

Students' Perception of the Learner Support Services in Distance Learning Institute (DLI), University of Lagos

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Abstract. Open distance learning has come to stay as one of the recognized mode of learning at different levels of education especially university level. The main purpose of this study is to determine students' perception of the learner support services in Distance Learning Institute (DLI), University of Lagos. Specifically, the study sought to ascertain students' perception of the help desk and counselling services in DLI and find out students' views about the ICT and LMS services in DLI. 6 Research Questions and 2 hypotheses were raised to guide the study. The study adopted the descriptive survey research design. The population of the study was made up of 10, 889 (5329 male and 5560 female) registered students of DLI for 2016/2017 academic session. Proportionate stratified sampling method was employed to select 386 students for sample size of the study. Mean score and standard deviation (SD) were used to answer the research questions while the t-test was used to test the null hypotheses at 0.05 level of probability. In testing the hypotheses, t-test statistical tool was employed. The results showed that students perceived the help desk is strategically located and the staff are friendly to attend to the students. They also perceived that DLI library is not conducive for learning, the library cannot be accessed on-line and not well equipped with current books. Among the findings were that learners will need the audio and video presentations of the modules, L.M.S need to be upgraded. The hypotheses revealed a significant difference between the perceptions of learner

support services by students based on gender with t-test value of 9.901 and $p < 0.000 < 0.05$. It was evident with t-test value of 4.168, $p < 0.000 < 0.05$, that there is significant difference in the perception of learner support services provided in DLI by the students based on year of study. It was recommended that the counseling centre should be publicized to attract more students. The DLI AIG blog should post information on personal and social issues bothering students.

Keywords: Learner support services, Gender, Open and Distance learning, Perception

1. Introduction

Open distance learning has come to stay as one of the recognized mode of learning at different levels of education especially university level. Open distance learning evolved from correspondence and distance education which were mainly characterized by sending and receiving learning materials by post, hence the name correspondence. In this 21st century however, open distance learning is now powered by different forms of electronic and digital gadgets. This makes it possible for learners, who are separated in time and space from the institution and their facilitators, to study on their own most of the time. Owing to this separation or isolation of distance learners from their institution and facilitators, most of the time, learner support services have been incorporated into the whole process as an important aspect of

distance learning. Learner support services are designed to bridge the gap which exists between the learner and the institution.

Brindley and Paul (2004) opined that in ODL, learner support has been a central issue of interest to distance educators for the past two decades as practitioners and researchers have tried better to understand the experience of the distance learner, what holds learners back, and what contributes to persistence and success in the learning process. Hence, the development of learner support in ODL has paralleled and reflected the change in conceptualization of education as transmission of pre-packaged knowledge to that of a dynamic transformative process, focusing on developmental constructivist models of teaching and learning and findings ways to engage the learner as an active and central participant in the learning process (Brindley & Paul 2004, pg 42)''

Ndudzo (2013) says that the learners' support system is an important service that needs to be provided by an institution to the learners because of the characteristics of distance learners themselves. Many authorities including Tait 2000 and Keegan 1995, agree that a learner support mechanism helps to address students' requirements that may affect their learning. These include career and course choice guidance, preparatory needs, study skills, access procedures to seminars, psychosocial needs, collaborative and group discussions, guidance on tutorials, learning materials, assessments and writing of assignments. It also includes guidance and counselling on non-academic issues

Gatsha and Evans (2010) say that the term learner support refers to the services provided to distance learners so that they can overcome barriers to learning and complete their studies successfully. Thorpe (1994) sees learner support services as constituting all those elements capable of responding to a known learner or group of learners before, during and after the learning process. Thorpe (2002) maintains the learner support learner support should be geared towards meeting all the needs the learners might have in other to guarantee quality learning. This explains the whole essence of learner support in

any open distance learning programme. This is because open distance learners because of their isolation and distance from the institution requires quality learner support services before admission; to guide them to make the right choice of courses, on the programme services; to assist them to benefit maximally from their learning experience, and post programme support services; aimed at assisting them on matters bothering on getting transcripts and other necessary correspondences with the schools. The post programme support service may also include giving career information and communicating with employers about the learners.

According to Simpson (2000) learner support services include all activities beyond the production and the delivery of course materials that assist the students in the progress of their studies. These include academic and non-academic or administrative support.

Academic support according Simpson (2000) is designed to assists students with cognitive, intellectual and knowledge related issues of specific courses. These may include printed modules, multi-media academic materials such as video recordings, radio lectures, audio cassettes, tutorials, study center meetings, library services and other academic oriented materials and -activities they help the students to relate comfortably with their learning tasks.

Non-academic learner support services according to Simpson (2000) assist students in their ability to be organized and effective in their studies. Non-academic support services include counselling; pre admission counselling, counselling while on the programme in different areas of the students' lives, training programmes on time management, study habits, examination attitude, orientation, and student's unions and associations, and many more programmes designed to help the students to bridge the gap caused by being distance learners. According to Chattopadhyay (2014), learner support system in open distance education varies from one institution to another. In other words, each institution would design, develop and implement learner support services that are in line with the peculiar characteristics of its students. In essence, what constitute learner support services

in one institution may not be important in another institution, However, all of the learner support services, no matter the form or composition, are geared towards assisting the learners in achieving their major goal of enrolling in the programme.

Furthermore, Baloyi (2012) affirms that learner support is a generic term, which is applied to the range of services that are developed by the institutions in order to assist the students to meet their learning objectives, to gain the knowledge, expertise and skills to be successful and to complete their course or studies. In other words, learner support services are designed to help learners to enter a programme, remain and progress on the programme and successfully complete the programme. It also helps in reducing attrition rate in any open distance learning programme. Brindley and Paul (2004) noted that learner support includes all those interactive processes intended to support and facilitate the learning process from the student's first point of contact with the institution, including tutoring, teaching, counselling, advising, orientation, administrative services and even peer tutoring and alumni support. The major reason for this is that learner support services provides students with the intellectual, emotional and social needs of their enrolling in the programme in the first place. This is referred to as the cognitive, affective and systemic characteristics of learner support by Tait (2000). Tait (2003) states three reasons why learner support services are very important in any open distance learning institution. These are:

Students need support, just like in any other human endeavour, students would need all the necessary help they can get to ensure their success in the programme they have enrolled in.

Learner support helps to reduce drop-out rate otherwise called attrition rate. A good learner support programme would ensure that the learners are retained in the programme. Learner support such as counselling, guidance, course advising, mentoring, training, etc are all designed to assist the learners overcome different challenges that may be threatening their success in the programme.

The facilitator or e-tutor through the process of mediation relates the teaching content to the student as an individual in her or his situation, including the social, economic, geographic and cultural dimensions.

Many authorities have studied learner support in relation to academic performance and effects of learner support services on the learners. Arko-Achemfour (2017) studied support gaps in an open distance learning context, the result of the study revealed that although most of the support services are in place, students in the study who live in the rural areas are not able to access them adequately thereby impacting adversely on their studies.

Baloyi (2012) studied learner support in open and distance learning context, a case study of ABET programmes in the University of South Africa. The result revealed among other things that in spite of the limitations, learner support in ODL has the potential to improve the success rate of students. Kamau (2012) studied the effectiveness of learner support services to distance learners in a primary education diploma, a case study in Botswana the study revealed that there is need for sustained learner-tutor and learner-learner interaction and regular communication with the supporting institution during the learning process. This would require planning and aligning learner support services to identified learners' needs, access to learning resources including the existence and application of effective monitoring and supervision mechanisms for academic, counselling and administrative support in order to ensure commitment and accountability of learner support providers.

Ukpo (2005) carried out a study on the relevance of learner support services at the National Teachers Institute (NTI) in Nigeria, the study revealed among other things that the students were pleased with the administrative, academic and counselling services, but were not pleased with the material distribution and the library services. The study also revealed that the students liked the support they receive from their tutors and study centre administrators, however,

they were displeased with the inadequacy of course materials.

Farajollahi and Moenikia (2010) studied the relationship between student support services and distance students' academic achievement. Their study revealed a significant relationship between students support services and its components with academic achievement of students. Adelowotan and Adewara (2009) surveyed the quality of the learner support programme for distance learning students in Distance Learning Institute, University of Lagos. The study revealed that the students were satisfied with the tutorial, library services and the support they received at the study centres. The students however showed dissatisfaction in the way the Institute personnel attended to their complaints. Their study equally revealed that the students would like the Institute to reach out to them more using the mobile telephone device. Chesto (2011) who also found significant influence of class level on students' perception and attitude towards counselling. Patrick and Ihejirika (2012), studied students' perception of the quality of learner support services in National Open University of Nigeria, the result of the study indicated that there were no significant differences in the level of importance and level of satisfaction between male and female learners on the learner support provided.

The Distance Learning Institute (DLI) University of Lagos started as a correspondence and open studies Unit (COSU) in 1973, to assist in the production of science education teachers for Nigerian primary and secondary schools. It was later transformed to Correspondence and Open Studies Institute in 1983. The institute operated on more of face-to-face mode in the transaction of the teaching and learning. However, with the growing need for access to formal education all over the world and Nigeria inclusive, as well as the advancement in technology and the shift globally to learning using e-platforms, the Institute was restructured by the University Senate in 1997 to be in line with the global trend. Ever since then, the Institute has continued to position itself to using blended modes of learning in reaching to its numerous students both within and outside the

country. The core values of the Institute include life-long education, learner centeredness, continuing learning, learner support, learner satisfaction, integrity and honesty. Learner support is one of the core values of the Institute, the Institute has learner support and counselling unit which received high scores during NUC Validation visit to the Institute in 2015 as well as in 2016. A lot has been put in place for the students to enable them have smooth experience in the learning activities in the Institute.

2. Statement of the Problem

The learner support unit of the DLI provides services to students in different areas including counselling, library support, help desk, provision of course materials in different forms (video, module text, radio lectures), online learner support and blog activities. Also, the LMS is used in reaching out to the students when they are not in residence. The learners in DLI have been availing themselves of the opportunity of using these services. There may be challenges the students encounter in the use of the learner support services available in DLI. Especially now that the Institute has almost migrated to full Open Distance mode of learning, thereby reducing the face-to-face contact periods at the study centres and laying more emphasis on the activities on the LMS according to National Universities Commissions' guideline on open distance learning in Nigeria. Whether they are satisfied with the services or their views about how these services can be improved on has not been ascertained in recent times, hence this present study to find out students' perception of the learner support services in Distance Learning Institute, the University of Lagos. The reason for this is in line with the opinion of Haghghi and Tous (2014), that analysis of learners' responses concerning the learner support services may provide the student support system with a better understanding of learners' expectations, thereby positioning the learner support services to serve the students better.

3. Purpose of the Study

The main purpose of this study is to determine students' perception of the learner support

services in Distance Learning Institute (DLI) University of Lagos. Specifically, the study sought to:

- Ascertain students' perception of the help desk activities in DLI.
- Find out students' views about the counselling services in DLI.
- Determine students' perception of the Library services available to the in DLI.
- Find out students' perception of the course materials available to them in DLI.
- Ascertain students' views about the online learner support services in DLI.
- Find out students' views about the ICT and LMS services in DLI.

4. Research Questions

The following research questions guided the study

- What is the students' perception about the activities of the help desk?
- How do DLI students view the counselling services available in DLI?
- What is the students' perception about the library services in DLI?
- What is the students' perception about the course materials available to students in DLI?
- How do students in DLI perceive the online learner support services available in DLI?
- What are students' views about the ICT and the LMS services in DLI?

5. Research Hypotheses

The following hypotheses were raised and tested at 0.05 level of significance:

- There is no significant difference in the mean rating of male and female students on their perception of the learner support services available in DLI.
- There is no significant difference in the perception of the learner support services in DLI by the students based on year of study.

6. Methods

The study adopted the descriptive survey research design. Survey research design according to Gall, Gall and Borg (2003) focuses on people, their opinions, attitudes, motivation and behaviour. Hence, survey was adopted for this study because the researchers want to survey the students' opinions on their perception about the learner support services available for them. The population of the study comprised 10,889 (5329 males and 5,560 females) registered students for 2016/2017 academic session in the three Departments in the Institute. Proportionate stratified sampling method was employed to select 386 students for the study. To get a good representative of the population, the Taro Yamani formula for sample size selection was used to determine the sample size for the study. A total of 386 sample was determined for the study. The sample size was randomly selected from the population and a total of 189 female and 197 male learners were selected. A 35-item questionnaire titled Perception of Learner Support Services by Students (PLSSS) was designed and used for the study. The questionnaire had six clusters according to the research questions raised. The instrument had a 4-point response scale of strongly agree, agree, disagree and strongly disagree with the weights of 4,3,2,1 respectively. The instrument was validated by 2 experts from Guidance and Counselling in the University of Lagos. Their suggestions and corrections were used in modifying the questionnaire to suit the study. To determine the internal consistency of the instrument, Cronbach alpha method was used, a reliability coefficient of 0.78 was obtained. This was taken as high enough to consider the questionnaire reliable to be used for the study. A total of 386 questionnaire was administered, however only 368 that were returned and properly filled were used for analysis. Mean score and standard deviation (SD) were used to answer the research questions while the t-test was used to test the null hypotheses at 0.05 level of probability. The criterion mean for the study was set at 2.50, this means that any item with a mean score of 2.50 and above indicated agreement. A mean score below 2.50 indicated disagreement. In testing the hypotheses, t-test

statistical tool was employed, and a null hypothesis of no significance was accepted were t-calculated was less than t-critical of 1.96 at

0.05 level of significance but rejected where t-calculated was greater than the t-critical.

Research Question 1: What is the students’ perception about the activities of the help desk?

Table 1: Mean and Standard Deviation of Students’ Perception of the Help Desk

S/N	Item	N	Mean	SD	decision
	The help desk is strategically located to attend to students’ needs	368	3.51	1.81	Agree
2.	The help desk staff are very friendly and they attend to students promptly.	368	3.40	1.61	Agree
3.	Students’ matters are professionally handled by the help desk staff.	368	3.17	1.55	Agree
4.	Staff members at the help desk are not friendly and they do not handle students’ matters well.	368	1.08	1.11	Disagree
5.	The help desk does not delay students’ matters, it needs to be improved on.	368	3.20	1.16	Agree
6.	The help desk serves no need for students.	368	1.12	1.01	Disagree

In Table 1, the result shows that items 1,2,3 and 5 had their mean value ranging from 3.17 to 3.51 which are higher than the criterion mean of 2,50. The four items also had Standard Deviation of 1.81, 1.61, 1.55 and 1.16 respectively. This indicates that the students agreed that the help desk is strategically located to attend to their needs, that the help desk staff are friendly and that they attend to students promptly and that students’ matters are professionally handled. They equally agreed that the help desk does not delay students’ matters. They however disagreed that staff members are not friendly with mean score of 1.08 and SD of 1.11 and that the help desk serves no need for the students with mean score of 1.01 and SD of 1.01. This is an indication that DLI students value the help desk and the services provided to them through the help desk.

Research Question 2: How do DLI students view the counselling services available in DLI?

Table 2: Mean Score and Standard Deviation of Students’ view about the counselling services available in DLI

S/N	Item	N	Mean	Standard Deviation	Decision
7.	The counselling services in DLI is good and help students in managing the challenges	368	3.41	1.16	Agree
8.	I am not aware that there is counselling service in DLI	368	1.80	1.11	Disagree
9.	I have never seen the counselling unit in DLI	368	2.13	1.12	Disagree
10.	The counselling centre should be publicized to attract more students.	368	2.94	1.08	Agree
11.	Counselling is not for Nigerians it is too foreign. I do not see its usefulness	368	2.51	1.17	Agree
12.	I am not satisfied with the activities of the counselling unit, it needs be improved on	368	2.47	1.18	Disagree

In Table 2, the result shows that items 7, 10, and 11 have mean scores ranging from 2.51 to 3.41 which are higher than the criterion mean of 2.50. The three agreed items also has SD of 1.16, 1.08, and 1.17 respectively. This indicated that the respondents agreed that the counselling services in DLI are good in meeting the students’ challenges, that the counselling centre should be publicized and that counselling is not for Nigerians. Items 8, 9 and 12 had mean scores ranging between between 1.80 and 2.47 which is below the criterion mean, and SD of 1.11, 1.12 and 1.18. This shows that the respondents disagree that they are not aware of the counselling services in DLI and that they have never seen the counselling unit, and that they are not satisfied with the activities of the counselling unit. This goes to show that the students have favourable disposition towards the services of the counselling unit as an aspect of the whole learner support programme in DLI.

Research Question 3: What is the students’ perception about the library services in DLI?

Table 3: Mean score and Standard Deviation of Students’ Perception of Library Services

S/N	Item	N	Mean	Standard Deviation	decision
13.	The Library is modern and has enough current books for students	368	1.70	1.50	Disagree
14.	DLI Library is not well equip for ODL mode of learning	368	2.52	1.19	Agree
15.	DLI Library has enough open education are relevant for ODL students	368	2.74	1.13	Agree
16.	I can access the library from anywhere I am	368	1.26	1.68	Disagree
17.	The Library is conducive for learning	368	1.08	1.10	Disagree
18.	The Library staff are friendly are willing to assist students to get materials in the library	368	2.83	1.18	Agree
19.	I have never used the Library , so I don’t know whether it has adequate services or not	368	2.61	1.15	Agree
20	I am allowed to borrow books from the Library for my studies.	368	2.71	1.31	Agree

In Table 3, the result shows that items 14, 15, 18, and 20 have mean scores ranging between 2.52 and 2.83 which are higher than the criterion mean of 2.50. The SD for the five items were 1.19, 1.13, 1.18, 1.15, 1.31 respectively. This shows that the respondents agreed that the library is not well equip for ODL mode of learning, that the library however have enough open education resource and that the library staff are friendly and willing to assist students to get materials in the library. On item 19, with a mean score of 2.61, the respondents agree that they have not used the library so that they cannot comment whether it has adequate services or not. This is understandable since their mode of learning is ODL, it is not compulsory that they would use the library in the Institute. There are other channels through which they can assess learning materials as ODL students without necessarily using the library in the Institute. Item 13 with mean score of 1.70 and SD of 1.50 shows that the respondents disagree that the library in the Institute is modern and had current books. Item 16 and 17 had mean score of 1.26 and 1.08 and SD of 1.26 and 1.10 respectively. This shows that the respondents disagreed that they can access the library anywhere they are and that the library is conducive for learning.

Research Question 4: What is the Students’ Perception about the Course Materials available in DLI?

Table 4: Mean Score and Standard Deviation of Students’ Perception on Course Materials

S.N	Item	N	Mean	Standard deviation	decision
21.	Course materials are available for students in both soft copies and module copies.	368	1.43	1.55	Disagree
22.	DLI course materials are easy to read and learner friendly.	368	2.72	1.28	Agree
23.	The Course materials are rich enough, they cover the course content appropriately	368	1.69	1.43	Disagree
24.	Apart from the text form of the modules, I would like to have the audio copies.	368	2.85	1.11	Agree
25.	We need the video presentation of the module for easy understanding of the content.	368	2.96	1.10	Agree

In Table 4, the result shows that items 22, 24 and 25 have mean scores 2.72 to 2.96 which are greater than the criterion mean. The SD for the items were 1.28, 1.11 and 1.10. This indicated that the respondents agreed that DLI course materials are easy to read and learner friendly, that they would like to have audio copies of the course materials and that they need video presentations of the course materials. While items 21 and 23 have mean scores of 1.69 and 1.43 respectively which are lower than the criterion mean of 2.50. This shows that the respondents disagreed that course materials are available for students in both soft copies and module format and that the course materials are rich enough and they cover the course content appropriately.

Research Question 5: How do Students in DLI perceive the Online Learner Support Services in DLI?

Table 5: Mean Score and Standard Deviation of Students’ Views about the Online Learner support

S/N	Item	N	Mean	Standard Deviation	Decision
26.	I am not aware that there is online learner support available for students in DLI.	368	2.71	1.28	Agree
27.	The online learner support service is good and students' queries are attended to properly.	368	1.18	1.71	Disagree
28.	Not all student matters can be handled using the online learner support	368	2.85	1.10	Agree
29.	The online learner support services should be improved on	368	3.05	1.25	Agree
30.	The DLI AIG blog should post more information on personal and social issues that bothers students	368	3.07	1.24	Agree

In Table 5, the result shows that items 26, 28, 29 and 30 had mean scores ranging between 2.71 and 3.07, which are greater than the criterion mean of 2.50. The items have SD of 1.28, 1.10, 1.25 and 1.24 respectively. This shows that the respondents agree that they are not aware that there is online learner support available for them, that not all students matter can be handled through online learner support, that the online support services should be improved on and that the DLI AIG blog should put more information bothering on personal and social issues concerning the students. Item 27 had a mean score of 1.18 ad a SD of 1.71, this indicates disagreement that the online support service is good and that students' queries are attended to properly using the online learner support service.

Research Question 6: What are students' views about the ICT and the LMS services in DLI?

Table 6: Students' Views about Internet and LMS

	ITEM	N	Mean	Standard deviation	Decision
31	The internet facilities in DLI is very good	368	2.86	1.10	Agree
32	I have issues with the LMS as it needs to be upgraded	368	2.66	1.14	Agree
33	The LMS is difficult to access	368	2.58	1.12	Agree
34	I prefer face-to-face teaching to the materials posted on the LMS	368	2.64	1.18	Agree
35	The LMS is not learner friendly	368	2.52	1.17	Agree

In Table 6, the result shows that items 31, 32, 33, 34 and 35 had mean scores ranging between 2.52 and 2.86, and standard deviation and SD of 1.10, 1.14, 1.12, 1.18 and 1.17 respectively. This indicates that the internet facilities in DLI is very good, however, the LMS needs to be upgraded, and that the LMS is difficult to access. Also the respondents agree that they prefer face-to-face teaching to the online mode of posting materials on the LMS and that the LMS is not learner friendly.

Test of Hypotheses

Table 7: The Test values for the differences in the perception of learner support services by students based on gender

Paired Samples Test

	Paired Differences					t	df	Sig.(2-tailed)
	Mean	Std Deviation	Std Error Mean	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference				
				Lower	Upper			
Pair1 Female Perception – Male Perception.	.45294	.59646	.04575	.36263	.54325	9.901	169	.000

T =9.901, p=.000 which is significant at 0.05 level of probability

Since p-value = 0.000 < 0.05 (the α value) therefore, the null hypothesis is rejected meaning that there is significant difference between the perception of learner support services by students based on gender.

Table 8: T-test values for the Differences in the Perception of the Learner Support Services in DLI by the Students based on the Year of Study.

Paired Samples Test

	Paired Differences					t	df	Sig.(2-tailed)
	Mean	Standard Deviation	Std. Error Mean	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference				
				Lower	Upper			
Pair 1 Yrs. 2 and 3 – Yrs. 4 and 5.	.41176	.81470	.09880	.21456	.60896	4.168	169	.000

T =9.901, p=.000 which is significant at 0.05 level of probability

Since p-value = 0.000 < 0.05 (the α value) therefore, the null hypothesis is rejected meaning that significant difference occurred between the perception of learner support services by students in DLI by the students based on year of study.

7. Discussion

From Table 1, it is clear that students perceived that the help desk is strategically located and the staff are friendly to attend to the students. Learners agreed that their matters are handled professionally by the help desk staff. This corroborates the work by Adelowotan and Adewara (2009) who found out that students were satisfied with the support they received at their study centre. This also corroborates the work of Ukpo (2005) whose work showed that students like the support they received from their tutors and study centre administrators.

Table 2 indicated that they are aware of counseling services in DLI which they found to be good and help students to manage their challenges. Table 3 also shows that the DLI library is not conducive for learning, the library cannot be accessed on-line and not well equipped with current books. However, they agreed that the library staff are friendly and books are easily borrowed. Table 4 shows that learners agreed that their course materials are easy to read and understand. They agreed that they will need the audio and video presentations of the modules. However, they perceived that the course materials are not readily available and does not cover all the course content. This calls for revision of the current course materials in use in the Institute. The major reason why the course materials need to be readily available is considering the fact that these students are ODL students who are supposed to study on their own

majority of the time. This is therefore not in support of the work by Gbenoba and Dahunsi, (2014) who opines that the success of any ODL institution depends on the availability of learning materials in quality and quantity. Table 5 indicated that online learner support services is bad because students’ queries and not attended to properly. From table 6, it was agreed by all students that the internet facility in the school is good but the L.M.S need to be upgraded because it is difficult to access. This is justifiable because learners are just learning to adapt to a new online mode of learning other than the traditional face-to-face learning they are used to. From the first hypotheses, there is significant difference between the perception of learner support services by students based on gender. However, the study by Patrick and Ihejirika (2012) on NOUN students revealed no significant difference between the perceptions of learner support services provided based on gender. From the second hypothesis, it was evident that there is significant difference in the perception of learner support services provided in DLI by the students based on year of study. This result corroborates the findings of Chesto (2011) who also found significant influence of class level on students’ perception and attitude towards counselling.

8. Recommendation

Generally, from the results of the study, it is recommended that:

- The Staff at the help desk need to be motivated more to continue in attending to the students promptly and to treat all students’ matters with dispatch.
- The counselling centre should be publicized to attract more students. It should also hold regular online sensitization programmes for the

students through the Institute's websites and the LMS.

- The Learning Management System (LMS) in the Institute needs to be upgraded and the students given refresher lessons every session on how to access and use it.
- The DLI AIG blog should post information on personal and social issues bothering students.
- The library needs to be upgraded and equipped with state-of-the-art facilities and also e-journals, e-books and other Open Education Resources that would enable the students to benefit more from the library.
- The course materials should be improved on and should be produced in different varieties – audio, videos, and even on other devices that can enable students benefit maximally from the materials.

9. Conclusion

The study was conducted to ascertain students' perception of the learner support services available in Distance Learning Institute (DLI), University of Lagos. Learner support is a very vital and crucial aspect of open distance education. It needs to be constantly researched into to understand the best way to improve on it. This is to enable the Institute to serve the students better. From the present study, it can be concluded that the learner support services at DLI is good, however, there is still areas that need improvement. Areas such as provision of modern facilities and current books and journals in the library, improving on the course materials.

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