

# A COMPARATIVE STUDY BETWEEN THE STUDENT SUPPORT SERVICES OF IGNOU, RC, BHUBANESWAR AND DDCE, UTKAL UNIVERSITY, VANI VIHAR

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## ABSTRACT

*Distance and open learning have expanded the accessibility to higher education by enhancing classroom learning through the change of theory and practice. Delivering the content materials remotely demands the use of technologies and efficient techniques that effectively support students. Therefore, providing impeccable student support services designed to meet the diverse needs of adult distance learners is crucial for an efficacious open and distance learning. Present study was conducted to find out the difference between the availability of study materials for the learners, to know the library services facility and access of computer and internet, to study the effectiveness of counselling programs organized by both IGNOU, RC Bhubaneswar and DDCE, Utkal University for the learners and to know the difference in responses to the mail and telephone of distance learners. The study revealed that a major portion (45%) of IGNOU students were only moderately satisfied, a bulk (60%) of DDCE students stated extreme satisfaction towards the availability of study materials. Utilization of library services was considerably higher at DDCE (50%) compared to IGNOU (45% never used). A significant difference existed in access to computers and the internet. Nearly half (45%) of IGNOU students never had access within the university, while a majority in DDCE (55% for internet and 35% for computers) reported of being extremely satisfied which highlighted a crucial area for improvement at IGNOU. The learners of both institutions experienced moderate satisfaction with counselling programs. A significant portion of students at both the institutions were satisfied with the response to mails and telephones.*

**Keyword:** - Student support service, Study materials, IGNOU, DDCE, library service, computer and internet

## 1. INTRODUCTION:

Distance Education merely refers to a mode of teaching from a distance. The term 'mode' refers to a practice with or without flexible approaches and practices to provide education from a distance (Rowntree, 1992). Distance and open education have increased the accessibility of higher education to innumerable learners in the world. It is a transformative framework where distance acts as the medium of providing knowledge through advanced technologies and techniques. In the light of this move which brings knowledge and learners together with a distance, the provision of student support services, as per the needs and expectations of higher distance education students, should be a vital part.

Student support service is the key means to deliver a course or program in distance education. In the regular traditional method, continuous teacher-taught communication forms the main contact point where the exchange of knowledge takes place (Padhan & Singh 2010). The whole system of open and distance education is based on a learner-centered approach that impedes such continuity of contact, so the lack of daily interaction with the faculty along with peer groups has to be compensated. Hence, a distance learning system requires an able, active, and structured student support service. It would not be wrong to say that the competence of student support services is directly proportional to the success of instruction by distance mode. The Indira Gandhi National Open University, known as IGNOU, is the national university for distance learning, located at New Delhi, India, along with many regional centers across the globe. This institution is named after former Prime Minister of India Srimati Indira

Gandhi, established in 1985 when the Parliament of India passed the Indira Gandhi National Open University Act, 1985 (IGNOU Act 1985).

The Directorate of Distance and Continuing Education (DDCE) a component executive of the Utkal University, began as the University Evening College in October, 1962 with an aim to deliver further education to students. On 27th November, 1974, The University Evening College was converted into the Directorate of Correspondence Courses. It was shifted to its present campus in 1987. The DCC was converted into Directorate of Distance and Continuing Education w.e.f. 15.10.1996, in accordance with the revised UGC guidelines for Open and Distance Learning.

### 1.1 The Key Components of Distance Education

- Online Platforms: Students access lecture materials, assignments, quizzes, and discussions.
- Video Conferencing: Live or recorded lectures and interactive sessions are conducted using video conferencing tools, allowing real-time interaction between instructors and students.
- Email and Communication Tools: Communication between instructors and students, as well as among students, often occurs through email, discussion forums, messaging apps, and social media platforms.

The techniques like flexible schedule, self-directed learning, multimedia resources, remote support services, assessment and feedback, global accessibility, continuous evaluation, new tools, platforms, and teaching strategies are constantly being developed to enhance the effectiveness and accessibility of online learning which can give more benefit

### 1.2 Student Support Service

The various categories of services provided to students include:

- Academic Support: This covers academic advisement, online libraries, study materials, and learning resources. To make sure students are staying on course, tutors and instructors can provide tailored advice and comments.
- Technical Support: A lot of technology is used in distance learning. Precise tech assistance assists students in resolving technical difficulties, navigating virtual learning environments, and troubleshooting any software or computer problems.
- Administrative Support: This includes help with registration, explanations of academic policies, and procedures for resolving grievances. A seamless learning process is ensured by effective administrative assistance.
- Counseling Services: Feeling anxious or lonely can occasionally be brought on by distance studying. Counsellors that offer emotional and psychological support can be accessed through SSS.
- Communication and Interaction: Students can communicate with professors, peers, and professionals through online forums, discussion boards, and video conferencing tools, which promotes a sense of community and collaborative learning.

## 2. NEED OF THE STUDY

Education is two-way process of communication in both classroom mode and distance mode. In distance education, there is no regular interaction. In this case, institutions have directed their effort and interest towards the development of knowledge for every distant learner and quality of human-to-human and human-to-machine interactions in the learning procedure.

The goal of distance and open learning can be achieved through comprehensive learner support services that encapsulates a range of activities, like production and distribution of learning materials, pre-arrangement of exchange programmes, conducting examinations and presenting final results, and mass-produced materials. The complementary services like tutoring and counselling, interactive teaching through television and radio support individual learning are being organized.

We should remember that a lot of learners are mostly adults who are studying part-time. So, they are confident about their capability to learn through the different unfamiliar packages sent to them. Despite the extensive research on student support services, no study has yet investigated a comparative study of the student support services among various open and distance learning universities. There is a need to obtain feedback and suggestions of the distance learners on the support services rendered by National and State level, so that it will help educational planners and policy makers to extract some policy options supportive to develop distance education and to bring improved quality in distance education. In addition, it will make some useful proposals to incorporate in the criteria for quality check in distance education. Last but not the least, this study is valuable to future researchers in the area of distance education. They will receive crucial statistics and information from it on distance learning generally and student

support services specifically. Hence, the researcher decided to conduct the study entitled as “A Comparative Study between the Student Support Services of IGNOU, RC Bhubaneswar and DDCE, Utkal University, Vani Vihar”.

### 3. OPERATIONAL DEFINITION OF KEY TERMS:

- Student Support Services: For the present study, student support services mean the range of activities which complement self-learning materials and the learner’s independent study.
- Open Learning: For the present study open learning is a concerted effort to break down the traditional obstacles to training in order to provide students with access to the essential training, certification and recognition for prior learning developed entrance test and the flexibility to learn at a time, location, and pace that best suits their needs.
- Distance Learning: For the present study distance learning takes place when the teacher and student are far apart by a physical distance. The method of imparting knowledge in distance education depends on the use of technology, mass production of self-learning materials and an effective student support service system.

### 4. OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY:

The study was conducted with the following objectives.

1. To find out the difference between the availability of study materials to the learners.
2. To know the library services facility provision to the students of open and distance learning program.
3. To know the difference between the distance learners of DDCE, Utkal University and IGNOU, RC Bhubaneswar in relation to access of computer and internet.
4. To study the counselling programs organized by IGNOU, RC Bhubaneswar and DDCE, Utkal University for the learners in distance mode.
5. To know the difference in responses to the mail and telephone of distance learners in IGNOU, RC Bhubaneswar and DDCE, Utkal University.

### 5. DELIMITATION OF THE STUDY:

The study was limited to the students holding Master’s degree in Education, English, History and Political Science of IGNOU, RC Bhubaneswar and DDCE, Utkal University, Vani Vihar, Bhubaneswar.

### 6. METHOD OF THE STUDY:

The present study was based on descriptive survey method in nature and mostly based on primary data collected from the learners of the distance education institutions. A descriptive study describes and interprets the present status of what is, recording, describing, analyzing and interpreting conditions that exist.

### 7. POPULATION OF THE STUDY:

The population for the present study was all students of July 2023 of first year, enrolled in Master’s degree in Education, English, History, and Political Science of IGNOU, RC Bhubaneswar and DDCE, Utkal University.

### 8. SAMPLE OF THE STUDY:

For the study, the sample of 80 students of July 2023 of first year, enrolled in Master’s degree in Education, English, History, and Political Science of IGNOU, RC Bhubaneswar and DDCE, Utkal University were selected randomly.

**Table: 01**

Sl. No	Name of the Institution	Total
01	Indira Gandhi National Open University, RC- Bhubaneswar, Odisha	40
02	DDCE, Utkal University, Vani Vihar, Bhubaneswar	40
Total		80

### 9. TOOLS:

The questionnaire developed by researcher titled “Questionnaire on Effectiveness of Student Support Services at Distance Learning Universities, i.e., IGNOU, RC, Bhubaneswar and DDCE, Utkal University, Vani Vihar, Bhubaneswar” was employed for data collection. The content of the questionnaire was developed from related literature, especially studies where similar information was solicited. The instruments were discussed with the experts for obtaining valuable suggestions for improving the items.

## 10. PROCEDURE OF DATA COLLECTION:

Selection of the proper method depends upon the nature of the problem stated and the objectives of the study to be achieved. The main objective of the present study was to make a comparative study of the student support services of the IGNOU, RC Bhubaneswar and DDCE, Utkal University, Vani Vihar, Bhubaneswar.

The investigators shared the questionnaire in a Google form format. The researchers clearly explained the purpose of the research in the introduction of the form. They were told that the results will be kept strictly confidential. The students responded to all the questions in the questionnaire that assessed the student support services in IGNOU, RC Bhubaneswar and DDCE, Utkal University. The results of the test were calculated and tabulated.

## 11. ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION OF RESULT:

The researchers employed descriptive analyses, frequencies, and percentages. The frequency and percentage analysis of the data gathered for this study was done before any necessary graphical representations were added for clarity. With the study's goals in mind, data on various areas of student support services in remote learning programs have been interpreted.

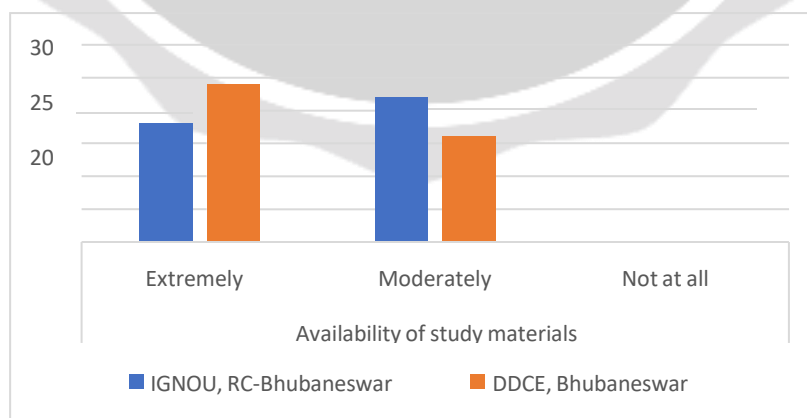
### Objective 1: Difference between the availability of study materials to the learners.

In order to estimate the effectiveness of student support services, the study was first examined for any differences in the availability of study materials to the learners. The following data was collected.

**Table: 02**  
Difference between the availability of study materials to the learners

Institutions	IGNOU, RC, Bhubaneswar		DDCE, UU, Bhubaneswar	
	No. of students	%	No. of students	%
Extremely	18	45	24	60
Moderately	22	55	16	40
Not at all	0	0	0	0
Total number of students	40	100	40	100

Table 2, revealed the differences between the availability of study materials to the learners in IGNOU, RC-Bhubaneswar and DDCE, Bhubaneswar. There were 40 students each from both the universities. Out of 40 IGNOU learner respondents, 55% were found to have moderate or average satisfaction, 45% were extremely satisfied in the availability of study materials to the learners. And out of 40 DDCE learners' respondents, 60% were found to have extreme satisfaction, 40% were moderately satisfied with the availability of study materials to the learners.



**Figure 1:** Comparison of the availability of study materials to the learners in IGNOU, RC, Bhubaneswar and DDCE, UU, Bhubaneswar

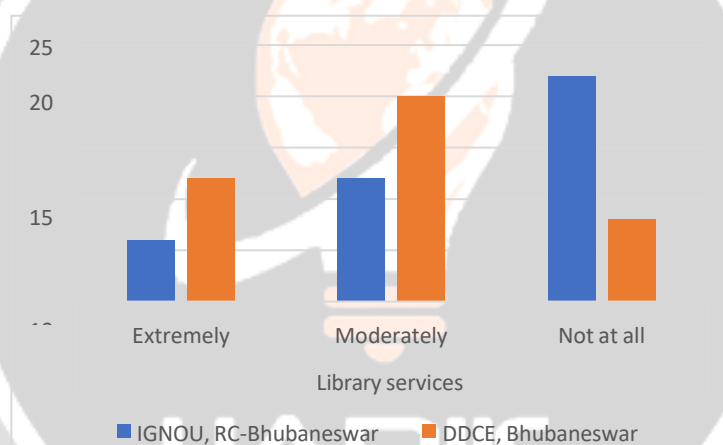
**Objective 2: To know the library services facility to the open and distance learners.**

This sub section includes the comparison between library services facility provision to the students of open and distance learning program in IGNOU, RC- Bhubaneswar and DDCE, Bhubaneswar. In order to find out the significance of the difference the following data was calculated and analyzed.

**Table: 03**  
**Difference between the library services facility provision**

Institution enrolled in:	IGNOU, RC, Bhubaneswar		DDCE, UU, Bhubaneswar	
	Library services	No. of students	%	No. of students
Extremely	6	15	12	30
Moderately	12	30	20	50
Not at all	22	55	8	20
Total number of students	40	100	40	100

As shown in Table 3, it can be seen that the results of the comparison of library services in both the universities had major differences. Among the 40 learner respondents of IGNOU, 55% of learners had never experienced the library facilities, 15% were extremely satisfied and 30% were moderately satisfied. Amongst the 40 learner respondents of DDCE, 50% of learners were moderately satisfied with experience of the library facilities, 30% were extremely satisfied and 20% never experienced the library facilities.



**Figure 2:** Comparison of the availability of library services to the learners in IGNOU, RC-Bhubaneswar and DDCE, Bhubaneswar.

**Objective 3: Difference between the distance learners of DDCE, UU and IGNOU, RC Bhubaneswar learners in relation to access of computer and internet.**

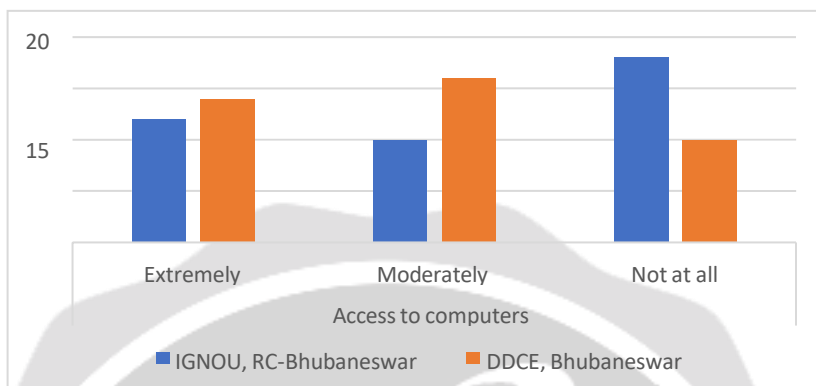
Access to computer and internet are essential tools for distance learners, allowing them to participate fully in the learning process. Hence, this sub section examines significant differences between the accessibility of computers and internet between the distance learners of DDCE, Utkal University and IGNOU, RC Bhubaneswar.

**Table: 04**  
**Differences in the accessibility in computer services**

Institution enrolled in:	IGNOU, RC, Bhubaneswar		DDCE, UU, Bhubaneswar	
	Access to computers	No. of students	%	No. of students
Extremely	12	30.00	14	35.00
Moderately	10	25.00	16	40.00
Not at all	18	45.00	10	25.00
Total number of students	40	100	40	100



As shown in Table 4, it can be seen that the results of the accessibility of computers in both the universities have major differences. Among the 40 learner respondents of IGNOU, 45% of learners had never experienced the computer facilities, 30% were extremely satisfied and 25% were moderately satisfied. Amongst the 40 learner respondents of DDCE, 40% of learners feel that they were moderately satisfied with experience of the computer facilities, 35% were extremely satisfied and 25% were never experienced the computer facilities.

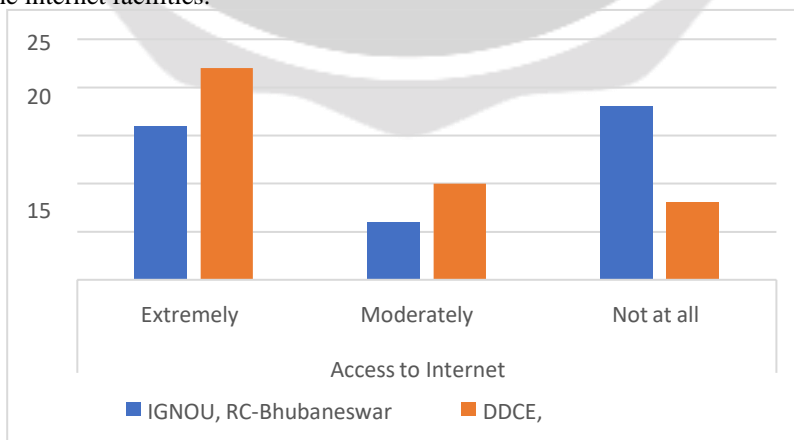


**Figure 3:** Comparison between the availability of accessibility of computer services to the learners in IGNOU, RC-Bhubaneswar and DDCE, Bhubaneswar

**Table: 05**  
Comparison of differences in accessibility of internet services

Institution enrolled in:	IGNOU, RC, Bhubaneswar		DDCE, UU, Bhubaneswar	
	No. of students	%	No. of students	%
Extremely	16	40.00	22	55.00
Moderately	6	15.00	10	25.00
Not at all	18	45.00	8	20.00
Total number of students	40	100	40	100

As shown in Table 5, a difference in the results of the accessibility of internet in both the universities was estimated. Among the 40 learner respondents of IGNOU, 45% of learners had never experienced the internet facilities, 40% were extremely satisfied and 15% were moderately satisfied. Amongst the 40 learner respondents of DDCE, 55% of learners were extremely satisfied with experience of the internet facilities, 25% were moderately satisfied and 20% never experienced the internet facilities.



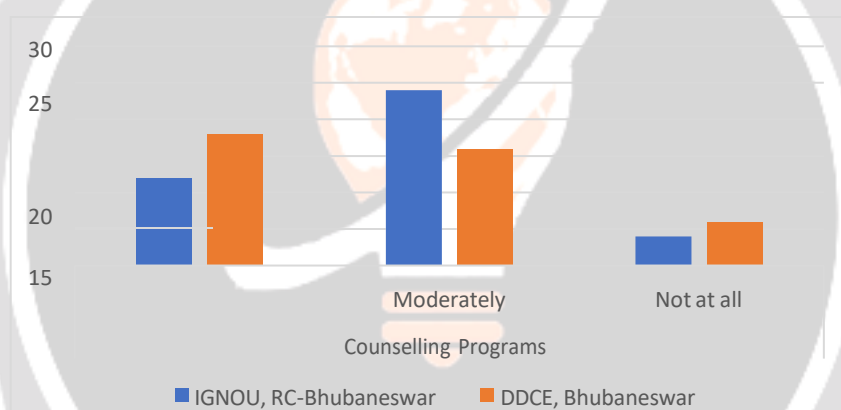
**Figure 4:** Comparison between the availability of accessibility of internet services to the learners in IGNOU, RC-Bhubaneswar and DDCE, Bhubaneswar.

**Objective 4: Difference between the distance learners of DDCE, UU and IGNOU, RC Bhubaneswar learners in relation to counselling programs.**

**Table: 06**  
**Percentage differences in conduction of counselling programs**

Institution enrolled in:	IGNOU, RC, Bhubaneswar		DDCE, UU, Bhubaneswar	
	No. of students	%	No. of students	%
Extremely	12	30.00	18	45.00
Moderately	24	60.00	16	40.00
Not at all	4	10.00	6	15.00
Total number of students	40	100	40	100

As shown in Table 6, it can be seen that among the 40 learner respondents of IGNOU, 60% of learners had moderate experience with counselling programs, 30% were extremely satisfied and 10% never attended any such program. Amongst the 40 learner respondents of DDCE, 40% of learners feel that they were moderately satisfied with experience of the counselling facilities, 45% were extremely satisfied and 15% were never experienced it.



**Figure 5:** Graphical comparison between the availability of counselling program facilities to the learners in IGNOU, RC-Bhubaneswar and DDCE, Bhubaneswar

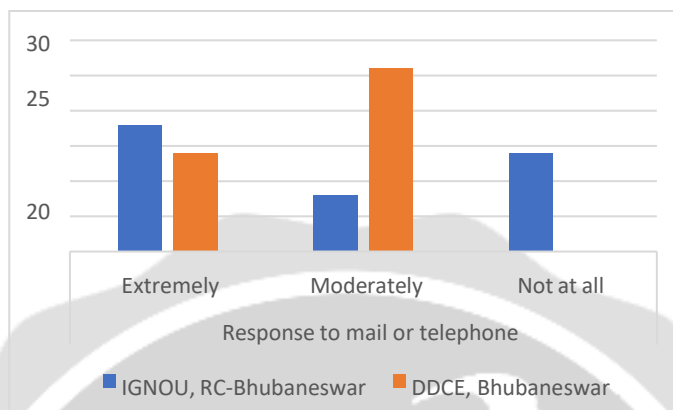
**Objective 5: Difference in responses to the mail and telephone of distance learners**

This sub section includes the evaluation of responses made to the mail and telephone by the students of open and distance learning program in IGNOU, RC- Bhubaneswar and DDCE, Bhubaneswar. In order to find out the significance of the difference the following data was calculated and analyzed.

**Table: 07**  
**Differences in responses to mail or telephone facility**

Institution enrolled in:	IGNOU, RC-Bhubaneswar		DDCE, Bhubaneswar	
	No. of students	%	No. of students	%
Response to mail or telephone				
Extremely	18	45.00	14	35.00
Moderately	8	20.00	26	65.00
Not at all	14	35.00	0	0.00
Total number of students	40		40	

Table 7 revealed the differences between the responses made to the mail and telephone by the learners in IGNOU, RC-Bhubaneswar and DDCE, Bhubaneswar. There were 40 students each from both the universities. Out of the 40 IGNOU learner respondents, 45% of students were extremely satisfied with the responses, 20% were moderately satisfied and 35% never received the responses. And out of 40 DDCE learner respondents, 65% were found to have moderate satisfaction and 35% were extremely satisfied with the responses made.



**Figure 6:** Differentiating the response to mail and telephone facilities to the learners in IGNOU, RC-Bhubaneswar and DDCE, Bhubaneswar

## 12. FINDINGS OF THE STUDY:

- It was found that maximum students, 22(55%) of IGNOU, RC- Bhubaneswar were moderately satisfied with the study materials available to them while maximum students, 24(60%) of DDCE, Bhubaneswar was extremely happy with the study materials.
- Only 18(45%) of 40 students in IGNOU, RC-Bhubaneswar were extremely satisfied with availability of study materials whereas 16(40%) of 40 students in DDCE, Bhubaneswar were moderately satisfied with the study materials available to them.
- While 20(50%) out of 40 students in DDCE, Bhubaneswar were using the library services, in IGNOU, RC-Bhubaneswar, 22(55%) out of 40 students had never used this service.
- The above observation implied that maximum students of IGNOU, RC Bhubaneswar, never used this service but it was the complete opposite in DDCE, Bhubaneswar.
- Least number of students, 6(15%) out of 40, of IGNOU, RC- Bhubaneswar were extremely satisfied with the library services.
- There were 12(30%) out of 40 students in IGNOU, RC- Bhubaneswar who were moderately satisfied with the library services.
- Out of 40 students in DDCE, Bhubaneswar, 12(30%) were extremely satisfied with the library services but 8(20%) were completely unaware of this service.
- It was found that maximum students in IGNOU, RC-Bhubaneswar, 18(45%) out of 40 students never had access to computers and internet in the university.
- There were 12(30%) students out of 40 in IGNOU, RC- Bhubaneswar and 14(35%) out of 40 students in DDCE, Bhubaneswar were extremely satisfied with the access of computers in their institutions.
- In IGNOU, RC-Bhubaneswar, 16(40%) students out of 40 and 22(55%) out of 40 students in DDCE, Bhubaneswar were extremely satisfied with the access of internet in their institutions.
- While 10(25%) out of 40 students in IGNOU, RC-Bhubaneswar were moderately satisfied with computer services and in DDCE, Bhubaneswar, it was 16(40%) out of 40 students.
- In case of accessibility of internet services, only 6(15%) out of 40 students in IGNOU, RC- Bhubaneswar and 10(25%) out of 40 students in DDCE, Bhubaneswar was moderately satisfied.
- It was found that maximum students in IGNOU, RC-Bhubaneswar, 24(60%) out of 40 students and 26(65%) out of 40 students were moderately satisfied by the counselling programs in the university, respectively.
- While in DDCE, Bhubaneswar 16(40%) out of 40 students and 24(60%) out of 40 students were moderately satisfied by the counselling programs in the university, respectively.



- An equal number of students, 12(30%) out of 40 students, were extremely satisfied with the counselling and orientation programs, each time, respectively.
- There were 18(45%) students out of 40 and 14(35%) out of 40 students in DDCE, Bhubaneswar who were extremely satisfied with the counselling and orientation programs respectively.
- In both IGNOU, RC-Bhubaneswar and DDCE, Bhubaneswar, equal numbers of students, 2(5%) out of 40 students, were not aware about the orientation program.
- While 4(10%) out of 40 students in IGNOU, RC-Bhubaneswar never attended the counselling programs, in DDCE, Bhubaneswar, it was 6(15%) out of 40 students.
- Maximum students of IGNOU, RC-Bhubaneswar, which is 18(45%) out of 40 students were extremely satisfied with the responses made to the mail and telephone from the institution.
- There were 26(65%) out of 40 students in DDCE Bhubaneswar and 8(20%) out of 40 students in IGNOU, RC-Bhubaneswar who were moderately satisfied with the responses to their mail or telephone.
- Among the 40 students in IGNOU, RC-Bhubaneswar, 14(35%) students never received any responses to their mails and telephone.
- While in DDCE, Bhubaneswar, among 40 students, 14(35%) students were extremely satisfied about the responses to their mails and telephone. There was no student in DDCE, Bhubaneswar who never received a response to their mail or telephone.

### 13. CONCLUSIONS

The findings clearly showed that the DDCE, Utkal University provided a more inclusive and satisfactory student support experience as compared to the IGNOU, RC-Bhubaneswar, in most of the key areas. Among the two institutions, DDCE students consistently have reported higher satisfaction with availability of study materials, access to library, technology resources, and awareness to queries as compared to the IGNOU students. While both institutions showed relatively average satisfaction with counseling programs, DDCE generally provided a more positive student support experience. These issues must be attended, in priority, to ensure fair access to quality distance education and to facilitate a empathetic learning environment for all students.

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