Understanding ODL Learner Profiles/Characteristics

Acknowledgement:

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Seminar Series

Introduction

1. Determining the characteristics and profile of ODL learners may not necessarily guarantee success in a distance education course or program.

2. However, it could significantly help tutors/facilitators/faculty staff /management understand

   (a) who is likely to participate in ODL and online learning,

   (b) what factors or motivators contribute to a successful ODL including online learning , and

   (c) the potential barriers deterring some students from participating in or successfully completing an ODL and an online course/program.

Importance of Identifying Learner Characteristics/Profiling

- All HEI's, more so for Open and Distance Learning (ODL) institutions need to develop good practice and understanding in enhancing learner experience and success;

- To match learner profile with the characteristic profile required for successful ODL, including online learning;

- To suggest some recommendations, based on the findings of this exploratory study on how OUM can further enhance its learners' experience and success.

Methodology

1) Uses a survey questionnaire administered online via survey monkey. Survey was opened from 18 Feb-20 April 2016;

2) The Instrument: Adapted from the Personality Inventory developed by the Malaysian Examination Board, 2013. The original instrument consists of 150 items clustered under 15 constructs. For this work, it was modified to 70 items clustered under 11 constructs. EFA and Reliability test led to a final instrument consisting of 49 items under 3 major constructs of Personality, Attitude and Motivation. A 4 Likert-type scale was used.

3) The sample: A total of 637 out of a population of 2970 (21.4%) first semester learners of Jan 2016 Intake. 438 complete responses were used (69%).

4) Data Analysis: (i) EFA – 15 constructs but reduced to 9 because of the very few items (6 constructs were taken out). (ii) Descriptive statistics and cross tabulation.

The Reliability Test

	Cronbach's Alpha	Cronbach's Alpha based on Standardized Items	N of Items
Overall	**0.953**	**0.956**	**49**
Personality	0.900	0.902	19
1) Openness to Experience	0.830	0.831	6
2) Conscientiousness	0.690	0.691	4
3) Autonomous	0.790	0.795	5
4) Leadership	0.751	0.744	4
Attitude	0.927	0.928	15
1) Towards Career	0.895	0.897	8
2) Towards Education	0.881	0.885	7
Motivation	0.863	0.869	15
1) Power	0.806	0.814	5
2) Achievement	0.825	0.829	6
3) Affiliation	0.757	0.757	4

Demographic Profile

Variables		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent
Gender	Male	170	38.8	39.2
	Female	264	60.3	60.8
	Missing	4	0.9	
	Total	**438**	**100.0**	**100.0**
Age	18 to 24	145	33.1	33.1
	25 - 34	202	46.1	46.1
	35 - 44	75	17.1	17.1
	45 - 54	13	3.0	3.0
	55 - 64	3	0.7	0.7
	Missing	0	0.0	
	Total	**438**	**100.0**	**100.0**
Faculty	FASS	71	16.2	16.2
	FEL	92	21.0	21.0
	FONAS	21	4.8	4.8
	FST	86	19.6	19.6
	OUM Business School	168	38.4	38.4
	Missing	0	0.0	
	Total	**438**	**100.0**	**100.0**

Variables		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent
Income (RM)	Less than 999	46	10.5	11.4
	1,000 – 1,999	148	33.8	36.7
	2,000 – 2,999	116	26.5	28.8
	3,000 – 3,999	46	10.5	11.4
	4,000 – 4,999	21	4.8	5.2
	5,000 and Above	26	5.9	6.5
	Missing	35	8.0	
	Total	**438**	**100.0**	**100.0**
Entry Qualification	SRP	2	0.5	0.5
	SPM	180	41.1	41.1
	STPM/Diploma or equivalent	227	51.8	51.8
	Bachelor Degree	25	5.7	5.7
	Masters Degree	4	.9	.9
	Missing	0	0.0	
	Total	**438**	**100.0**	**100.0**

Demographic Profile

Faculty	Frequency	Percent	Cumulative Percent
Faculty of Applied Social Sciences (FASS)	71	16.2	16.2
Faculty of Education and Languages (FEL)	92	21.0	37.2
Faculty of Nursing and Allied Health Sciences (FONAS)	21	4.8	42.0
Faculty of Science & Technology (FST)	86	19.6	61.6
OUM Business School	168	38.4	100.0
Total	438	100.0	

Descriptive Statistics

Item Means

CONSTRUCTS	ITEMS	MEANS	SD	%
Personality: Opennes to experience	Everywhere I go, I am out looking for new things or experience	3.34	0.57	83.51
	I view challenging situations as an opportunity to grow and learn	3.36	0.53	83.91
	Creative ideas inspire me	3.32	0.57	82.94
	I like to try new things	3.37	0.55	84.19
	I appreciate new innovation	3.33	0.50	83.33
	I always find new ways to solve problem	3.20	0.56	79.97
Personality: Conscientiousness	I always come up with original ideas	2.95	0.59	73.80
	I will make careful judgement before making any conclusion	3.30	0.56	82.54
	I think first before I act upon something	3.28	0.57	81.96
	I like to find the source to a problem	3.11	0.57	77.86
Personality: Autonomous	I can make my own decision	3.24	0.59	80.99
	I can complete a task without the help from others	2.67	0.73	66.78
	I can solve problems on my own	2.95	0.63	73.69
	I am confident with the decision that I made	3.12	0.56	77.91
	I can act upon a situation without any direction from my superior	2.84	0.67	71.06
Personality: Leadership	I actively seek as much information as I can in a new situation	3.24	0.48	81.05
	I like to be in charge of things and people	2.97	0.66	74.20
	If I disagree with someone, I let them know	3.00	0.65	74.89
	I take the initiatives to lead others	2.96	0.63	74.03

CONSTRUCTS	ITEMS	MEANS	SD	%
Attitude towards Career	I am committed in my work	3.36	0.52	84.02
	I am an independent person	3.30	0.58	82.42
	I like to explore new things in my career	3.41	0.54	85.22
	I take my job seriously	3.41	0.54	85.28
	I work very hard to achieve my goal	3.43	0.52	85.85
	I make the effort to improve myself professionally	3.46	0.52	86.42
	I find it easy to work if I have some knowledge in what I do	3.48	0.53	87.10
	I am clear about what I should accomplish	3.26	0.55	81.57
Attitude towards Education	Enrolling in OUM is fun	3.24	0.56	80.88
	Learning new things is enjoyable	3.43	0.51	85.67
	Being an OUM learner makes me feel special	3.28	0.57	82.02
	I learn more about my job in OUM	3.09	0.63	77.17
	The content of the course that I take is interesting	3.26	0.52	81.39
	I cherish what I learn in OUM	3.25	0.50	81.34
	I love what I do for a living	3.30	0.60	82.54
Motivation: Power	I feel glad when other people accept my ideas	3.29	0.51	82.19
	I like when other people seek my advice	3.22	0.55	80.59
	I feel satisfied if I have the final say	3.08	0.60	76.88
	It is important to me to be liked by others	2.93	0.71	73.29
	I enjoy spending leisure time with my co-workers	3.02	0.61	75.51
Motivation: Achievement	I am determined to win any competition that I take part in	3.11	0.60	77.63
	I like challenges	3.18	0.54	79.51
	I am motivated by success stories	3.27	0.55	81.74
	I am always pursuing success	3.21	0.55	80.31
	I am not afraid of failures	3.05	0.65	76.31
	I believe in the saying "When there's a will there's a way"	3.39	0.54	84.76
Motivation: Affiliation	I enjoy belonging to clubs, groups and society	2.96	0.69	73.92
	I would rather work with people than work alone	3.01	0.69	75.17
	I enjoy being in a crowd	2.70	0.78	67.52
	I believe in the saying "The more the merrier"	3.03	0.67	75.74

Defining High and Low Categories

1) The ratings used in the survey was a 4-Likert-type scale:

   1= strongly disagree, 2=Disagree, 3=Agree, 4=Strongly agree

2) Categories:

   a) % High = (No. of 3 and 4 ratings) / total rating *100

   b) % Low = (No. of 1 and 2 ratings) / total rating *100

Categories of Learners

Personality	High (%)	Low (%)
1) Openness to Experience	96.27	3.73
2) Conscientiousness	90.36	9.65
3) Autonomous	78.31	21.69
4) Leadership	84.42	15.58

Attitude	High (%)	Low (%)
1) Towards Career	97.34	2.66
2) Towards Education	94.56	5.44

Motivation	High (%)	Low (%)
1) Power	88.26	11.74
2) Achievement	92.01	7.99
3) Affiliation	78.20	21.80

Results

1) A very high % of respondents are in the high category of personality, attitude and motivation (78 -96%)

2) However, there are 3 areas that need to be highlighted:

   Under personality:

   a) 21.69% of respondents are in the low category of *autonomous*;
      (I can complete a task without the help from others; I can solve problems on my own; I can act upon a situation without any direction from my superior – with means <3.00), and

   b) 15.58% in the low category of *leadership*
      (I like to be in charge of things and people, I take the initiatives to lead others)

3) Under motivation :

   a) 21.8% of respondents fall under the low category of *affiliation*
      (I enjoy belonging to clubs, groups and society, I enjoy being in a crowd)

Cross Tabulation

Why cross tabulate?

To see how personality, attitude and motivation change with age, entry qualification and income.

1. Age against Personality, Attitude and Motivation;

2. Entry Qualification against Personality, Attitude and Motivation; and
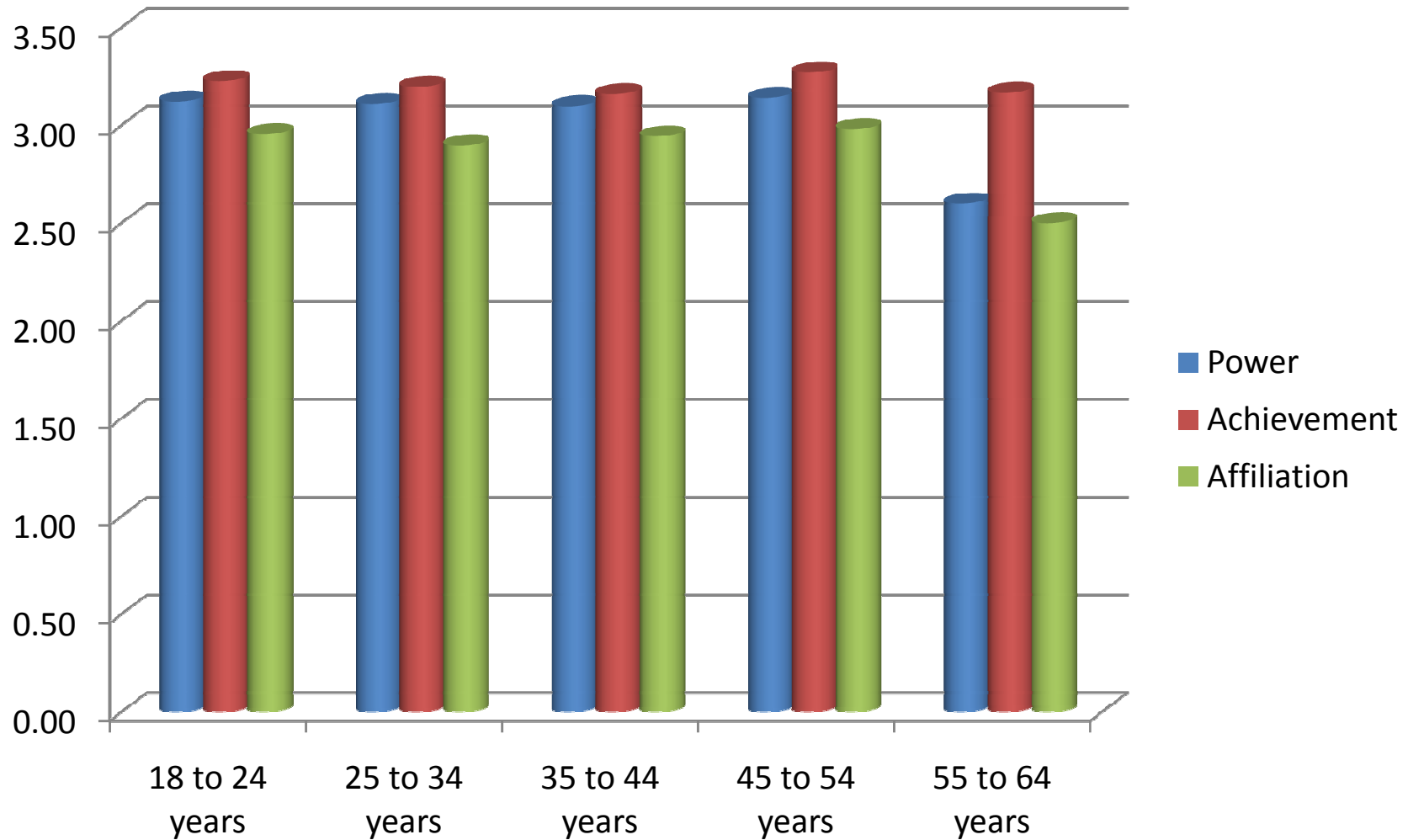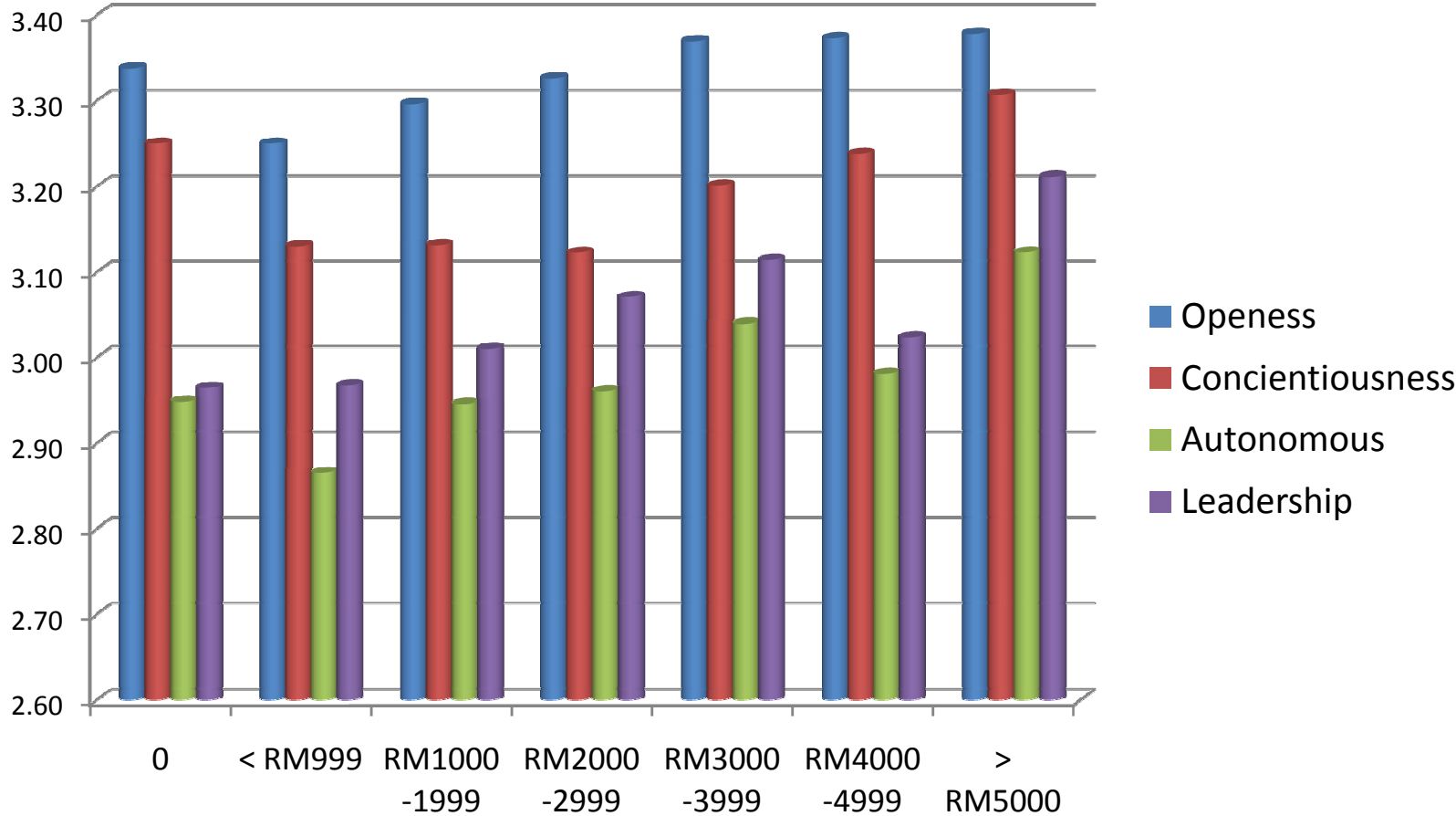
3. Personal Income against Personality, Attitude and Motivation.

Observation 1

- <u>Age/Personality</u>: Openness to experience, Conscientiousness, Autonomous and Leadership
  - ➢ Lowest: autonomous; Highest: openness to experience for all age groups
  - ➢ All 4 personality increases with age, and decrease for the 55-64 age group.

- <u>Age/Attitude:</u> Attitude toward career, Attitude towards education
  - ➢ Higher in attitude towards career for all age groups
  - ➢ Both attitudes increase with age group, and decrease for 55-64 age group

- <u>Age/Motivation:</u> Power, Achievement, Affiliation
  - ➢ Lowest : affiliation and highest: achievement for all age groups
  - ➢ Level of motivation do not change with age except for a decrease for 55-64 age group

Age against Personality
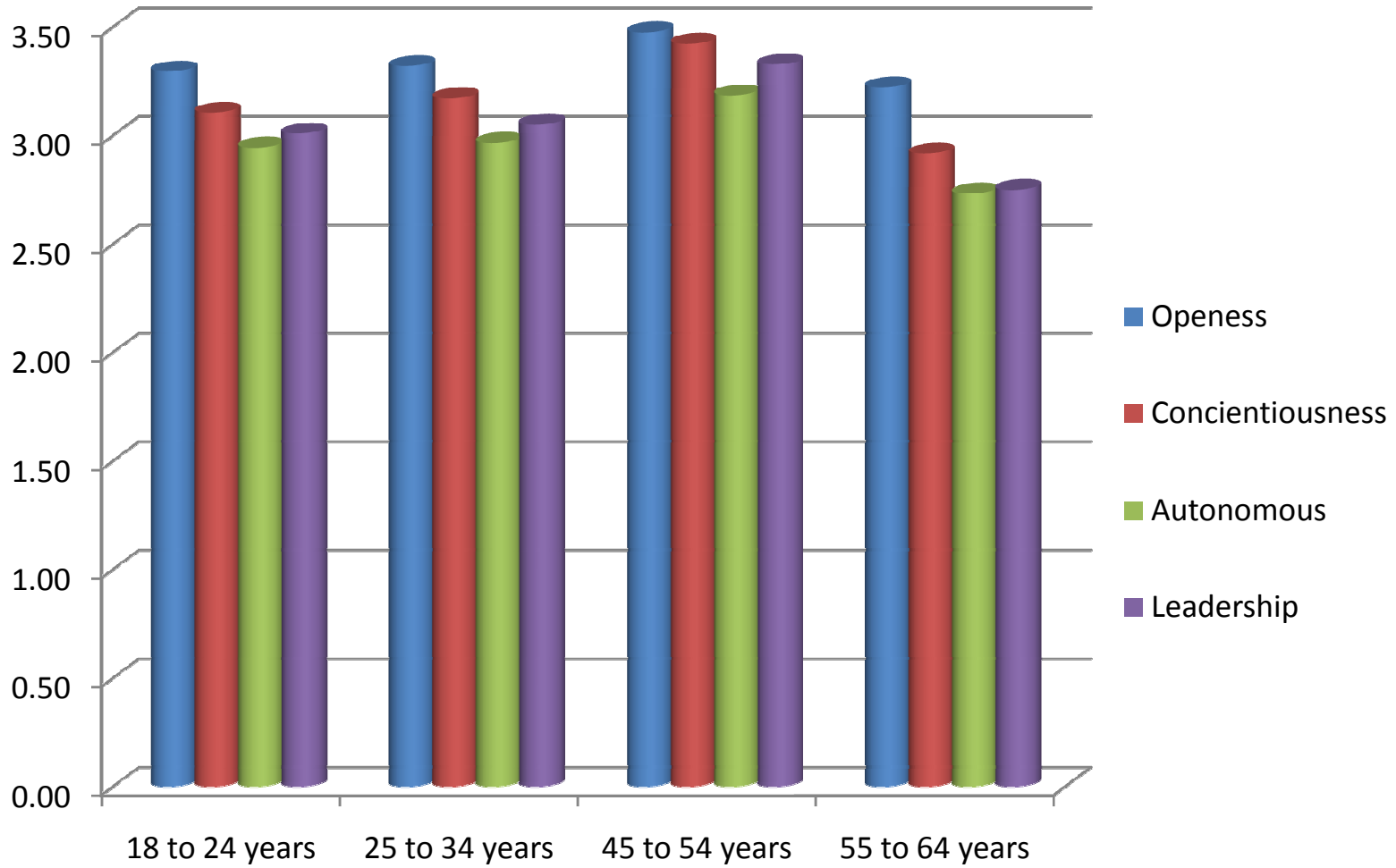
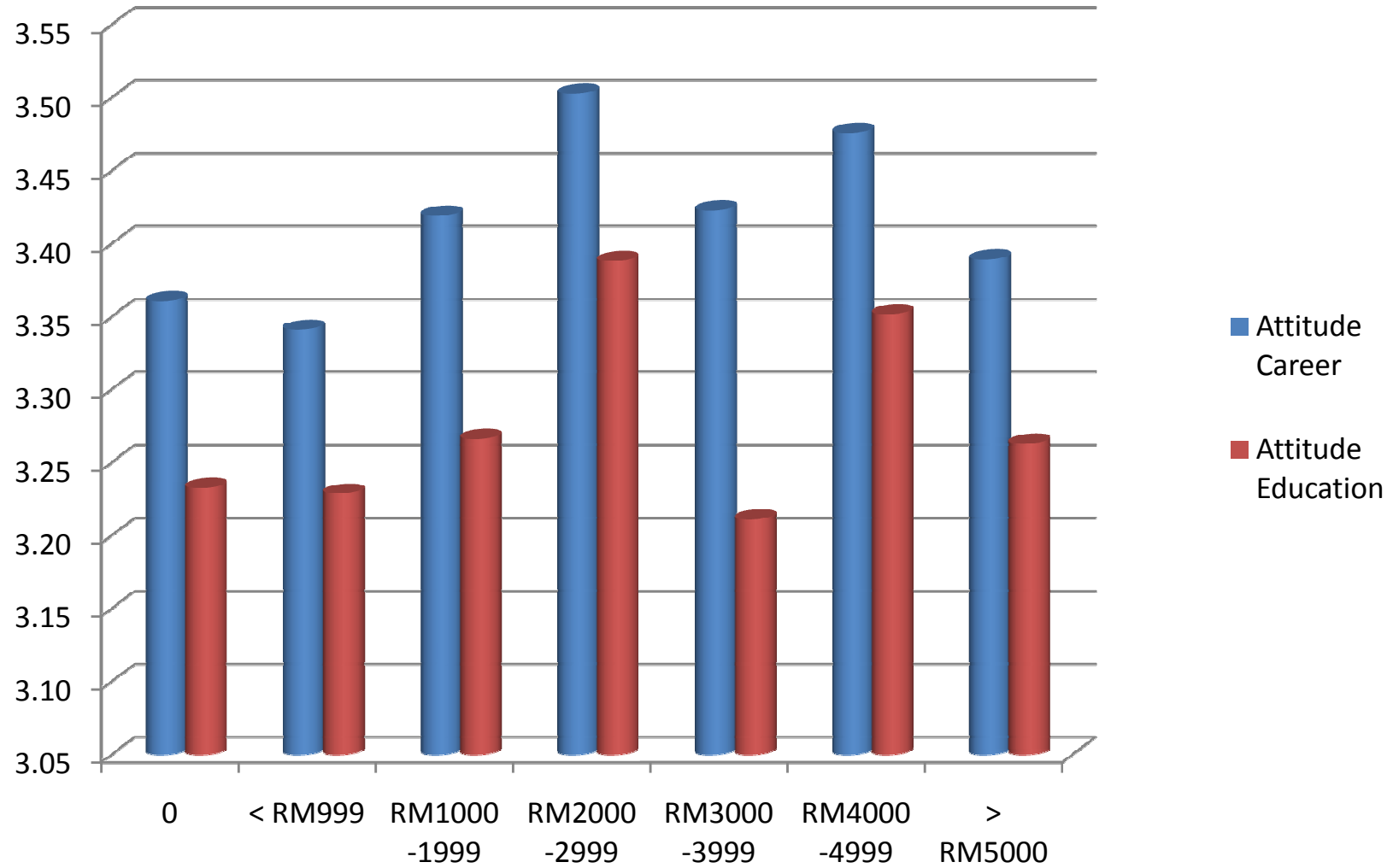# Age against Attitudes
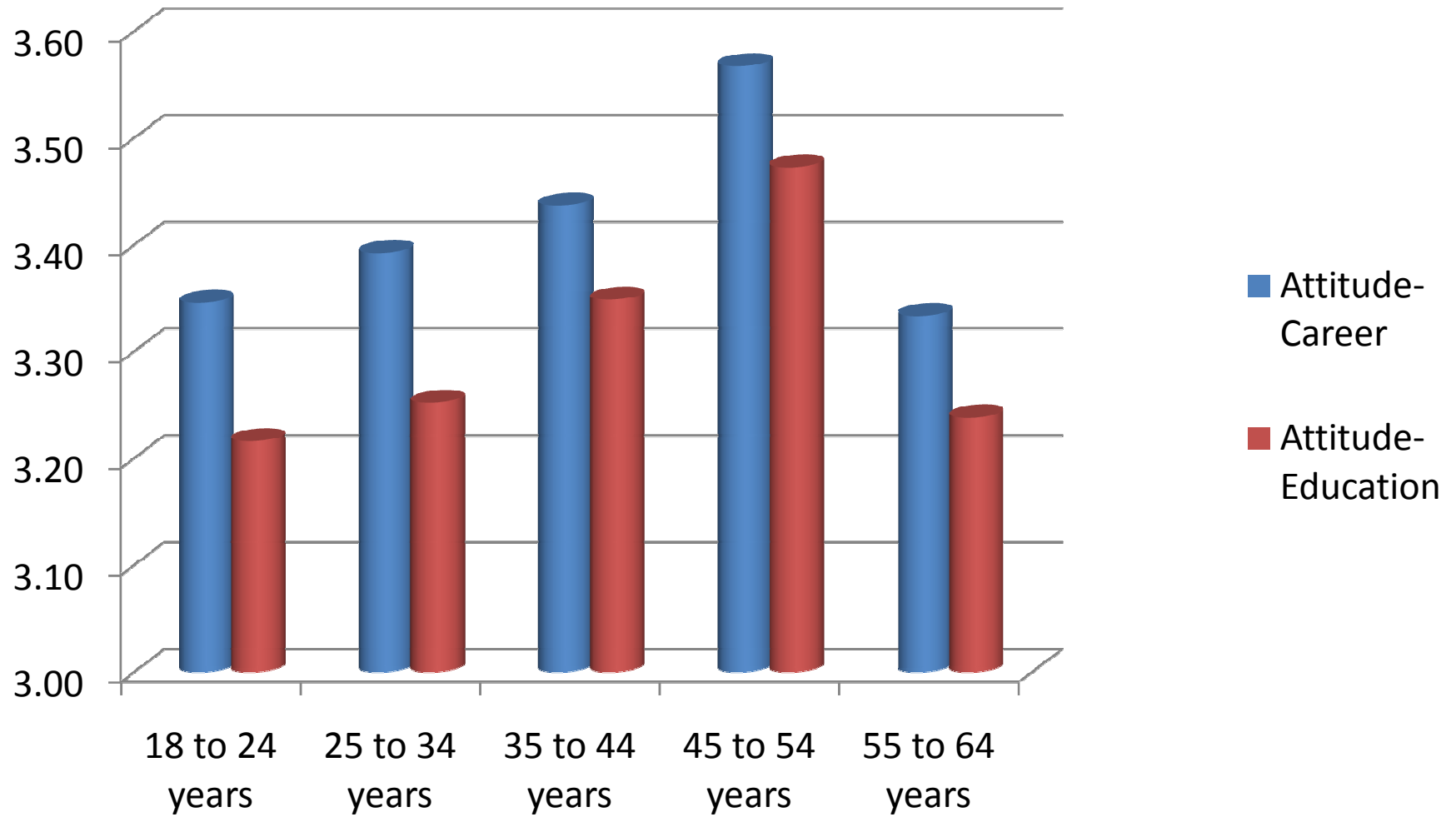
Age against Motivation

Observation 2

- Income/personality: Openness to experience, Conscientiousness, Autonomous and Leadership
  - Lowest: autonomous; Highest: openness to experience for all age groups
  - All 4 personality increases with age, except for those in the <RM999 income category, where personality is lowest

- Income/attitude: Attitude toward career, Attitude towards education
  - Higher in attitude towards career for all age groups
  - Both attitudes are lowest among the RM0-999 category

- Income/motivation: Power, Achievement, Affiliation
  - Lowest : affiliation and highest: achievement for all age groups
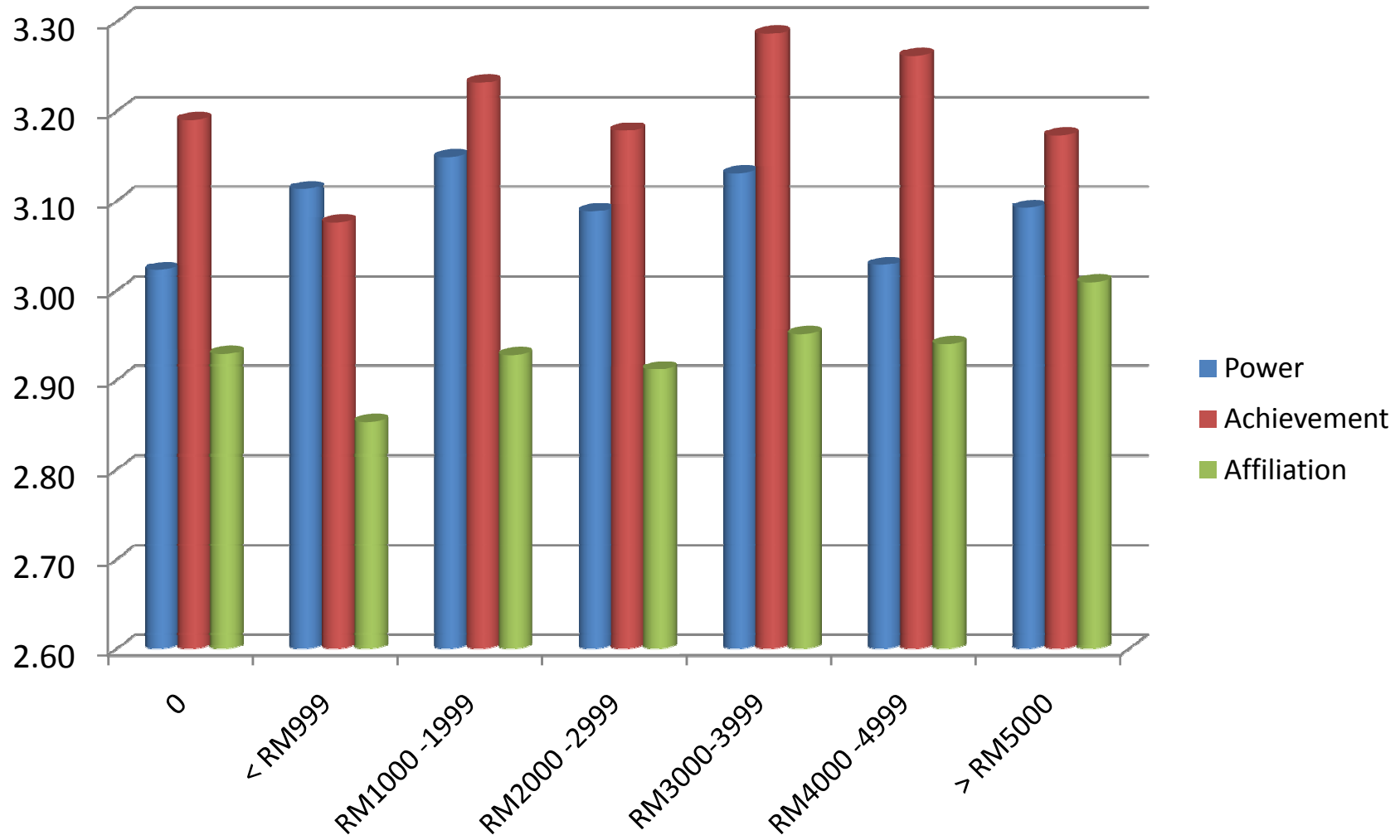 - Lowest affiliation among the <RM999 category

Income against Personality
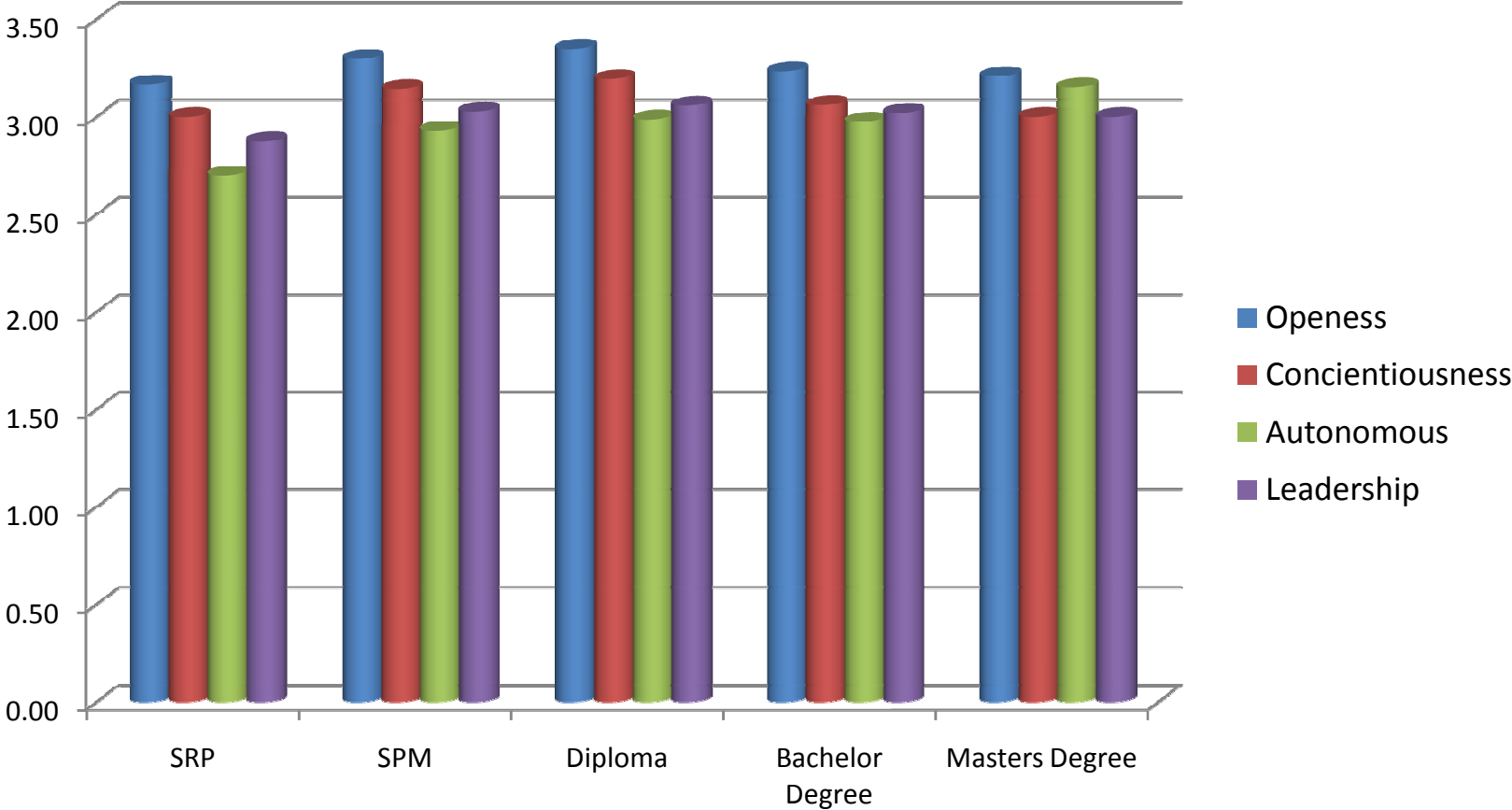
Income against Attitude
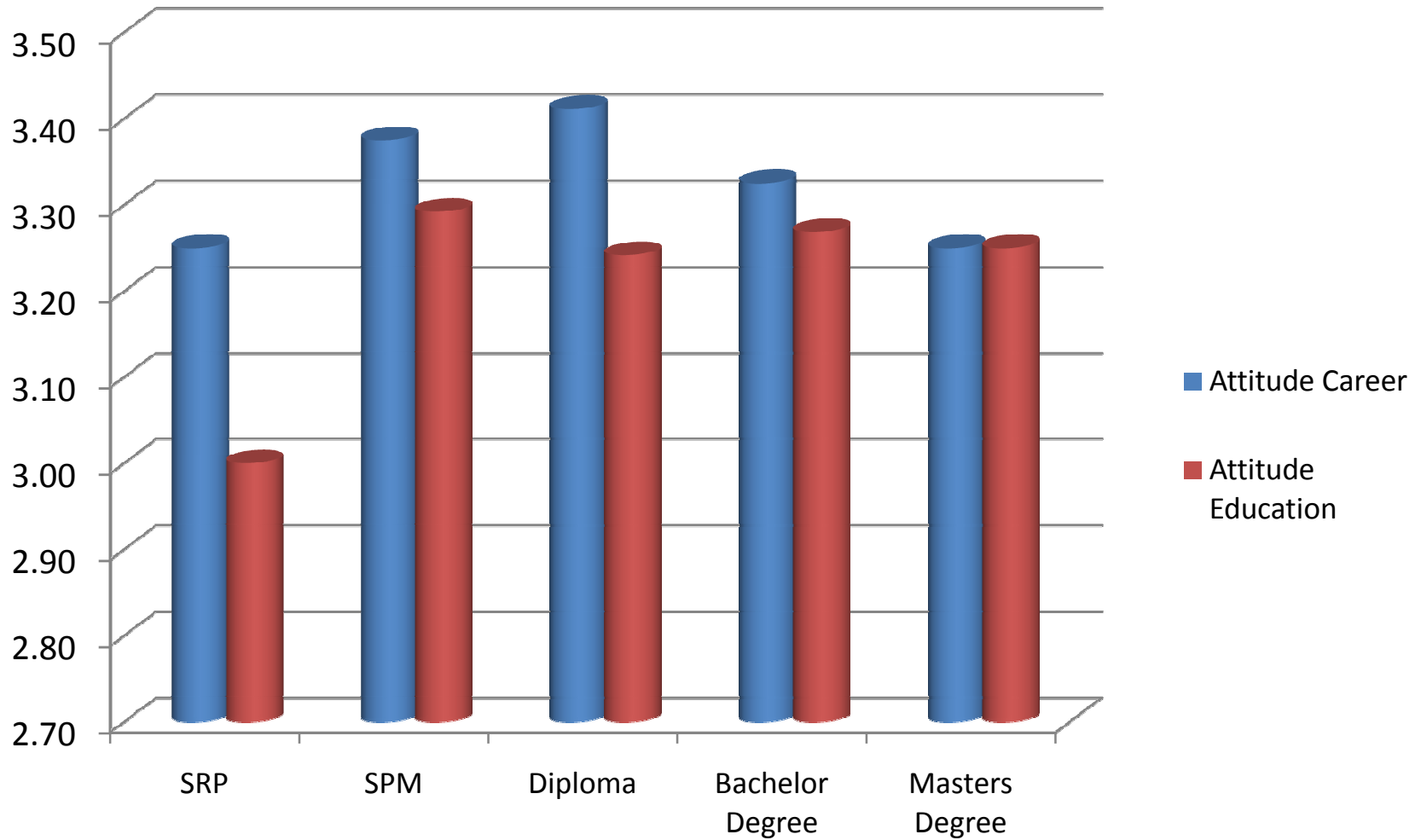
Income against Motivation

Observation 3

- Entry.Qual/Personality: Openness to experience, Conscientiousness, Autonomous and Leadership
  - ➤ All 4 personality traits do not vary much with entry qualification

- Entry.Qual/Attitude: Attitude toward career, Attitude towards education
  - ➤ Higher in attitude towards career for all entry qualification
  - ➤ Both attitudes are lowest among the SRP

- Entry.Qual/Motivation: Power, Achievement, Affiliation
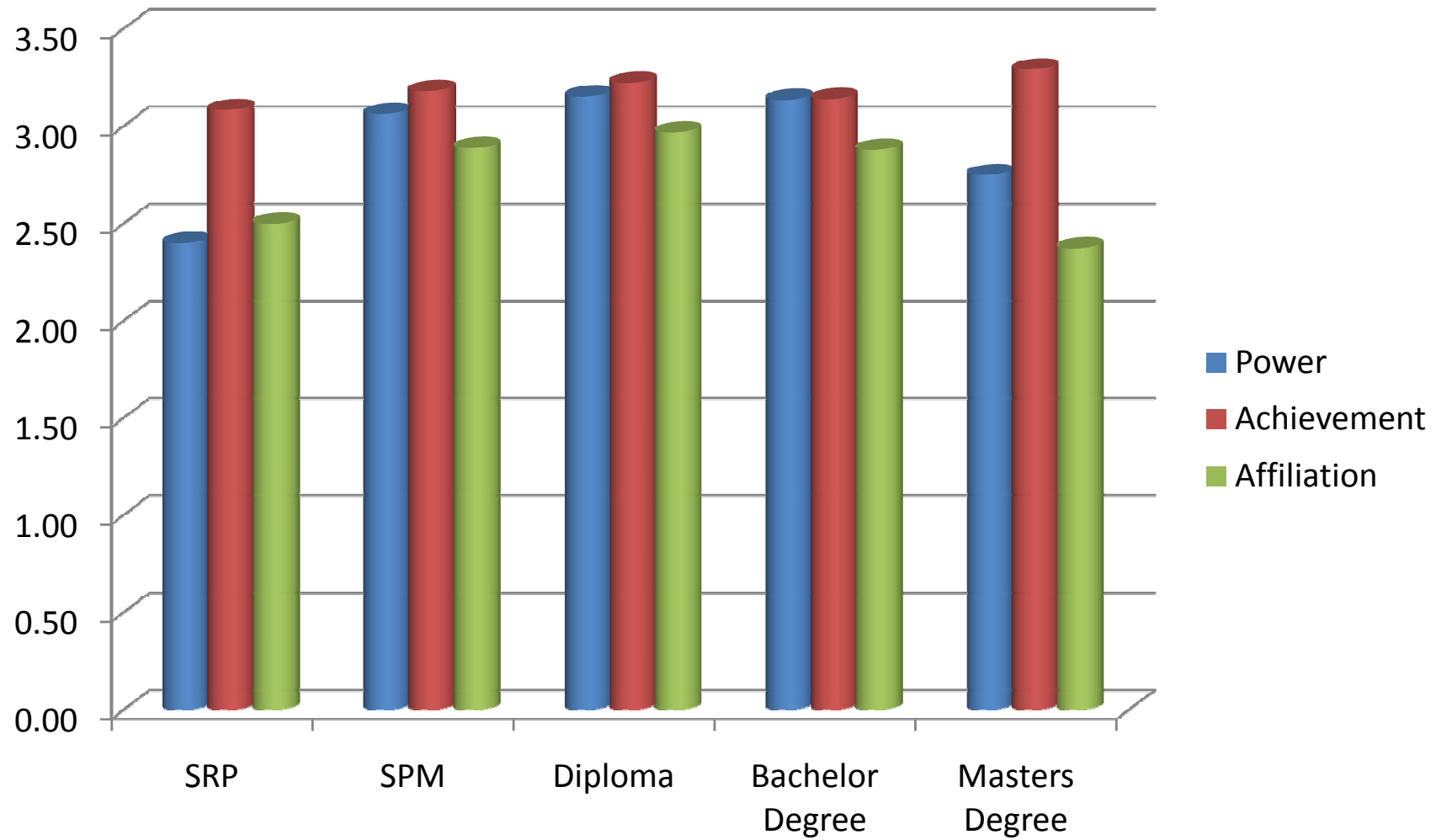 - ➤ All 3 do not vary much with entry qualification

Entry Qualification against Attitude

Entry Qualification against Motivation

Conclusion

1. A high percentage of learners who had come in to OUM are in the "HIGH" category of personality, attitude and motivation (78 - 97%);

2. Three areas of concern and in which OUM needs to work on in order to help shape our learners towards the high category of:

    Autonomous; Affiliation and Leadership

Autonomous

1. What is meant by autonomous? Self-directed/self regulated/independent
   a. Self directed learning can be described as the skill of "learning how to learn" or being metacognitively aware of one's own learning
   b. Items: I can make my own decision; I can complete a task without the help from others; I can solve problems on my own; I am confident with the decision that I made; I can act upon a situation without any direction from my superior.

   Online learning students must possess "self" behaviors such as self-discipline, self-monitoring, self-initiative which are characteristics of self-regulated learning. In the absence of the face-to-face meetings, the ability of learners to monitor and regulate their own learning is critical.

Recommendations for enhancing autonomy

Instructors:

- Provide _scaffolding_ for it promotes self-reliance. Scaffolding is a technique that uses steps to gradually develop learning. It breaks tasks down into manageable steps so it does not become overwhelming. Scaffolding helps students to progress at a level comfortable for them and learning is progressive, that means that they're learning bits at a time in order to develop understanding
- Give learners _short, directed and concrete online tasks_ that provide the most "learning for experience" to make the adult learners see the relevancy of online learning. These can be done by:
  - Coaching, using audio files or videos to help in performing a task
  - Providing recourses to assist learners to complete tasks
  - Providing examples of complete problems
  - Build a co-operative learning environment
  - Help to motivate and direct learners in the learning process
  - Be available for consultations during learning process
  - Serve as an advisor and show concern to learners

Affiliation

What does affiliation mean?

- The need to be connected or to belong to a supportive group.

- Online learners must understand and value the learning opportunities afforded by collaborative and communication technologies in order to be engaged in learning.

Recommendations for enhancing affiliation

Greater emphasis on Online Learning which :

(i) Promotes student-teacher, students-student and student-content interactions. Role of e-tutors is critical

(ii) Promotes the creation of a Community of Practice (COP) or groups of learners to discuss and do things together in an online environment. Encourage group activities

(iii) Promotes greater collaboration through the online discussion forums. It helps students to find peers and tutors online who would support them in their learning activities. However, having committed and responsive e-tutors is critical

Recommendation (overall)

1) Identification of **new learning strategies** that help to improve the development of lifelong learning and other skills that can enhance learners' self-directedness and autonomy. Eg: using problem-based learning approach; case studies, group projects.

2) **Evaluation of the effectiveness** of the instructional strategies used in the modules as well as the quality of its support services towards enabling learners to become independent.

3) Develop **rich and multiple formats of online learning materials** to support the diverse needs of OUM learners as well as engaging them to explore available educational resources independently.

4) Encourage learners in doing: self-reflection, develop personalised learning goals, conduct self-check, and monitor their learning progress. This can be achieved through **formative assessment**, whereby adult learners can assess their own progress and make plans for further improvements so that they achieve their goals. This calls for more self-test and quizzes for every topic.

5) **Improve quality of services** by reducing factors that makes learners doubt, to enable learners to manage their programme independently. Less complaints and enquiries and smoother journey in their studies.

Future Research

To link the data (by student ID) to the

    a) Assignment marks (average of the first semester courses taken)

    b) Exam marks (average of the first sem. exam marks for all courses taken)

    c) Re-registration status (from first to second semester

    d) To add " type of entry" – normal/flexible to demographic variables

➢ The above will allow for identification of variables for students who are: i) successful; ii) retained and iii) did not re-register (defer; withdraw and quit).

➢ Early identification of students in category (iii) will enable OUM to implement pro-active intervention to reduce first semester attrition

➢ Develop a dashboard for students (by Sept 2016)

THANK YOU