

Role of Allama Iqbal Open University Tutor in Imparting Learning to Rural Women at Intermediate Level

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Abstract

AIOU and other distance learning institutes help close the gender gap in Pakistani education, which perpetuates gender inequality (Zafar & Khan, 2018). Urban women are less likely to prosper in adversity than rural women. Understanding how AIOU tutors overcome these challenges and effectively teach is crucial for advancing remote education. This study examines how AIOU tutors help rural women with intermediate-level schooling. This study employs Gay et al. (2016)'s descriptive survey research framework to investigate how AIOU tutors assist intermediate-level rural women in their learning. This study included tutors from Allama Iqbal Open University (AIOU) in Bahawalpur and Vehari, as well as rural female intermediate-level students (N = 8,387) from the Spring 2016 semester, who benefit most from tutor-mediated learning. From the table above, 422 tutors were identified. The sample size was 201. The poll included 177 tutors. Return ratio was 88%. The survey found that AIOU teachers provide helpful feedback and maintain high academic standards to fulfil student needs. The study found that the University's tutors can help low-income students achieve academic success if the institution takes steps to improve their educational opportunities. AIOU's professional development seminars may emphasize interactive teaching, digital resources, and rural female student engagement. Regular tutor feedback ensures training relevancy.

Keywords: *AIOU, Distance Learning, Gender Gap, Intermediate-Level, Communication Styles*

Introduction

This is especially true for women living in rural regions, as they often face institutional barriers that hinder their access to quality educational opportunities (UNESCO, 2020). When it comes to elevating communities that have been historically marginalized, education is not only a fundamental right but also a powerful tool that can be leveraged effectively. Distance learning institutions, such as Allama Iqbal Open University (AIOU), play a vital role in bridging the gender gap in education in Pakistan, which perpetuates gender inequities in education (Zafar & Khan, 2018). These universities offer disadvantaged individuals' flexible

educational opportunities. By serving as crucial facilitators in the process of transmitting knowledge, encouraging critical thinking, and boosting academic engagement among rural female learners, AIOU tutors play a significant role at the intermediate level (Khan et al., 2021). It is necessary to conduct additional studies in this field because the efficiency of these instructors in overcoming geographical, cultural, and infrastructural constraints remains a subject that has not been adequately investigated (Ahmed & Malik, 2019).

According to Hussain et al. (2021), the work of AIOU tutors encompasses not only

standard teaching but also mentoring, motivation, and the use of adaptive pedagogical practices specifically geared to meet the needs of rural women. In open and distance learning (ODL), the interaction between the tutor and the student has been shown to have a substantial impact on the academic achievement of learners as well as the rates at which they continue their education (Latif and Hussain, 2022). However, rural women often face extra challenges that can impede their educational advancement. These include societal restraints, poor internet connection, and the obligations of managing a household (Jabeen et al., 2021). However, rural women are more likely to succeed in the face of adversity than their urban counterparts. Understanding how AIOU tutors overcome these hurdles and ensure effective knowledge transmission is vital for improving educational outcomes in remote locations (Ashraf & Iqbal, 2018).

The purpose of this research is to investigate the role that AIOU tutors have in enabling intermediate-level education for rural women. The study also assessed the influence of different communication styles and instructional approaches on students' and teachers' academic performance (Batool and Rehman, 2023). According to Ahmed and Malik (2022), the purpose of this research is to identify best practices and potential gaps in the present tutoring framework. The research achieved the objective by analyzing quantitative data gathered from tutors. To ensure that women in rural Pakistan have equal access to education, the results helped inform policy suggestions for improving the delivery of distant education.

Review of Literature

A person's ability to assimilate into and make meaningful contributions to society depends on the information and skills they acquire through their educational experiences. Differentiation between animals and humans is based on learning. The groundwork for progress is education. The country's priority is the education of its citizens. There are three distinct modes of education: formal, informal, and non-formal. This study tried to investigate how the Allama Iqbal Open University has educated rural Punjabi women. The researcher sets the goals of the survey to guide their work, and to reach those goals, they must adhere to standard research practices. The role of AIOU in improving the quality of intermediate education for rural women is the subject of this section's analysis.

Every person must have the opportunity to get a quality education. You may need to obtain a degree to improve or maintain your standard of living. One's educational background has a significant influence on their social surroundings throughout life. No aspect of being human can be taught through education. Full potential can only be realized through education. Education, according to Hussain and Sultan (2020), helps individuals realize their full potential by directing their spirits toward the genuinely marvelous things.

A person's social self is something that can be better understood via education. A positive shift in behavior is the result. Diverse sources must be utilized if education is to advance and change. Education improves one's perceptual and critical thinking abilities. Learning provides

direction in four domains: intellectual, physical, philosophical, and ethical, and it paves the way to living one's life purpose.

In Pakistan, the Allama Iqbal Open University (AIOU) has proven to be an effective institution in meeting the comprehensive educational needs of the country's population. The aspect of our educational system that receives the least attention from Pakistani civil engineers is their ongoing education. Engineers, architects, town planners, and interior designers were the target audience for the postgraduate degree and diploma program in Environmental Design that was developed by AIOU in collaboration with the British Council of Pakistan in 2003. This program presents several forward-thinking strategies that can be implemented during the design process to enhance the harmony between the user, the building, and its surrounding environment.

In his 2007 article, Ahsan emphasized the relevance of distance education, as well as the challenges that women encounter when trying to enroll in higher education institutions. He believes that the nation is experiencing an increasing demand for education delivered through distance learning. Educational problems that are widespread and impact women are addressed. Consequently, it is of the utmost importance to acknowledge it as an alternate method of instruction. In light of the discussion that has taken place thus far, the DE mode is an effective method for empowering women and addressing the challenges of women's backwardness in all parts, regardless of prejudice.

Moore and Kearsley (2012) claimed in his commentary on the significance of education for women that education not only improves women's health and sources of income by supplying them with information and skills, but also gives them the ability to acquire a proper position in the social order and increase their social status. When it comes to making decisions, education instills both importance and self-reliance. A well-educated lady is in a position to reduce her level of dependency. As a result of the statement "One of our greatest needs is to spread education among our women," the importance of female education is emphasized worldwide. According to Hashmi, Zafar, and Ahmad (2008), "the education of women has a positive effect on the economic development of the country." The country's per capita income rises when there is a greater proportion of women who have completed their education. It is guaranteed under the Constitution of Pakistan that the country will have access to educational opportunities. In Article 37, it says: "Under the Constitution of Pakistan, the government is obligated to eradicate illiteracy and ensure that all citizens have access to free and obligatory secondary education within the shortest feasible time. Also, everyone should be able to go to college if they work hard enough, and they should encourage more people to enroll in technical and professional programs." Each Pakistani province is responsible for its educational policy and budget. Implementing the new delegated constitution is the responsibility of the provincial departments of education and law, which are responsible for drafting this legislation. It is reasonable

to believe that the new generations of educated parents will play a significant role in promoting comparable changes in Pakistan. This is because Pakistan has made substantial progress in the education of both males and females over the past two decades (Benz, 2013). The authors, Voigt and Spies (2020), believe that promoting female education is a crucial component in the formation of a more just society, one that includes women who are proud and self-assured, both in the highlands and in other parts of the world.

The rural areas of Pakistan are home to the vast majority of the country's inhabitants. Even if gender inequality is one of the most significant factors that contribute to the low position of women in Pakistan (Akhter, 2014), there are still many other factors that exist. On the other hand, women have a negative social attitude, particularly in urban and rural communities. The importance that rural culture places on the education of women is not as high as one might think. The fact that they have educational amenities that are ineffective and sometimes incorrect within their available constraints leads them to feel that it is nothing more than a futile expenditure of both income and time. The majority of people, particularly those living in rural areas, believe that education is essential only for males. The literacy rates of boys and girls in Pakistan are significantly different from one another, particularly in rural and remote areas. This disparity is primarily attributable to the fact that this base exists (Munawar & Akhter, 2017).

Research Methodology

To investigate how tutors from Allama Iqbal Open University (AIOU) assist

intermediate-level rural women in learning, this study employs a descriptive survey research framework proposed by Gay et al. (2016). To ensure generalizability, a quantitative technique employed to systematically collect data from a sample of tutors and students (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). According to Fraenkel et al. (2019), the study used a cross-sectional survey design to assess tutors' communication styles, educational techniques, and the challenges they face in rural locations.

This initiative focuses on students in intermediate programs from rural areas, as well as AIOU tutors. Cohen et al. (2018) advocate for a stratified random sample to represent all locations, thereby increasing the trustworthiness of the findings. Data was collected using a standardized questionnaire based on previous studies. Dörnyei and Taguchi (2020) state that this survey assesses student engagement, accessibility, and education. A pilot study validated the instrument's reliability, and Cronbach's alpha utilized to evaluate internal consistency (Field, 2018).

The population of this study consisted of tutors from Allama Iqbal Open University (AIOU) in the Bahawalpur and Vehari regions. First, rural female intermediate-level students (N = 8,387) registered in the Spring 2016 semester were included, as they represent the primary beneficiaries of tutor-mediated learning (AIOU, 2016). Secondly, since they are directly involved in delivering education, 422 intermediate-level tutors from both regions were taken into consideration. The tutor's involvement in rural women's education was thoroughly examined using the questionnaire items. The researchers sent

questionnaires to the tutors (201) through post having return postage envelopes in the post mail and the tutor (177) sent their responses back to the researchers. The detail is as under;

Table No. 1

Sample of the respondents

Total population	Size of sample	No. of Respondents	Return rate
422	201	177	88%

Based on the data in the table above, a total of 422 tutors were identified. We used a sample size of 201. A total of 177 tutors participated in the survey. There was an 88% return ratio.

The researcher used the statistical techniques of frequency, percentage and mean score for data analysis.

Data Analysis and Interpretation

Demographic Distribution

Table No. 2

Tutors' gender distribution

Sex	Frequency	Percentage
Male	100	56.5
Female	77	43.5

The data presented in Table 2 reveal that, compared to female tutors, male tutors constitute the majority (56.5%). There are 43.5% of female tutors in the workforce.

Table No. 3

Tutors' residence distribution

Location	Frequency	Percentage
Rural	95	53.7%
Urban	82	46.3%

In comparison to urban tutors, who make up 46.3% of the total, Table 3 reveals that rural instructors make up the vast majority (53.7%).

Table No. 4

Analysis of tutors' responses

S#	Statement	SA	A	UD	DA	SDA	MS
1	The university informed the students in time about their tutors.	61.6%	32.2%	4.5%	0.6%	1.1%	4.5
2	Students submit their assignments according to schedule	39.5%	41.8%	7.4%	6.8%	4.5%	4.1
3	Assessed assignments are sent back to the learners in due course.	46.3%	41.3%	5.1%	4.5%	2.8%	4.2
4	Assignments are comprised of the entire course.	50.3%	34.5%	7.9%	6.2%	1.1%	4.3
5	Tutors give remarks on students' written work.	30.5%	58.2%	6.8%	3.4%	1.1%	4.1
6	Remarks on students' written work are encouraging.	42.9%	47.5%	6.2%	2.3%	1.1%	4.3
7	The course books engaged the learners in learning.	42.9%	45.2%	9.1%	1.7%	1.1%	4.3
8	Tutorial meetings are organized as per schedule.	51.4%	34.5%	8.4%	2.3%	3.4%	4.4
9	The students are present in tutorials consistently	22.6%	22.6%	11.3%	29.4%	14.1%	3.1
10	Students' performance is enhanced in the course of tutorials.	40.1%	49.2%	9.0%	1.7%	--	4.4
11	Tutor plays role as a counselor.	61.0%	32.2%	5.1%	1.7%	--	4.5
12	Tutors keep record of students' work and activities.	54.8%	35.0%	5.6%	4.0%	0.6%	4.4
13	Tutors have a critical role in upgrading women learning.	55.9%	32.2%	6.2%	4.0%	1.7%	4.4
14	Tutors play vital role in learner's character building.	42.9%	47.5%	3.9%	3.4%	2.3%	4.2
15	Workshops are arranged for tutors to enhance their teaching skills.	16.9%	16.4%	9.6%	30.5%	26.6%	

According to Table 4, the vast majority of tutors (93.8%) were pleased with the university's fast communication regarding their tutors. While 1.7% were opposed to the proclamation and 4.5% were unsure. The average is 4.5. If the mean is this high, then we can be sure of the statement. Item 2 states that the majority of tutors (81.3%) support the statement that students are expected to deliver their assignments on time. The remaining 7.4% were unsure, and 11.3% had

no idea what the proclamation meant. The average score is 4.1. This mean value shows that the declaration is specific. According to item 3, 87.6% of teachers agreed with the statement that students will receive their graded assignments in a timely manner. There were 5.1% who were unsure and 7.3% who were against the assertion. On average, it's 4.2. As far as the announcement is concerned, this mean value shows absolute assurance. With the declaration that

assignments comprise the entire course, Item 4 makes it apparent that combined tutors (84.8%) showed a positive response. While 7.3% were opposed to the proclamation, and 7.9% were unsure. The mean score value is 4.3. The mean value supported the announcement. Item 5 shows that 88.7% of tutors give written comments to pupils. 6.8% were unsure, and 4.5% could not endorse the proclamation. The average score is 4.1. This mean value shows statement certainty. Item 6 shows that 90.4% of tutors said comments on students' writing are encouraging. 6.2% were unsure, and 3.4% could not support the proclamation. The mean score value is 4.3. The mean score value endorsed the claim. Item 7 shows that 88.1% of instructors stated that the study material course books effectively engaged students. 9.1% were unsure and 2.8% opposed the proclamation. The average is 4.3. This mean value shows declaration certainty. Item 8 indicates that 85.9% of tutors reported that tutorial meetings are appropriately scheduled. 8.4% were unsure, and 5.7% disagreed. Scores average 4.3. The mean score supported the proclamation. Item 9 states that 45.2% of tutors agree that students attend tutorials regularly. While 11.3% were unsure, 43.5% opposed the proclamation. The mean score value is 3.1. The mean contradicts the claim. Item 10 shows that 89.3% of tutors said students' lesson performance is correct. While 9.0% were unsure and 1.7% could not endorse the declaration. The midpoint is 4.4. This mean value reflects announcement certainty. Item 11 shows that 93.2% of tutors agreed that they counsel. 5.1% were unsure, and 1.7% had reservations about the proclamation.

The average score is 4.5. The mean supported the claim. Item 12 indicates that 89.8% of tutors approved the proclamation. 5.6% doubted and 4.6% opposed the declaration. The mean score is 4.4. This mean score shows proclamation certainty. Item 13 shows that 88.1% of tutors agreed that tutors help women learn. 6.2% were unsure, and 5.7% opposed the statement. The average score is 4.4. The mean score supported the claim. Item 14 showed that 90.4% of tutors agreed that tutors help students acquire character. 4% were unsure and 7% opposed the declaration. The average score is 4.2. The mean score supported the statement. Item 15 shows that 33.3% of tutors agreed that seminars improve their teaching skills. 9.6% doubted and 57.1% opposed the announcement. The average score is 2.6. Low mean scores contradict the statement.

Findings and Conclusions

The research paper "Role of Allama Iqbal Open University (AIU) Tutors in Imparting Learning to Rural Women at the Intermediate Level" provides insightful information on several aspects, including the tutors' attitudes, students' engagement, and the university's support systems. With an average score of 4.5, nearly all faculty members (93.8% agreement rate) believed that the university was effective in sending timely communications to them. All signs indicate that AIU's administrative apparatus is fully operational in terms of keeping tutors informed. However, locally specific differences in resource distribution could be to blame for the miscommunication.

It is hardly unexpected that 6.2% of those who participated in the study were unhappy

or unsure. The already remarkable performance of AIOU in engaging students through remote learning will be significantly enhanced if all locations, especially rural ones, are accessible. As a result, the instructor would be even more involved. According to the study's results, 8.1% of tutors believe their students consistently submit their work on time (mean = 4.1). Plus, an astounding 87.6% of educators reported returning graded papers promptly (mean = 4.2%), and the number of instructors who included written remarks was even higher (mean = 4.1). The results of the survey indicate that AIOU teachers make an effort to meet the requirements of their students by providing them with helpful feedback and maintaining high academic standards. Some students will continue to receive inconsistent or delayed feedback since 7.3% to 11.3% of tutors were uncertain or disagreed. Resolving these disparities is crucial for improving the educational outcomes of rural women. They depend heavily on organized support systems because they rarely interact face-to-face. Women in rural regions are in a better position to testify to this.

Notably, most instructors disagreed with the assertion that students often attended tutorials (mean = 3.1), whereas only 45.2% of tutors shared this view. The difference here is substantial. Using descriptive statistics, we identified several key challenges. Professional growth, student engagement, assignment management, and tutor happiness all fall under one umbrella. The study's results revealed that AIOU's online learning model has both advantages and disadvantages, specifically for rural

women. Because rural women face more challenges compared to urban ladies when attempting to engage in extra or co-curricular activities, as indicated by the low value of the mean score. The mentioned challenges are caused by socio-economic constraints, including household obligations, transportation issues, and cultural norms that forbid certain behaviour in society. Live sessions and mobile learning options enable students to maximize their education with AIOU's innovative approaches. AIOU must investigate other ways to improve learning, since tutorials are crucial for students to remember information.

In addition, despite 89.3% of tutors reporting that students performed well in class (mean = 4.4), 88.1% of tutors stated that AIOU's study materials were effective (mean = 4.3). The university has done a commendable job with the program design. In addition, an impressive 93.2% of tutors reported offering counselling services (mean = 4.5), and an even larger percentage (88.1%) indicated that they were effective in helping students with their schoolwork (mean = 4.4). With so few people signing up for these professional development programs, it's possible that they aren't helpful, accessible, or even relevant. Training programs provided by AIOU could incorporate gender-sensitive methods of instruction, digital literacy, and modern pedagogical practices to better serve students in remote areas. If a tutor is effective, their student will have a far better chance of succeeding.

The following numbers illustrate the significant impact that tutors have on the academic performance, self-esteem, and

motivation of rural women to continue studying. Moreover, only 33.3 per cent of teachers believed that seminars helped them become better educators, while 57.1 per cent were doubtful (mean = 2.6). The study's authors hope that by cataloguing the areas of knowledge held by AIOU tutors, they will be better equipped to assist rural women as they pursue higher education. Poor tutorial attendance and a lack of professional development opportunities are serious issues that the institution must address immediately, despite its strengths in communication, assignment management, and educational assistance. University's tutors can help students from low-income families succeed academically, but only if the school takes specific measures to improve the academic outcomes for these students. Educators and lawmakers can take action based on the findings to increase access to high-quality programs in economically challenged places. Contributing to the continuing discussion concerning online education, the findings are clear.

Recommendations

To strengthen the role of AIOU tutors in teaching rural women, the study's conclusions suggest the following recommendations:

1. AIOU may revamp its professional development seminars to emphasise interactive teaching, digital resources, and the engagement of rural female students. Training relevance should be ensured by regular tutor feedback.
2. Assignment feedback is typically helpful; however, AIOU may establish a standardize monitoring system to ensure timely and consistent evaluations across all

areas, decreasing tutor responsiveness differences.

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