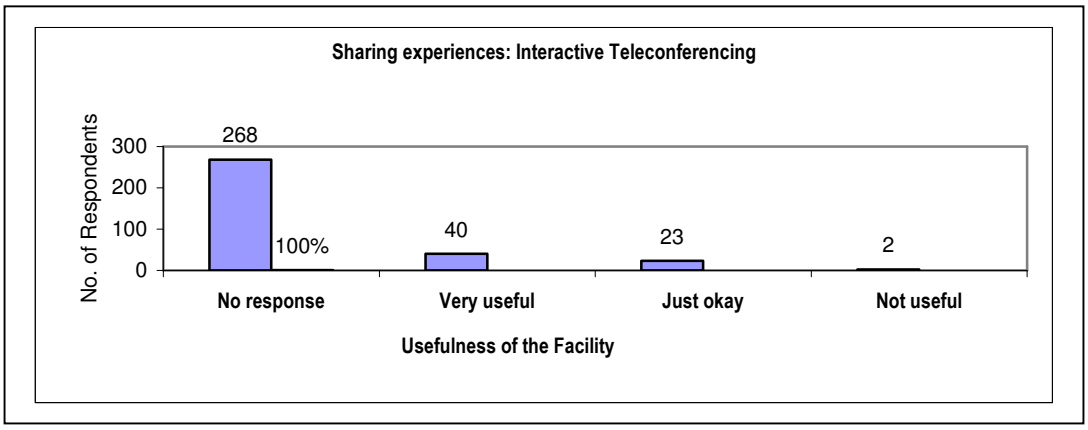
d. Frequency of usage of the facility (Table 21): This indicates poor use of the facility. Majority choosing not to respond is to be noted.

Table 21



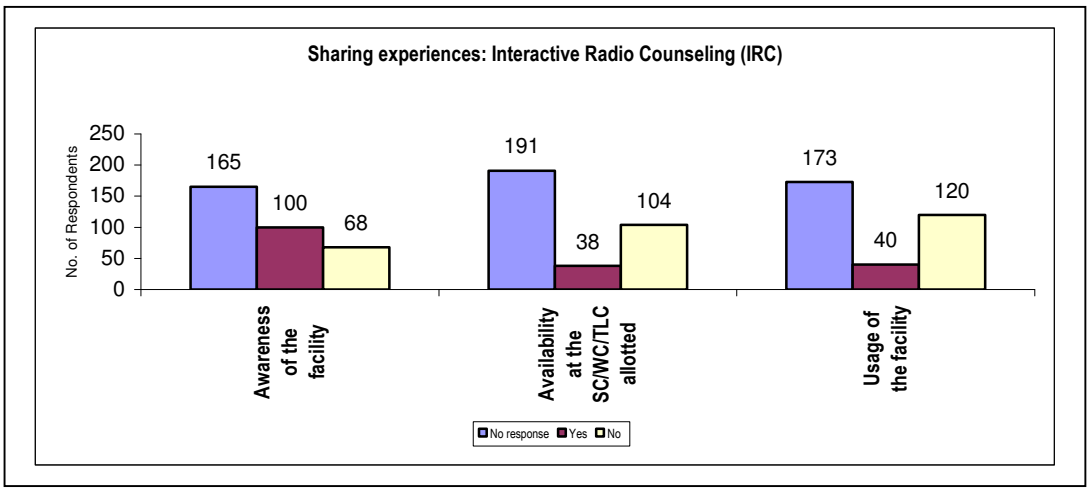
e. Usefulness of the facility (Table 22): This indicates the good to average level of usefulness of the facilities to those who used it. However, there is scope for further enhancing the same. A majority not responding is to be noted.

Table 22



iv. Interactive Radio Counseling (IRC) (Table 23)

Table 23



a. Awareness about the facility: 30% respondents mentioned that they were aware of facility of Interactive Radio Counseling provided by IGNOU. 20% respondents mentioned that they were not aware of such a facility. 50% did not respond to the question. This shows that only a third of the respondents were aware of the IRC facility. It indicates the poor level of awareness and also reflects poorly upon the student support systems for not creating awareness among a majority of the students.

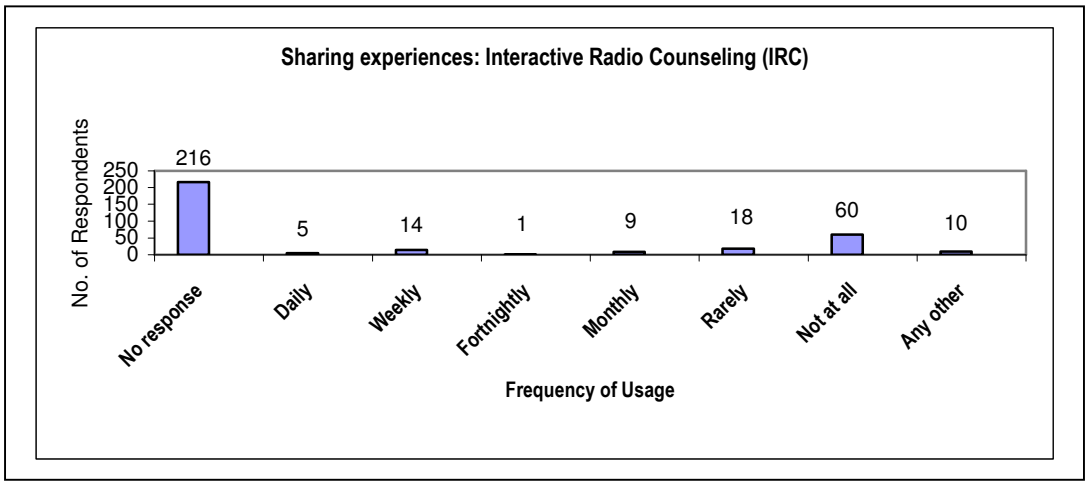
b. Availability at the SC/WC/TLC allotted: about 26% respondents mentioned that the facilities of Interactive Radio Counseling provided by IGNOU were available to them. While about 31% mentioned it was not available to them. 57% did not respond. This shows that only one fourth of the respondents could access the facility. It indicates that the access to the facility had a lot of scope for improvement.

c. Usage of the facility: 12% respondents mentioned that they were using the facility of Interactive Radio Counseling provided by IGNOU. While 36% mentioned they were not using them. 52% did not respond to the question. This shows that only 12% respondents were using the facility. It indicates

that half of those were able to access the facility were using them. The lack of response from half the respondents needs to be noted.

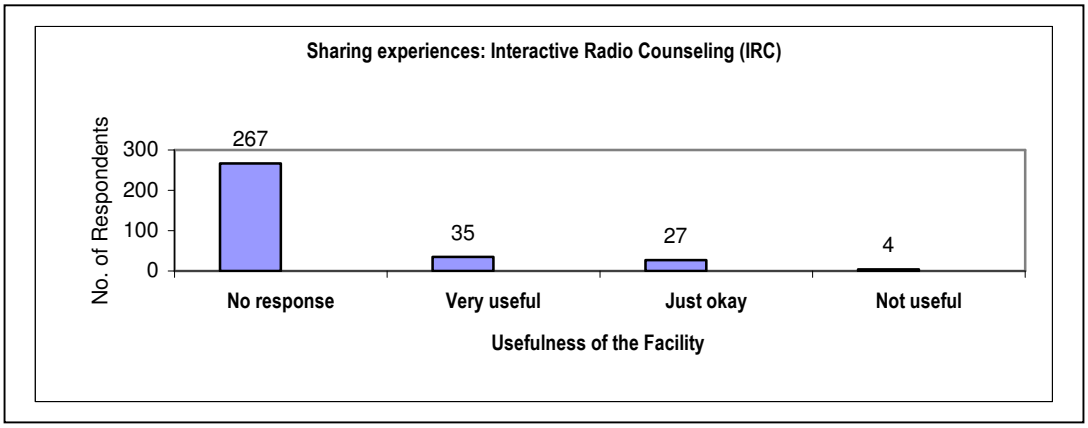
d. Frequency of using the facility (Table 24): 18% respondents mentioned that they never used the facility of Interactive Radio Counseling provided by IGNOU; regular users were 2% daily, 4% weekly, 3% monthly while occasional users ranged from 3-5%. 65% did not respond. This shows that less than 5% respondents were using the facility. It indicates poor use of the facility. The lack of response from a majority needs to be noted.

Table 24



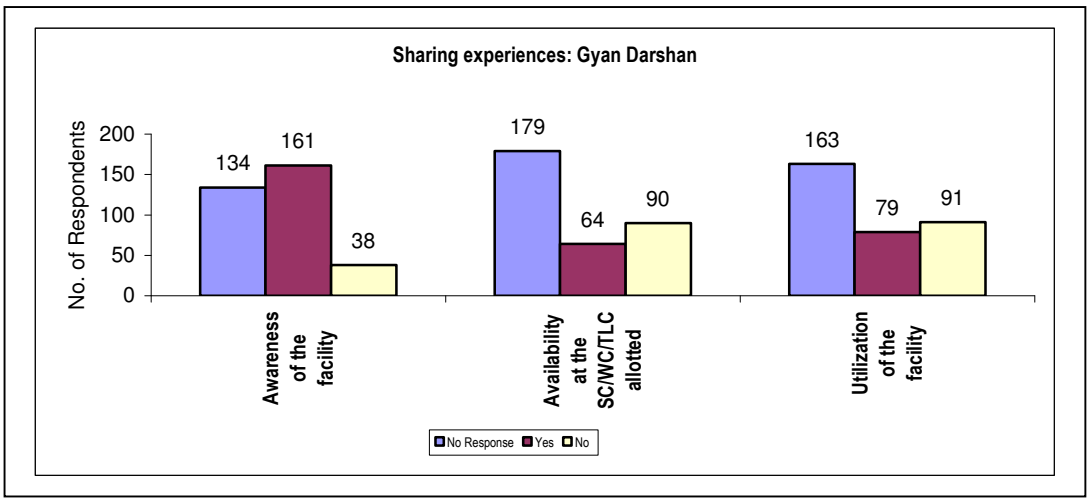
e. Usefulness of the facility (Table 25): this indicates the good to average level of usefulness of the facilities to those who used it. However, there is scope for further enhancing the same.

Table 25



v. Gyan Darshan (Table 26)

Table 26



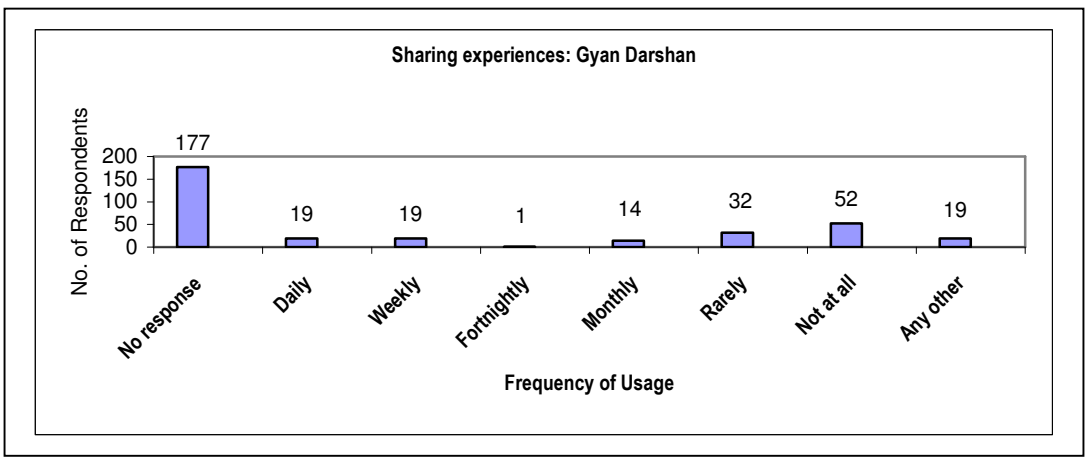
- **Awareness of the facility:** 48% respondents mentioned that they were aware of facility of Gyan Darshan provided by IGNOU while 12% respondents mentioned that they were not aware of such a facility. 40% did not respond to the question. This shows that about half the respondents were aware of the Gyan Darshan facility. It indicates the level of awareness but also the scope for further creating awareness among a majority of the students.

- **Availability at the SC/WC/TLC allotted:** 19% respondents mentioned that the facility of Gyan Darshan provided by IGNOU were available to them, while 27% mentioned it was not available to them. 54% did not respond. This indicates that the access to GD was being made at some SC/WC/TLC but it had a lot of scope for improvement.

- **Utilization of the facility:** 24% respondents mentioned that they were using the facility of Gyan Darshan provided by IGNOU while 27% mentioned they were not using them. 49% did not respond to the question. This shows that one fourth of respondents were using the facility. this indicates a surprise trend of more persons using than those who are able to access it at the SC/WC/TLC. May be they are using it from home. The lack of response from 49% is disturbing.

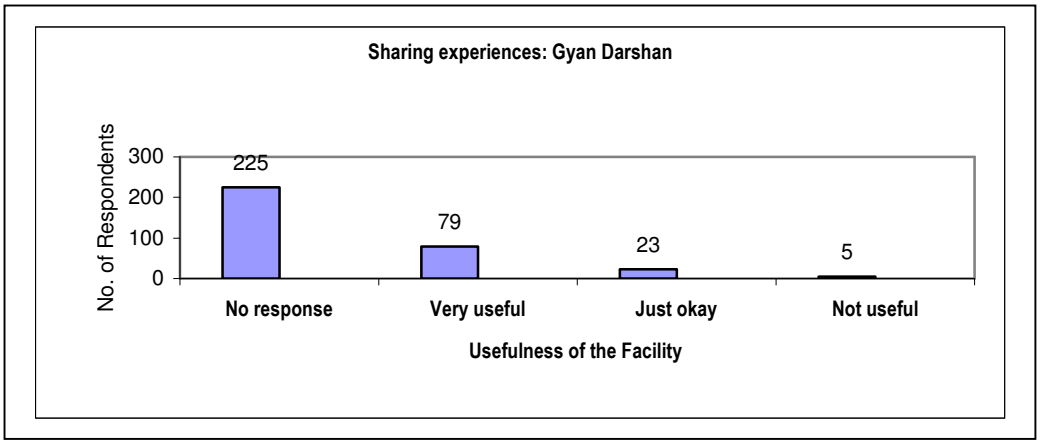
- **Frequency of usage of the facility (Table 27):** this indicates the frequency of usage is erratic. But the clear response of not choosing and not responding needs to be studied further.

Table 27



- **Usefulness of the facility (Table 28):** This indicates the good to average level of usefulness of the facilities to those who used it. However, there is scope for further enhancing the same.

Table 28



vi. Gyan Vani

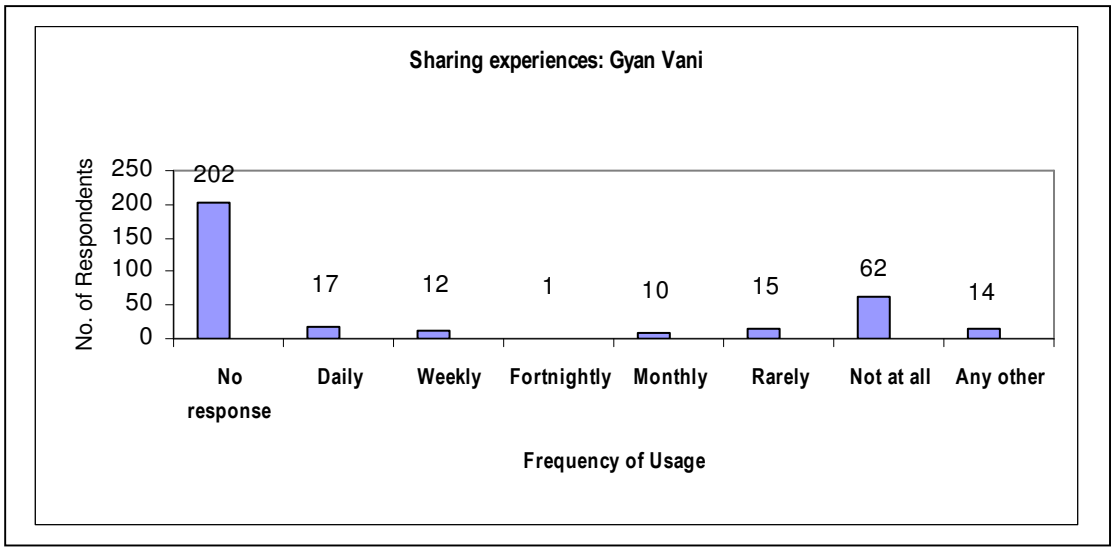
a. Awareness of the facility: 35% respondents mentioned that they were aware of facility of Gyan Vani provided by IGNOU. 20% respondents mentioned that they were not aware of such a facility. 45% did not respond to the question. This indicates the fairly level of awareness but also the scope for creating awareness among a majority of the students.

b. Availability at the SC/WC/TLC allotted : 11% respondents mentioned that the facility of Gyan Vani provided by IGNOU was available to them, while 32% mentioned it was not available to them. 57% did not respond. This indicates that the access to GV at SC/WC/TLC has a lot of scope for improvement.

c. Utilization of the facility: 15% respondents mentioned that they were using the facility of Gyan Vani provided by IGNOU while 33% mentioned they were not using them. 52% did not respond to the question. This again indicates a rise in the usage percentage compared to access at SC/WC/TLC and probably indicates that they use from home. But the clear response of not choosing to use needs to be found.

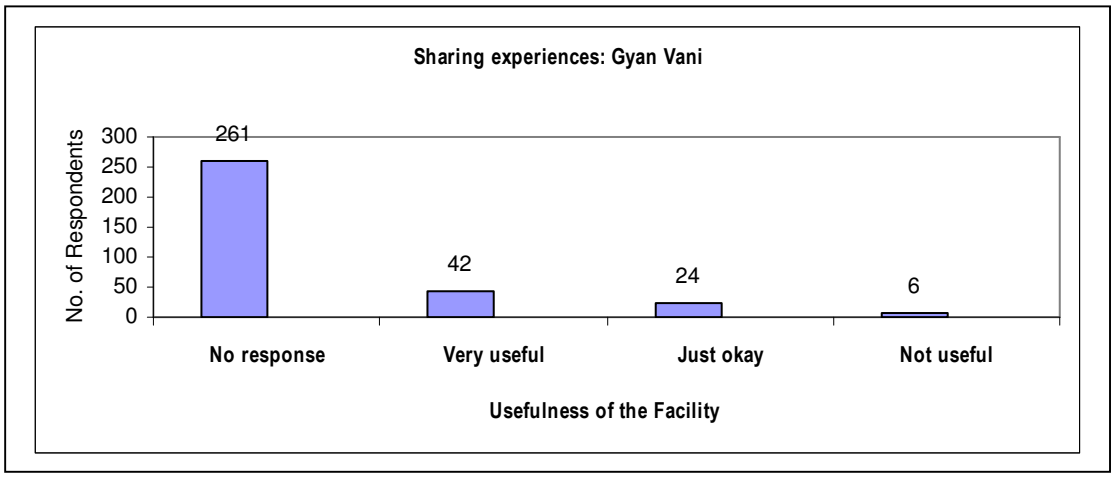
d. Frequency of using the facility (Table 29): This indicates poor use of the facility. And the clear response of not choosing needs to be studied further.

Table 29



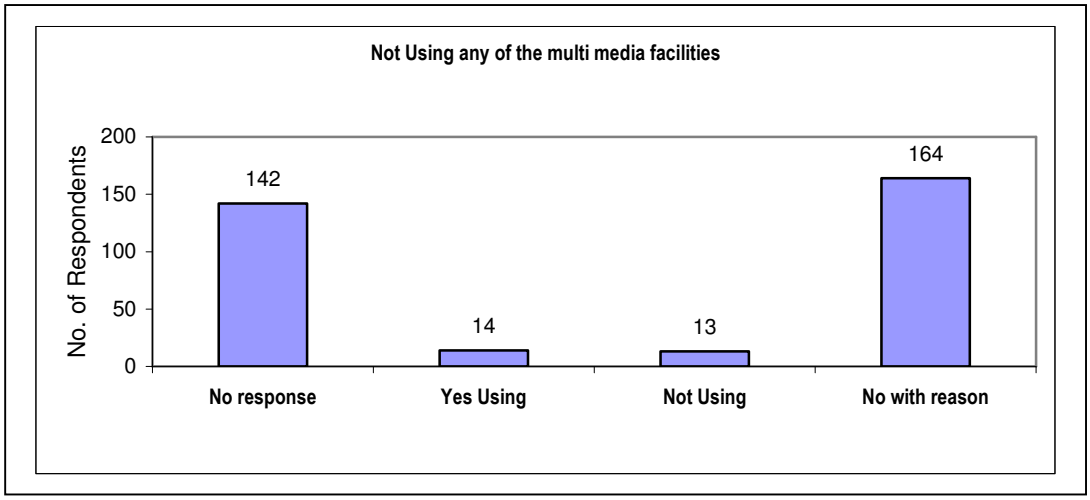
- **Usefulness of the facility (Table 30):** This indicates the good to average level of usefulness of the facilities to those who used it. However, there is scope for further enhancing the same.

Table 30



Not using any of the multi media facilities at all/ reason (Table 31)

Table 31



This indicates the low level of usage but also the reasons for the same which need to be seriously looked into.

Reasons cited for not using Audio Cassettes/CDs: Lack of awareness regarding its availability; lack of easy and ready availability especially through SC compounded with non cooperative attitude of SC staff with whom students normally interact were cited as reasons for not using audio cassettes/CDs.

Reasons cited for not using Video Cassettes/CDs: unaffordability, lack of accessibility & appropriate environment in SC, lack of easy and ready availability through SC compounded with non cooperative attitude of SC staff with whom students normally interacted were cited as reasons for not using video cassettes/CDs.

Reasons cited for not using Interactive Tele Conferencing with TOLL FREE facility: lack of awareness, lack of facilities at SC and even dissatisfaction with response received to queries and doubts raised were cited as reasons for not using the video teleconferencing facility

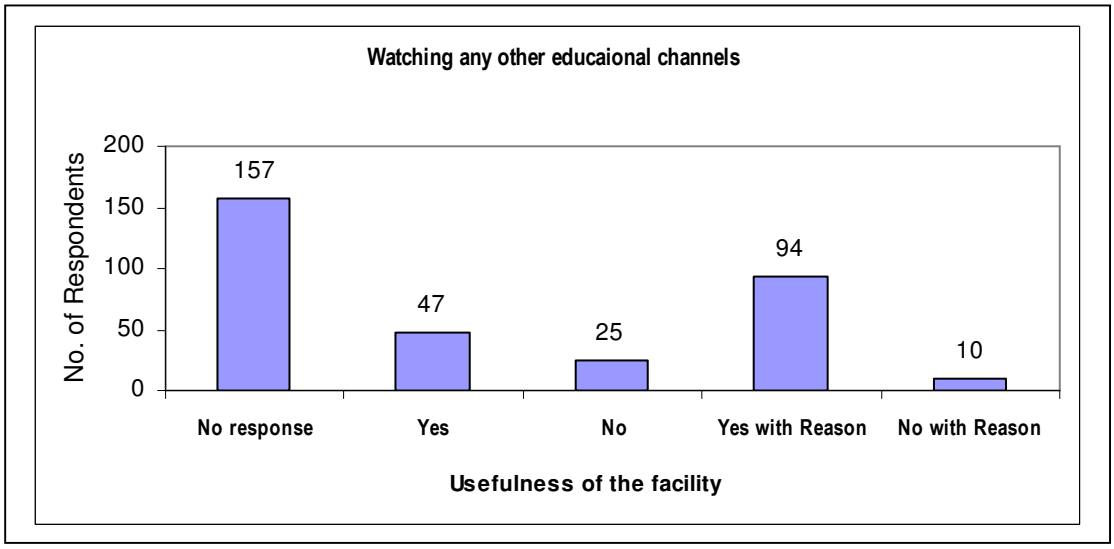
Reasons cited for not using Interactive Radio Counseling (AIR): lack of awareness, lack of facilities at SC and total ignorance regarding the usage were cited as reasons for not using the radio teleconferencing facility

Reasons cited for not using Gyan Darshan: lack of awareness, inconvenience of timings seem to be the reasons for not using the Gyan Darshan. At least 10% respondents were noted to be using the Gyan Darshan though it was not clear whether it was being accessed through the terrestrial or satellite mode

Reasons cited for not using Gyan Vani (FM Radio): lack of awareness regarding the facility, non availability of the facility at the SC, inconvenience of timings seem to be the reasons for not using the Gyan Vani

Watching any other educational channels such as National Geographic/ Discovery, History Channel, (Table 32)

Table 32



About 70% of the respondents were noted to be watching Discovery, National Geographic, Animal Planet and so on, while 30% of the respondents mentioned they could not access these channels. Greater awareness regarding the channels & easier access to these channels were noted as cause for greater usage. The reasons cited for the popularity of their programming indicate the demand for interesting informative and educative programming- both generic and specific

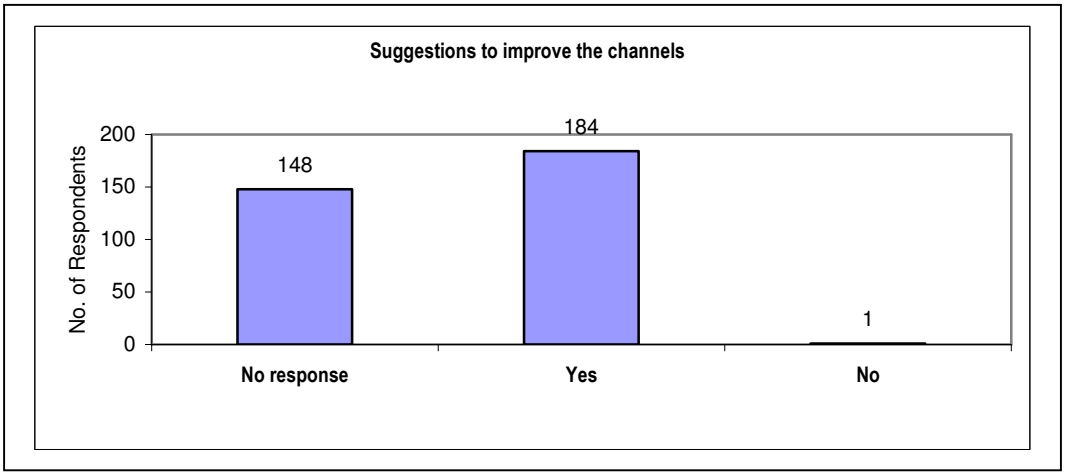
Reasons cited for watching other educational channels:
Discovery & National geographic: high quality video and timing
Interesting, informative, well presented esp. on wild life, their habitat, their role in the environment, our responsibilities, voluntary organizations, their work etc.
NGC Special provides information about animals and birds
Discovery kids-relates to daily life
Discovery future plans- relates to daily life
Discovery- Extreme Machine- informs about how to build new machines &develop technology
Discovery-Wild Discovery- provides information about animals and birds
Animal Planet- family entertainer
Watch all of the above- find them general and interesting Informative, educative and offers opportunity to watch incredible facts
Investigation files- gives knowledge on types of investigations done; advancements in research and S & T

As regards the crucial areas of media facilities available at home, most had radios and tape recorders, TVs with cable connections, mobile (surprisingly), computers and Internet access. Almost 50% visited the SC/WC and TLCs once a weekly basis while almost 28% visited them monthly.

Coming to the crux of the responses to the Ist Questionnaire, only 20% were satisfied with the present level of the multimedia facilities. Suggestions regarding access, relevancy content, quality and its treatment, timing and duration and student support systems, ends, information and attitude of staff were given.

Suggestions to improve the multi media facilities of IGNOU (Table 33)
This indicates the interest among learners regarding IGNOU multi media facilities.

Table 33



Except for 20% of the respondents who were satisfied with the present level of the multi media facilities offered; numerous suggestions were given by 80%.

- Access
- relevance of content
- quality of programming & treatment of content
- timing & duration
- student support systems, events, information & attitude of staff

Discussion

Studies such as the above, usually have an inherent assumption that all learners and especially those who are in the ODL system are using the electronic media support through various ICTs(Information communication technologies) being used to deliver the content in addition to the print medium. This is probably due to the following reasons,

a) the technology dependent ODL system has been around for a couple of decades in the country and is growing in popularity;
b) the increasing evidence of technology (ICT) access and usage by even the socio economically weaker sections of the society.

While awareness regarding various available channels continued to be low and the major cause of hampering their usage, as we note from the above findings, mere affordability, possession and access to various forms of ICTs does not automatically translate into their usage for education and training.

The two critical issues involved here are

a) media (primarily electronic media) & ICTs

b) Learner Characteristics in Education & Training

While studies such as the above tend to look at the media habits, leisure habits and study habits and infer a direct correlation, in reality, there does not seem to be as straightforward a co relation. So while broadcast of a audio or video programme does seem to be more convenient way for learners to access, and similarly, access through terrestrial TV or FM radio more convenient to receive at home than through teleconferencing through satellite based systems, there are other factors which seem to influence access and usage.

The media & ICT related factors are:

- **Familiarity with the medium:** howsoever well done any medium can have an impact only on those who are familiar with it. Only those accustomed to listening to Radio/ audio cassettes can be reached through IRC/Gyan Vani /Audio CDs etc.

- **Easy access:** whatsoever the demand, unless a medium is accessible easily, it can not sustain an audience. e.g. a)Gyan Darshan offered through satellite mode is yet to be accessed by significant number of learners.b) Even though there is a TV in most learner homes, the 'remote' being in the hands of the dominant family member (usually the parent or some elderly male or even child), a member of the household who is a learner may not be able to easily access an education TV programme broadcast over it from home. c) even though IGNOU is marketing the audio & video cassettes / CDs since the very beginning, students are unable to use it as it is not easily accessible or available at SC/WC.

- **Cost effectiveness/affordability:** quite often, affordability and value for money are important factors. The significant demand for video CD/cassettes seems to be hampered by its high costs. The poor returns on the visit to RCs for teleconferencing in the past is another example.

- **Timing:** the electronic media being a highly transcient media, a lot of thought has to go into the timing of the educational programmes especially in the broadcast mode for utility and effectiveness. This will vary vastly among different learner groups. Also, there need not necessarily be a overlapping of prime time in the entertainment /news channels with that of an educational channel

- **Duration:** the duration of any electronic media programme must be carefully planned keeping in mind the target audience, the information load in the content, the mode of delivery (broadcast/ non broadcast), etc.

- **Treatment of content:** the treatment of educational content in different media must be carefully made to suit the medium, understanding the limitations of the medium, and most importantly keeping in mind that the shelf life of educational software is far longer than entertainment programmes. Different levels of maturity of learners would need different types of treatment in terms of format, pace etc.

- **Style of presentation:** most responses from learners tend to indicate that the expected style of presentation of a typical curriculum based programme is quite similar to that done in the classroom by a teacher – elaborately explaining with graphic illustration of a small sub topic of a given chapter. Yet, the expectation from generic enrichment programmes is different. It is expected to inspire, motivate, satisfy curiosity, etc. A full fledged educational channel is expected to be a blend of both types of programming.

- **Interactivity:** interactivity, though often sought by audiences (as per most ODL practitioners) can be of varying types – asynchronous (email/fax/sms) and synchronous (telephone). And while the present trend is to introduce real or simulated interactivity on most TV & Radio broadcast channels, in the ODL system, it assumes a much more responsible motivational role as well and hence must be carefully planned. The two –way communication 'loop' must be ready in order to handle the queries. The real test is to ensure that every interaction reaches a logical end. And probably when viewed as a total channel, the quantum of interactivity needs to be arrived at through specifically designed studies.

- **Replay options:** educational programming similar to the entertainment programming will also have to cater to replay options -both through broadcast mode for large groups of audiences as well as through narrowcast mode for individual learners.

- **Limitations of each media:** every medium has its own unique strengths and limitations which must be borne in mind while harnessing it for educational purposes.

The 'Learner Characteristics' related factors are:

- **synchronization with academic cycle:** it is being increasingly realized that at least as far as broadcast of curriculum based programmes are concerned, synchronization with academic cycles of the target learner group is extremely vital. Appropriate transmission strategies must be adopted for greater effectiveness.

- **preferred learning location:** one of the prominent findings of the above study has been the observation that in spite of agreeing that they can afford and do own modern electronic gadgets – Radio, TV, telephone, computer etc. most learners were found complaining of not being able to access these at the SC/ WC/TLC thereby giving a clue to the preferred learning location as being the SC/WC/TLC.

- **preferred learning environment:** yet another point which seems to have emerged from the above study is that a certain mental picture and level of expectation seems to exist among learners regarding the SC/WC/TLC.

- **Interactivity:** interactivity is critical for learners –both with teachers as well as peers. In the ODL system, this gets highly restricted. While through the mediation of ICTs this can be enhanced, it must be done in a customized manner for different target audiences, academic programmes and so on.

- **interface with human element:** And in spite of technological mediation there is still a lot more comfort and satisfaction they seek from human 'warm body' interface at the SC/WC/TLC (facilitators/coordinators need to be sensitized to respond to this need).Also, there still seems to be a certain amount of felt need for 'peer group' interactionespecially among certain level of learners for which the SC/WC/TLC is the 'nodal' point.

Our concern should be to raise the awareness level regarding the facilities, upgrade the facilities at SC/WC/TLC, sensitize the SC/WC/TLC Staff, review the transmission strategies, etc.

Direction of Future Research

Based on primary data collected through the questionnaires, the present study represents a first-level investigation of usage and media preference profile of IGNOU learners. The findings provide some basic inputs for consideration of policy makers.; in terms of the critical necessity of creating mass awareness of media resources among the learner body as a necessary pre-requisite for media access and usage. It is very clear that those who have been exposed have found the educational media both useful and instructive.

The issue that clearly emerges is that we need to know much more about the utilization trends and actual usage preferences before the media mix at the institutional or Programme level can be finalized. Within IGNOU, impact assessment studies of its media choices have already been initiated and are designed as stratified, random sample, comprehensive studies, covering its entire learner universe, across programmes and regional centres.

The present study is a preliminary level enquiry in multiple media usage of the ODL institution. Further research is needed in the area of inter modal choices in media options, preferred time slots and formats; choice of interactive versus broadcast modes, synchronous versus asynchronous modes and patterns of customization desired by the ODL learners. We also need to have in-depth research for the Asian learner about the pedagogic effectiveness of different media, the recall and retention resulting from the variety of media, done on a comparative basis.

ODL institutions are constantly in search of higher levels of academic effectiveness. Continuous

research in media options and comparative analysis of these options represents just another set of efforts to achieve better degrees of fit between the learner expectations and institutional efforts.