

# STEREOTYPING, PREJUDICE, COLLECTIVE SELF-ESTEEM AND ACADEMIC ACHIEVEMENT OF DISTANCE EDUCATION AND REGULAR STUDENTS

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**Abstract:** Research has established that stereotyping, prejudice and collective self-esteem predict academic performance. Similarly, in Ghana, students' academic achievement could be influenced by stereotyping, prejudice and collective self-esteem, particularly, in relation to their modes of study. Thus, the study compared distance education and regular students of the University of Cape Coast (UCC) on account of stereotyping, prejudice, collective self-esteem and academic achievement. The study employed the descriptive survey design, and a multi-stage sampling approach to select a sample of 628 comprising 306 and 322 regular and distance education students respectively for the study. Two research instruments that measured stereotyping, prejudice and collective self-esteem of distance and regular students were used to collect data. Data were analysed using multiple linear regression. Results revealed that stereotyping and collective self-esteem predicted the academic achievement of regular students. However, these variables did not predict the academic achievement of distance education students. It was recommended that academic counselling and workshops be organised by the UCC management in order to boost students' confidence and pride in their modes of study.

**Keywords:** Stereotyping, prejudice, collective self-esteem, academic achievement, distance education, regular students

## Introduction

Distance education is the method of offering education or giving instruction to recipients not actually visible in a lecture room as is done in the familiar traditional institutions (Busari, 2017). The Commonwealth of Learning (COL) (2000) describes distance education as a mode of delivering knowledge or skills to people set apart by distance at a certain period in time from their instructors or trainers. The expressions, 'open learning' and 'distance education' are terms that have been used to describe methods that emphasise the need to make knowledge and skills at all levels accessible to learners regardless of their locations or granting learners the same or equivalent chances to access education wherever they find themselves (UNESCO, 2002).

In analysing how the distance education programme operates in Ghana, one needs to consider the underlying structures. Generally, in line with Britain's approach, Commonwealth Countries adopted the Commonwealth model in administering and operating their distance education systems

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(Mintah & Osei, 2014; UNESCO, 2001). Initially, UNESCO proposed that the Ghanaian universities offered part-time studies, teaching and corresponding with students through mass media (Olumide as cited in Mintah & Osei, 2014). In the current Ghanaian setup, there are different ways by which the programmes are run.

First, in terms of distance, there is the remote and the semi-remote. The remote style of distance learning is operated in the true meaning of the word 'distance', where there is no physical contact between the tutors and learners (Mintah & Osei, 2014). One example is the Presidential Special Initiative (PSI) Distance Learning Programme which was aired on Ghana Television (GTV) for Junior High Schools (JHS) and Senior High Schools (SHS) in the early 2000s (Mintah & Osei, 2014). Presently, in the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic, the Government of Ghana in conjunction with the Ghana Education Service (GES) began the Visual Learning Programme which is targeted at bringing lessons to students of Basic, Junior High and Senior High schools across the nation via television and radio and online (UNESCO, 2020). Another example is the African Virtual University (AVU), which certain public university colleges and departments in Ghana offer. Specifically, the University of Ghana (UG), University of Cape Coast (UCC) as well as Kwame Nkrumah University of Science and Technology (KNUST), and the Ghana Institute of Management and Public Administration (GIMPA) have established AVU facilities which render distance learning programmes such as computer science and business administration which are run in their undergraduate and graduate programmes (Kumi-Yeboah, Young & Boadu, 2014). Presently, Virtual Learning has become the new norm being organised by all universities both private and public in the country due to the changes that the COVID-19 outbreak caused (Upoalkpajor & Upoalkpajor, 2020). Even some private basic schools have taken to this new venture to enable them to meet the learning needs of their students (UNESCO, 2020).

With semi-remote distance learning, a set of students occasionally assemble with their coordinators or tutors to receive some printed models and guidelines to guide them in their learning during the time that they are away or on their own. At a point in time, they re-converge to write examinations which are used to assess their performance (Mintah & Osei, 2014). However, in Ghana, insufficient funding and equipment, and sometimes inadequate personnel have led to the blended form of learning being the most practised. Depending on the university in question, the programme being studied and the site of the campus vis-a-vis the students' location, the contexts and mode of implementation differ (Kumi-Yeboah, Young & Boadu, 2014). In light of the foregoing, some Ghanaian universities run a centralised or decentralised form of education. In the centralised mode, students meet their facilitators at selected distance learning centres across the country and at an appointed time, travel to the university campus which is a centralised point to meet with their lecturers for live revision and writing of examinations when the regular students are on holidays. Some advantages of this mode are that it enables distance students to experience campus life, and also allows them to use facilities that regular students alone had access to (Tackie Larkai, Ankomah-Asare & Nsawah-Nuamah, 2016). With the decentralised mode, every region chooses centres for students to attend lectures and write their examinations. Thus, students are not obliged to go to the main university campus (Tackie Larkai, Ankomah-Asare and Nsawah-Nuamah, 2016). This is practised by the University of Cape Coast (UCC), University of Education, Winneba (UEW), University of Ghana (UG) and Kwame Nkrumah University of Science and Technology (KNUST) in Ghana. Distance education, thus, alters the learning situation from the familiar convergent university type of study into a rather dispersed and easy-to-attend one (Akrofi, 2010).

The regular conventional university system of education in Ghana, on the other hand, spans 9 or 10 years. The undergraduate or first-degree programme takes four years, the second degree (Master of Philosophy) takes two years and the terminal degree (Doctor of Philosophy) lasts for either three or four years. This mode of education is perceived to be the best in terms of quality and performance compared to the distance mode (Senyamator et al. 2022). This study was, therefore, designed to examine and compare the difference between the academic achievement of distance education and regular students of the University of Cape Coast focusing on the final year undergraduate students. A study of this phenomenon is significant in bringing issues catalysing

misconceptions on the inferiority of DE programmes to the conventional systems into the limelight for focused discussion among stakeholders and formulation of policies by the government and the UCC to address the misconceptions as well as improving educational facilities for DE learners. This would go a long way to enable universities in Ghana to run complete remote (virtual) DE programmes in case of any eventuality such as COVID-19 which struck the world in 2019, and make it more flexible and ubiquitous for learners and prospective learners in the future thereby helping the government to achieve its quality and equity education for all policy.

## Theoretical Framework

### *Self-Concept and Stereotype Threat Theories*

Rogers' personality theory focused on self-concept, which he explained as the concept of who one is or as a structure that slowly grows due to interaction among people in society and particular significant others (Rogers, 1951). According to Rogers, people's feelings, values, and perceptions that they form about the world and the meanings they form about them constitute their phenomenological field. Those parts of the phenomenological field that have to do with the individual are what define the 'self'. Thus, the concept of self is an organised set of either positive or negative perceptions that people form subject to the nature of interaction with people around them which could either improve or hinder their job or academic performance. In the context of this study, students' phenomenological field comprises people's perceptions of them as distance education learners or regular school learners. These perceptions that they have and their experiences define their self and build or tear down their organismic trust (belief in themselves that they can achieve the best academically). Thus, the perceptions that people have pertaining to a group inform the group members of who they are – the collective self of the group. Through the process of interacting with their environment, regular education and distance education students acquire others' notions about themselves and their mode of study. Those experiences that enhance their collective selves and build organismic trust are incorporated into their collective self-image while those that debase them are rejected.

This can be true for students on a particular mode of study, be it regular or distance, who are regarded or stereotyped as academically good. If one falls within this status, the individual will want to go to all lengths to uphold that name. On the other hand, those who fall short of this status would be psychologically affected as people around them regard them as not good academically. In that wise, students whose mode of study is highly regarded relatively as the best boost their self-confidence such that they work within their abilities, appreciate themselves, live up to their values and seek to actualise their true potential. In this regard, learners tend to please society by living up to their stereotyped status (Igbo, Onu & Obiyo (2015).

In sum, Rogers' theory in relation to the present study, is that distance education students who perceive that they are negatively stereotyped suffer low self-esteem because they are denied unconditional positive regard, just because others such as some officers of the Ghana Education Service (GES), and a section of the society within which they find themselves stereotype them as those who are not academically good. For instance, Tagoe (2014), revealed that one problem distance education faces in Ghana is the prejudiced idea among some parents and students that offering regular university programmes gives students some prestige over distance education students. In addition, the distance education programme is wrongly perceived as a mode for those who were unable to pass the criteria for selection into regular school (Brown, 2009). This assertion is however diametrically opposed to what pertains at UCC, where students on both modes are admitted based on common admission criteria.

The prejudice may make distance education in Ghana less appealing to some graduates from Senior High Schools (Tagoe, 2014). They would prefer regular programmes to distance programmes. For some of them already on the UCC distance programme, their perceptions and judgments of themselves may be distorted due to the negative perceptions people hold about them and their

mode of study. This may lead to low organismic trust and a pessimistic view of themselves. With such a pessimistic view, they may not be confident of their abilities and potentials and so may not be gingered to put in their best to achieve academic excellence. On the other hand, students studying through the regular mode who possibly attract a better perception of themselves due to their mode of study may find themselves in a more congruent state and perform better.

Stereotype threat theory, on the other hand, highlights the position that a person who is an affiliate of a group that is negatively stereotyped can perform poorly in the area to which the stereotype threat relates, especially if this area is also crucial to the person's identity.

According to Stroessner and Good (2021) whenever people view themselves as affiliates of a stereotyped group, threats of the stereotype are activated which turns to weakens their performance because they become anxious that they may conform to the negative stereotypes about their group particularly when the prevailing circumstances magnify their vulnerability.

Distance education, though accepted and hailed by the majority of Ghanaians, has some stereotypes associated with it. As mentioned earlier some members of the general public have the notion that it is meant for the working class, it is stressful, low in quality and does not offer the same opportunity for constant physical interaction with colleagues and lecturers, access library and internet services as regular students do, therefore, students may not perform as regular students who have all these opportunities and facilities. This stereotype may give rise to stereotype threat in distance students when they have to write the same standard of examination as regular students, teach during off-campus teaching practice in the community schools, or compete for job opportunities with their colleagues from the regular mode. This may also affect individuals' collective self-esteem. Conversely, regular students may get stereotyped as inexperienced as compared to distance education students who may already be workers either as untrained teachers or college graduates seeking to upgrade themselves. This may pose a stereotype threat to regular students especially in teaching practice and may cause some anxiety which can suppress confidence and performance.

## **Empirical Review**

### *Relationship between Prejudice and Academic Achievement*

Many studies have revealed conflicting findings on the relationship between prejudice and academic achievement. Some studies revealed a negative correlation between prejudice and academic achievement; others, a positive correlation while others found no relationship at all. Benner et al. (2014), for instance, revealed a negative relationship between widespread perceptions of prejudice in the school and students' GPAs. However, there was no link between students' perception of prejudice and their academic achievement. Of all the factors considered in Benner et al.'s (2014) study, prejudice perceived within the school had the most pronounced effect on students' academic grades and achievement. Thus, the GPAs of students in schools where they perceived more prejudice among their mates turned out to be lower than those who did not perceive any form of prejudice. Institution-wide prejudiced behaviours exhibited against vulnerable groups can be more detrimental to their academic achievement than where few individual students perceive prejudice. Goldsmith (2004) reported that Black American students complained of prejudice and discrimination where student academic grouping is done and racial discrimination is obvious in the process. Contrary to the findings of Benner et al. (2014), Thomas (2011) found that racial prejudice of Black South Africans in tertiary institutions living in a multicultural setting, despite having heard of the negative perceptions that the outgroup holds against them, stayed unperturbed, and their collective self-esteem and academic achievement remained unaffected.

Caldwell-Günes and Silver (2015), similarly revealed that among a sample of 68,825 students sampled from three different ethnic backgrounds namely Black Americans, Caucasians and Hispanics found that student minorities excelled academically, despite racial and social prejudice within the school environment. Results from their investigation revealed that prejudice among peers predicted

students' academic achievement among Black American males and females and White females. However, prejudice did not predict the academic achievement of White males and Spanish males and females. There was also a strong positive correlation between perceptions of peer prejudice and academic achievement for Black American students. This implied that, the more prejudiced students perceived, the better their academic achievement. Caldwell-Günes and Silver (2015) explained this phenomenon by suggesting that sometimes negative experiences help individuals build positive coping skills to counter the crisis. The study also found that White students who were the dominant group reported the highest levels of prejudice indicating that probably the variables that were indicators of prejudice were not the same for Black Americans.

### *Relationship between Collective Self-Esteem and Academic Achievement*

Empirically, research has established a positive correlation between collective self-esteem and high academic achievement (Bettencourt, Charlton, Eubanks, Kernahan, & Fuller, 1999; Thomas, 2011). In the context of adjustment, Bettencourt, et al. (1999) found that students who adjusted well in school developed high collective self-esteem which was reflected in their high academic achievement by the end of the first year. Similarly, Thomas (2011) delved into the association among racial identity, collective self-esteem and academic self-efficacy involving students in a tertiary organization and found that students who were of Black origin including Africans, Zulus, Swazis, Sothos, Tswanas and Tsongas reported a statistically significant positive correlation between their total collective self-esteem score and their academic self-efficacy which indicated that as collective self-esteem increased, academic self-efficacy which is a good pointer to academic achievement also increased (Seaton, Marsh & Craven, 2010).

In a related study, Knisfsend et al (2020) reported that students who showed unconditional positive regard and were treated fairly developed a very strong sense of collective self-esteem which significantly predicted their academic outcomes better than their distance counterparts. Knisfsend et al further revealed collective self-esteem of the students was defined by the positive attitudes of society about their mode of study and their feelings of belonging to the conventional system devoid of discrimination and negative stereotypes. Thomas and Wagner (2016) likewise, compared racial identity and collective self-esteem in relation to academic self-efficacy of White majority and Black minority students in a higher academic institution, recording a statistically significant positive relationship between the collective self-esteem of the Black minority group and their academic self-efficacy and achievement. This, according to Seaton, Marsh and Craven (2010), academic self-efficacy is a positive indicator of academic achievement implying that as collective self-esteem increases students' academic achievement also increases. This supports Luhtahnen and Crocker's (1992) theory of the development of collective self-esteem that high levels of collective self-esteem are linked to high levels of academic achievement just in the same manner that high personal self-esteem correlates with high levels of academic achievement because both collective self-esteem and personal self-esteem develop from the academic self-concept which is an indicator of academic achievement. It also supports the findings of Cohen and Garcia (2008) and Miller-Cotto & Byrnes (2016) that collective self-esteem has a direct impact on the academic achievement of students. The findings imply that distance and regular students' collective support for one another in addition to positive feelings about their mode of study are capable of boosting their academic achievements.

### **Statement of the Problem**

Statistics from students' records at the University of Cape Coast (UCC) show that the majority of students at the university are made up of distance students. Student enrolment for the 2020/2021 academic year stands at 75,970 with a total of 20,042 regular students and 55,928 distance students (University of Cape Coast, 2022). This shows a relatively higher intake in distance learners as against regular learners. This is because most people desire to pursue higher education without leaving their

jobs and therefore would opt for distance programmes. However, there seems to be a perception among most students in tertiary institutions in Ghana and some members of the general public that students who offer distance education programmes instead of the regular programmes in the universities are low achievers academically in relation to their colleagues who pursue regular programmes. The reason is that they are not exposed to the knowledge that their counterparts who offer the regular programmes are exposed to due to the short duration of contact periods/hours (Rivera & Rice, 2002). This assertion, however, does not seem to hold for the distance programmes run by UCC since they practice the semi-remote distance form of learning where they meet periodically with their tutors for instruction (Mintah & Osei, 2014). Another reason for the perceived low academic achievement is that they do not have ample time to learn because their time is shared among family life, work and studies (Anhwere, 2013).

The perception held by some students and the general public is that distance education students are low academic achievers creates some form of prestige around regular school as against distance education thus warding off fresh graduates from senior high schools leaving distance education for workers and those unable to meet entry requirement for regular school (Tagoe, 2014). A preliminary interaction with some of the students pursuing distance education programmes revealed that some of them would have opted for the regular programmes if that option were easily accessible through study leave with pay. Unfortunately, many teachers who make up the amount of distance education learners offering education courses do not have this option since the Ghana Education Service (GES) grants study leave with pay facility to a very limited number of practising teachers.

Secondly, even if the Ghana Education Service made the offer of study leave available many would be unable to access it due to some unfavourable job and family circumstances. Some GES officers often make stereotypical comments about teachers studying in distance education mode as those with low quality and competence (Senyamator, et al., 2022). This was coupled with an incident that occurred in April 2019, in which a directive was given to District Directors of Education in Ghana to repost all graduate teachers from distance education from senior high schools to basic schools but was later withdrawn due to public outcry (Amarteifo, 2019). Ferdinand (2019) revealed that distance education was surrounded with some stereotypes and prejudice and students were aware of it. The problem, therefore, pertains to the fact that some distance education students have registered low efficacy and achievement thus, the distance education programme is surrounded by some form of stereotypes and prejudice to the extent that graduates from that distance mode are perceived to underperform on the field of work and do not match up to their counterparts from the conventional mode (Senyamator, et al., 2020).

The researchers, therefore, intended to find out if these stereotypes and prejudice held against distance education students and regular students have any relationship with their academic achievement, and if collective self-esteem of distance education and regular students has a relation with their academic achievement as evidenced in the literature (Owens & Massey 2011; Massey, & Probasco, 2010; Thomas, 2011; Bettencourt et al., 1999).

### *Hypothesis*

Stereotyping, prejudice and collective self-esteem will predict the academic achievement of regular and distance students of the University of Cape Coast.

## **Methodology**

### *Research Design, Population and Sampling*

This study employed the correlational design and the accessible population comprised all level 400 (final year) students offering education in three regions of Ghana chosen from stratified zones (The nation was stratified into three zones, namely Southern Zone (Central, Greater Accra, Western and

Volta regions), Middle Zone (Eastern, Ashanti and Brong-Ahafo regions) and the Northern Zone (Northern, Upper East and Upper West regions). The present study covered all these three zones with one region selected from each zone using the lottery method. Emphasis was laid on study centres where degree programmes in education are offered designated by the College of Distance Education (CoDE), and all level 400 students offering education on a regular mode in the College of Education Studies of the University of Cape Coast. Level 400 students were considered appropriate for the study because we were interested in their Cumulative Grade Point Aggregates (CGPA) available at the time of conducting the study. Level 400 students offering education programmes at CoDE in the regions chosen for the study were 1, 917 and level 400 regular students offering education in the College of Education Studies of the University of Cape Coast were 1,405. Thus, the total accessible population of the study was 3,322.

Based on the Krejcie and Morgan (as cited in KENPRO, 2012) sampling criteria, sample sizes for the population of 1,405 regular level 400 students was 306, and that of 1,917 level 400 distance learners was 322 were selected for the study using a multistage sampling technique. The total sample size of the study, therefore, was 628. The University of Cape Coast offers similar undergraduate education programmes both on the regular and distance modes so then it was possible to compare students offering similar programmes on different modes.

Purposive sampling was used to select education centres in the selected regions and the final year degree (level 400) students offering education in the distance mode. Subsequently, proportionate stratified and simple random sampling was used to select male and female participants from the selected study centres offering degree programmes within the regions chosen from the zones designated by CoDE.

For the regular mode, the Faculty of Educational Studies, Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences Education, Faculty of Science and Technology Education and Faculty of Educational Foundations were purposively chosen from the College of Education Studies. A stratified and simple random sampling method was used to select respondents in each department.

### *Data Collection Instruments*

Two sets of questionnaires, Stereotyping Assessment Questionnaires (SAQ) for both Distance Education Students and Regular Education Students (see Appendix A for sample), were adapted for the study. The two sets of questionnaires were designed in a similar way but with a few changes in the wording to suit the two categories of students. The first part (Section A) measured collective self-esteem and was an adapted version of Luhtanen and Crocker's (1992) 16-item Collective Self-esteem Scale.

The collective Self-esteem Scale consisted of four subscales, namely; membership esteem, private collective self-esteem (personal judgments of how good one's social group was), public collective self-esteem (a person's judgment about how he or she thought others assessed his or her social groups), and importance to identity (evaluation of how significant a person's membership in a social group was to the person's self-concept).

The third and fourth parts, (Sections B and C), which measured stereotyping and prejudice respectively were adapted versions of the seven-point Stigma Consciousness Questionnaire (Pinel, 1999). This measured how individuals differed in their perception and reaction to stereotyping and prejudice. The minimum to maximum range scores were 0 - 60. The higher the stigma consciousness score, the higher the level of prejudice or stereotyping and the lower the score, the lower the degree of prejudice or stereotyping experienced. Academic achievement was measured by students' CGPA. The scale was adopted for the study due to its ability to offer the most efficacious and varied levels of agreement, quality, and disagreement to the respondents for better insights into the issues under investigation to ensure an accurate measure of their perceptions and feelings (Cornell, 2023). Despite the usefulness of the Likert scale, it is worth acknowledging the fact that there are some criticisms

about its averaging as done in this study as it could not account for the relevance of grasping and understanding the variability among respondents' views and opinions (Jamieson, 2004).

### *Validity and Reliability of Data Collection Instruments*

The face and content validity of the survey questionnaires on stereotyping, prejudice, collective self-esteem and academic achievement of distance and regular students were evaluated by two senior academic colleagues in measurement and evaluation who are well-acquainted with instrument development in accordance with the objectives of the study, evaluated their quality in terms measuring the constructs they were intended for and necessary corrections pointed out were effected. The adapted instruments were pilot-tested on 35 regular students and 40 distance students at the Department of Education in the University of Education, Winneba to establish their reliability and practicability in the Ghanaian context. The overall Cronbach's Alpha reliability value for all the 36 items on the distance students' questionnaire stood at .793 with Alpha estimates of .777, .761 and .841 for the Collective Self-esteem Scale (CSES), Stereotype Scale (STS) and Prejudice Scale (PREJ) sub-scales respectively. That of the regular students' questionnaire was .826 with reliability estimates of .835, .828 and .817 for the Collective Self-esteem Scale (CSES), Stereotype Scale (STS), and Prejudice Scale (PREJ) sub-scales respectively.

### *Ethical Issues and Data Collection*

This study took into consideration some ethical issues. These involved the right to privacy, voluntary participation, anonymity and confidentiality. To legitimise these, ethical clearance from the Institutional Review Board of the University of Cape Coast (CES-ERB/ucc.edu/v4/20-39) was obtained. The purpose of the study was disclosed to the respondents, and before they responded to the questionnaire, they filled out consent forms and were assured of anonymity and confidentiality. Their names were, therefore, not required on the instruments and could withdraw from the study at any time without giving any reasons.

Course tutors, centre and regional coordinators helped in administering the questionnaires. At the end of the data collection process, 310 completed questionnaires were retrieved from students in the distance mode and 285 from students in the regular mode which resulted in 96% and 93% response rates for distance and regular students respectively.

### *Data Processing and Analysis*

Data for the overarching hypothesis was analysed using linear multiple regression analysis. The hypothesis was split into two parts for the purpose of clarity and analysed separately. The first part tested how stereotyping, prejudice and collective self-esteem predicted the academic achievement of regular students, and the other, how these same predictor variables predicted the academic achievement of distance education students.

#### *First Part of the Overarching Hypothesis: Stereotyping, Prejudice and Collective Self-Esteem will Predict the Academic Achievement of Regular Education Students.*

This hypothesis sought to examine whether stereotyping, prejudice and collective self-esteem predicted the academic achievement of regular and distance students of the University of Cape Coast.

In order to achieve the hypothesis, linear multiple regression was used. In this case, there are three predictor variables (stereotyping, prejudice and collective self-esteem) and an outcome variable (academic achievement). Composite scores were calculated with the aid of SPSS which transformed the data gathered on the predictor variables into continuous variables since they were originally measured categorically (measured on a 4-point scale; 1- Strongly Disagree (SD), 2- Disagree (D), 3 -



Agree (A), 4- Strongly Agree (SA). Though the conversion of the scale was done despite some criticisms against the conversion of original scales, it was done to meet the assumptions underlying regression analyses requiring the use of unilinear scales that accommodate continuous variables. Assumptions such as the dependent variable should be continuous and there should be more than one predictor variable, were fulfilled. The outcome variable was continuous since respondents' CGPAs ranged from 1.0 to 4.0. Other assumptions such as the relationship between each of the predictor and outcome variables were also met. Collective self-esteem had a very weak and positive correlation with CGPA ( $r = 0.07, p = .041$ ), stereotyping also had a weak and negative correlation with CGPA ( $r = -0.150, p = 0.008$ ) and prejudice was negatively correlated with CGPA ( $r = -0.074, p = 0.001$ ).

To check for normality, it was observed that the residual errors were approximately normally distributed as determined by the normal Q-Q plot. To check for multicollinearity the variance inflation factor (VIF) was used. It was uncovered that the VIF values were less than 10 for all the predictors (collective self-esteem had a VIF value of 1.113, stereotyping had a value of 1.381 whereas prejudice recorded a VIF value of 1.567). The homoscedasticity assumption was fulfilled since there was no clear pattern of the regression standard predicted value. A summary of the linear multiple regression to test for the hypothesis at a 5% significance level is presented in Tables 1 and 2 respective

**Table 1: Multiple Regression Analysis on Stereotyping, Prejudice and Collective Self-Esteem and Academic Achievement of Regular Students**

Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients			Collinearity Statistics	
		B	Std. Error	Beta	t	Sig.	Tolerance	VIF
1	(Constant)	2.945	.183		16.065	.000		
	Collective self-esteem	.016	.007	.137	2.368	.019	.898	1.012
	Stereotyping	-.016	.005	-.200	-3.465	.001	.724	1.381
Model	R	R Square		Adjusted R Square		Sig.		
1	.240 <sup>a</sup>	.058		.051		.000		

a. Predictors: (Constant), collective self-esteem, stereotyping

b. Dependent Variable: CGPA

Source: Field survey (2022)

From Table 1, collective self-esteem (Beta = 0.137,  $p < 0.05$ ) and stereotyping (Beta = -0.200,  $p < 0.05$ ) are significantly the best predictors of students' CGPA (achievement). However, whereas collective self-esteem is positively related to CGPA, stereotyping is negatively related to CGPA. Collective self-esteem is thus a positive significant predictor of CGPA. This suggests that high levels of collective self-esteem are likely to lead to high levels of CGPA attainment. On the other hand, the negative, weak but significant predictive ability of stereotyping on CGPA suggests that higher levels of stereotyping are likely to lead to low levels of CGPA attainment and vice versa. Prejudice is not a significant predictor of CGPA based on the results of the study.

Results from Table 1 show that stereotyping, prejudice and collective self-esteem predicted the academic achievement of regular education students of the University of Cape Coast ( $R = 0.240a, p < 0.05$ ). This means that the hypothesis that "Stereotyping, prejudice and collective self-esteem will predict academic achievement of regular students of the University of Cape Coast" is accepted. From the results, the predictor variables: stereotyping, prejudice and collective self-esteem only account for 5.8% of the variation in students' academic achievement. This suggests that

approximately 94.2% of other variables that have not been considered in this study could account for the variations in students' academic achievement as compared to their stereotyping, prejudice and collective self-esteem

### *Second Part of the Overarching Hypothesis*

This hypothesis tested that; stereotyping, prejudice and collective self-esteem will not predict the academic achievement of distance education students of the University of Cape Coast. Collective self-esteem had a very weak and positive correlation with CGPA ( $r = 0.07$ ,  $p = .041$ ), stereotyping also had a weak and negative correlation with CGPA ( $r = -0.150$ ,  $p = 0.008$ ) and prejudice was negatively correlated with CGPA ( $r = -0.074$ ,  $p = 0.001$ ).

The results are presented in Table 2.

**Table 2: Multiple Regression Analysis on Stereotyping, Prejudice and Collective Self-Esteem and Academic Achievement of Distance Education Students**

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Sig.
1	.156 <sup>a</sup>	.024	.015	.055

a. Predictors: (Constant), prejudice, collective self-esteem, stereotyping

b. Dependent Variable: CGPA

Source: Field survey (2022)

Based on the result shown in Table 2, stereotyping, prejudice and collective self-esteem are not significant predictors of academic achievement of distance education students of the University of Cape Coast ( $R = 0.156$ ,  $p > 0.05$ ). This means that the hypothesis that "Stereotyping, prejudice and collective self-esteem will not predict academic achievement of distance education students" is retained. From the results, the predictor variables: stereotyping, prejudice and collective self-esteem only account for 2.4% in the variation of distance education students' academic achievement. Since stereotyping, prejudice and collective self-esteem were not significant predictors of distance education students' academic achievement, further analysis to determine the relative contribution of the predictor variables was not done.

### **Discussion of Findings**

From the results, collective self-esteem was shown to be a positive and significant predictor of academic achievement for regular education students. This finding corroborates most of the empirical data on the fact that positive levels of collective self-esteem may lead to increased academic achievement (Cohen & Garcia, 2008; Miller-Cotto & Byrnes, 2016). The present finding supports Rogers' (1961) theory of the development of the self-concept that people who believe in themselves and therefore possess organismic trust leading to high self-esteem are likely to be high achievers. Likewise, people who believe in their group and what they can do are likely to possess high collective self-esteem which can lead to high general achievement levels among members. The present finding is also in consonance with that of Miller-Cotto and Byrnes, 2016), who found that collective self-esteem has a positive correlation with academic achievement. Furthermore, stereotyping was also shown to predict academic achievement, but this time, negatively, which is in line with existing literature. This finding confirms the stereotype threat theory by Steele and Aronson (1995) that negative stereotypes about one's social group could stir up anxiety in an individual which could inhibit the person's performance on standardised tests.

Results from this study, however, indicated that prejudice does not predict the academic achievement of regular students and was therefore not included in the final model. Though a surprising outcome, this confirms the finding of Benner et al., (2014), who found that there was no statistically significant relationship between students' perception of prejudice and academic performance. However, it contradicts other empirical reports such as Lehman (2012) and Mckown (2005, where prejudice has been reported to have a negative relationship with academic achievement. It suffices, therefore, to conclude that the kind of relationship that exists between prejudice and academic performance is situation or institution-specific.

The second aspect of the overarching hypothesis was to examine the predictive abilities of stereotyping, prejudice and collective self-esteem on the academic achievement of distance education students. Results indicated that stereotyping, prejudice and collective self-esteem were not significant predictors of distance education students' academic achievement. In fact, 97.6% of factors that were not covered in this study could account for variations in students' academic achievement, which may include student support systems such as the provision of library facilities, guidance and counselling services and student information services.

This result could also suggest that in Ghana, though distance students may have heard of these stereotypes and prejudice with respect to their mode of study, other issues such as pursuing higher education to be better paid or promoted in their jobs were of more importance to them than the stereotypes associated with their mode of study. For instance, most distance learners are already employed and that may be a source of pride and privilege for them since most regular students would have to go looking for jobs after completion.

Furthermore, one can argue that the issue of closeness and mingling with regular students on the same campus, which is a necessary condition for comparison and competition is absent. This could be the reason for the absence of the negative impact of prejudice and stereotyping on them. This is in line with Thomas and Wagner (2016), and Downie et al. (2006), who revealed that the basis for comparison and its concomitant effects such as stereotyping and prejudice are contextual and based on proximity.

This result confirms that of Benner et al. (2014), who found that there was a relationship between students' perceptions of peer prejudice and their grade point average. They concluded that students' subjective perceptions of peer prejudice were not related to their GPAs. It also buttresses the revelation of Caldwell-Günes and Silver (2015), Salvo, Shelton and Welch (2019), and Thomas (2011) who noted that, for some stereotyped and prejudiced groups of students who find themselves in multicultural settings, in spite of having heard the negative perceptions that the out-group holds against them, stayed unaffected.

### **Policy Implications of the Study**

The policy framework put in place by the Government of Ghana on tertiary education with respect to distance education (DE) focuses on increasing access to higher education. Ghanaian Public Universities responded to the national policy by running DE programmes since 1996. The University of Education, Winneba (UEW) became the first tertiary institution in Ghana to start DE programmes followed by the University of Cape Coast (UCC) and the University of Ghana (UG) in 2001 (Osei, Dontwi & Mensah, 2013). Enrolment in DE in the country has seen a significant boost. However, there is a lack of policy for DE dual-mode institutions on how to achieve quality and parity in performance and achievement on regular and distance modes devoid of stereotypes of study modes, prejudice and so on. Therefore, in the context of the findings of this study where despite no predictor/relation affecting the GPA of DE in terms of collective self-esteem, prejudice and stereotype it is still imperative to make sure that there are policy directives and reorientations by the government and the dual-mode institutions including UCC on the provision of quality learning facilities for DE learners comparable to that of the conventional mode to ensure equity or parity in terms of academic achievement. The findings of this study could offer a policy foundation on which

operative counselling services could be structured for students and introduce courses on prejudice and stereotyping into the core curriculum to sensitise students about their detrimental effects on academic achievement and how to manage them.

Ghana's goal of ensuring access to education at the second cycle and tertiary levels is geared toward adequately addressing the specific needs of its citizens to improve academic outcomes of students and enhance the standard of their lives (Government of Ghana, 2002). It is also to provide an alternative approach to the conventional models in higher education and ensure prudent and efficient use of material and human resources (Government of Ghana, 2002).

In tandem with the foregoing, the trend in Ghana's DE shows that the Cape Coast University and the University of Education, Winneba produce over 70% of all DE public university enrolment in Ghana. Distance enrolment has seen a 39.4% increase (Alberta et al, 2016). Postgraduate school admission was 5% of total distance enrolment. Kwame Nkrumah University of Science and Technology admits 85% of all second-degree distance learners. The total enrolment in DE in Ghana is more than double that of regular student admission in public universities with over 8000 yearly upsurges in admission. Hence regulation for this sector in terms of its quality and performance comparable to the traditional modes by policy is imperative (Alberta et al, 2016).

The trajectory of DE in Ghana indicates a massive expansion. The trend of technology is likely to render this sector of learning very robust and competitive. The question therefore arising is the policy framework within which DE would operate in Ghana. Currently, there are no national standards, conventions or policies for DE in Ghana. This lacunar in policing of the sector will be a threat to the sector in the future of how the major stakeholders view its quality and performance thereby creating more challenges than positives. This explains why a section of Ghanaians presently have negative stereotypic views of DE in general and does not make DE appealing to Senior High School graduates (Tagoe, 2014). This highlights Nyerere, et. al (as cited in Alberta, Ankomah-Asare, Nicholas & Nsowah, 2016) when they revealed that:

The absence of clearly defined national distance education policies in most African countries poses another challenge. Policies are needed to provide a framework for the development of distance education. With the exception of South Africa, few African countries have clearly defined national policies to guide the development of distance education in their respective countries. The absence of such policies is a clear obstacle to the development of distance education (p, 3).

Governmental operative policy framework regulating DE in Ghana specifically on technological infrastructure, quality human resources in DE management, and common enrollment requirements driven by the Ministry of Education and enforced by the National Council for Tertiary Education would go a long way to engender confidence in the general public and all stakeholders including the GES which is the largest employer of DE products (teachers). This would go a long way to abate the stereotypic views of some stakeholders and the general public about the Ghanaian DE system.

### **Limitations of the Study**

This study, despite its useful revelations, has a number of limitations. The first one has to do with the reliance on self-reports (questionnaires). Social desirability could not be ruled out in the responses given. The students might not have given their honest opinions and attitudes since the survey may have probed into their privacy and their emotions making them report desirable information about their mode of study rather than what actually pertains. Lastly, the use of the Cumulative Grade Point Average (GPA) to assess students' academic achievement was a limitation since students on the regular and distance modes of the university wrote exams of equivalent difficulty levels and did not write a common or same examination and were not taught by the same instructors. Thus, the use of their CGPA might not be a perfect means of assessing their academic achievements.

## Conclusion and Recommendations

Collective self-esteem is an important determiner of academic achievement of students pursuing degree programmes in education by regular mode at UCC. Stereotyping has detrimental effects on the academic achievement of students pursuing degree programmes in education by regular mode at UCC. Conversely, collective self-esteem, stereotyping and prejudice did not predict the academic achievement of distance learners.

We, therefore, conclude that though distance students may have heard of these stereotypes and prejudice with respect to their mode of study, other issues including pursuing higher education to achieve job upgrades, are of more importance to them than the stereotypes associated with their mode of study. Based on the findings and conclusions of this study, the following recommendations are presented:

1. Since collective self-esteem predicts the academic achievement of regular students, their collective pride and support for one another as regular students should be encouraged by UCC management and counsellors to boost their collective self-esteem and academic achievement.
2. Stereotyping, prejudice and collective self-esteem are not predictors of academic achievement of distance education students of UCC. They should, therefore, be encouraged to continue not to allow stereotypes concerning their mode of study to define their choice of higher education and prospects for academic growth. This would help them develop closer connections with members of the out-group (regular students) and other members of society to correct and erase any stereotypical beliefs that they have about them.
3. The UCC management should put in place regular seminars to address among others the quality alternative mode of its distance education which is comparable to the regular system and its attendant advantages to enable all major stakeholders (students, prospective students and GES) to appreciate thereby engendering confidence in them about it, and to abate the stereotypic ideas some of them hold about DE.

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## APPENDIX A

### Stereotyping Assessment Questionnaire for Education Students (Distance Mode)

#### SECTION A

##### BACKGROUND CHARACTERISTICS OF RESPONDENTS

Please tick (v) or provide responses to the questions which follow:

1. Please indicate your gender by ticking in the relevant box  
a. Male [ ]    b. Female [ ]
2. Please indicate your mode of study by ticking in the relevant box  
a. Regular student [ ]    b. Distance student [ ]
3. Please indicate your employment status by ticking in the relevant box  
a. Employed [ ]    b. Unemployed [ ]
4. Please indicate your marital status  
a. Single [ ]    b. Married [ ]
5. Please indicate your age  
Age: .....
6. Please indicate your CGPA as at level 300  
CGPA: ..... For triangulation purposes and by your consent this information would also be collected from the Students Record and Management Unit of UCC.



**SECTION B**  
**COLLECTIVE SELF-ESTEEM SCALE**

Collective self-esteem refers to how people view themselves based on their membership to a social group or category to which they belong. Please indicate your level of agreement to the following statements that focus on Collective Self-esteem. Circle the number and the letters of the 4-point scale (1- *strongly disagree*, 4- *strongly agree*) that best describes how that statement applies to the way you see yourself as being a member of distance education students. Please make sure you do not omit any item.

1- Strongly Disagree (SD), 2- Disagree (D), 3- Agree (A), 4- Strongly Agree (SA)

No.	Collective Self-Esteem Scale	SD	D	A	SA
1	I feel that I am worthy to be a distance education student.	1	2	3	4
2	I often regret that I am a distance education student.	1	2	3	4
3	Overall, being a distance education student is considered good by other people.	1	2	3	4
4	Overall, being a distance education student has very little to do with how I feel about myself.	1	2	3	4
5	I feel I don't contribute much to the distance education students' group that I belong to.	1	2	3	4
6	In general, I'm glad to be a distance education student.	1	2	3	4
7	Most people consider distance education students to be rather ineffective at the workplace than regular education students.	1	2	3	4
8	Being a distance education student is an important reflection of who I am.	1	2	3	4
9	I participate in all the various distance education students' group activities on campus and even outside campus.	1	2	3	4
10	I often feel that being a distance education student is not anything to boast about.	1	2	3	4
11	In general, other people respect distance education students.	1	2	3	4
12	Being a distance education student is not important to my sense of what kind of a person I am.	1	2	3	4
13	I often feel that I'm not very useful to the distance education students' group. I do not participate nor offer anything to the group's activities.	1	2	3	4
14	I feel good about being a distance education student.	1	2	3	4
15	In general, other people think that being a distance education student is not anything to be so proud of.	1	2	3	4
16	In general, being a distance education student is an important part of my self-image.	1	2	3	4

**SECTION C**  
**STEREOTYPING SCALE**

Stereotypes are knowledge, beliefs, traits, attributes and expectations a person or group of people have about another particular social groups which can have an effect on the target's personality. On a scale of 1-4, indicate the extent to which you agree or disagree with these statements as a distance education student. Tick (✓) where applicable.

1- Strongly Disagree (SD), 2- Disagree (D), 3- Agree (A), 4- Strongly Agree (SA)

No	Statement	SD	D	A	SA
1	What people say about distance education students can negatively affect my opportunity of getting a good job as compared to regular students.	1	2	3	4
2	I am never worried when people see me as a regular education student.	1	2	3	4
3	When interacting with regular education students, I sometimes feel that they perceive me differently because I am a distance education student.	1	2	3	4
4	Most regular education students judge distance education students based on their mode of study.	1	2	3	4
5	My being a distance education student does not influence the way regular students behave towards me.	1	2	3	4
6	I almost never think of the fact that I am a distance education student whenever I interact with regular education students. They make me feel like I am one of them.	1	2	3	4
7	My being a distance education student does not influence how other people in society including officers in the education sector behave towards me.	1	2	3	4
8	Most people have a lot of negative thoughts about distance education students and they sometimes say so.	1	2	3	4
9	I often realise that regular students are proud and they look down on distance students.	1	2	3	4
10	Most people have a problem viewing distance education students as being equal to regular education students.	1	2	3	4

**SECTION D  
PREJUDICE SCALE**

Prejudice is the preconceived judgment or opinion a person or group of people in society make about another person or another group of people based on some social beliefs, and it is sometimes accompanied by unreasonable discrimination. On a scale of 1-4, indicate the extent to which you agree or disagree with these statements as a distance education student. Tick (v) where applicable.

1- Strongly Disagree (SD), 2- Disagree (D), 3- Agree (A), 4- Strongly Agree (SA)

No	Statement	SD	D	A	SA
1	The way people treat distance education students makes me realise that regular students stand a chance of getting better jobs.	1	2	3	4
2	I am never worried when people see me as a distance education student	1	2	3	4
3	When interacting with regular education students, I sometimes feel that they show an attitude of dislike for me because I am a distance education student.	1	2	3	4
4	Most people in society discriminate against distance education students based on their mode of study.	1	2	3	4
5	My being a distance education student does not influence the way regular students relate with me.	1	2	3	4
6	I do not feel bad as a distance education student whenever I interact with regular education students. They treat me like I am one of them.	1	2	3	4
7	My being a distance education student does not influence how other people in society such as employers relate with me.	1	2	3	4
8	Most people have a lot of preconceived negative opinions about distance education students and sometimes they show it.	1	2	3	4
9	I often observe that regular education students do not respect distance education students.	1	2	3	4
10	Most people have a problem treating distance education students as being equal to regular education students.	1	2	3	4