



Perceptions about eLearning in Saudi Arabia



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- Saudi Arabian education system is under stress to provide additional educational opportunities for increasing population and a desire to increase literacy rate.
- The capacity growth rate of existing Saudi educational institutes doesn't match the current growth rate in enrollment demand.
- Internet offers a viable and cost effective alternative to formal classroom learning.
- Internet based distance learning is still in its infancy in the country. As it happens with any change, the public perception is not in favor eLearning over formal classroom based training.
- These responses are part of a broader study that covers the use and effect of Internet in Saudi Arabia.



- The rapid technological advances, shifting market conditions, rapid obsolescence of existing knowledge and increasing population are challenging the education systems to provide additional educational opportunities without increasing budgets.
- The answer to this challenge is to develop distance education programs.
- Traditionally these programs are considered useful for adults who missed college education, those who have time and distance constraints, physical disability and workers who want to update their knowledge at their places of work.
- Now anyone is potentially a distance learner, a concept that has implications for educational institutions and teachers.

on (Contd)



- In its simplest form, distance learning takes place when a teacher and student(s) are separated by physical distance. The teacher student interaction can take place using voice, video, data and print (by correspondence).
- A form of distance learning that uses Internet and Internet technologies as a medium to impart training is known as Electronic Learning (e-Learning).
- Advances in information and communications infrastructure, capacity, functionality, and reduction in cost have increased the use and access of information technology for educational purposes.
- Moreover, information and communication technology is suitable for evolving art of teaching that is constructivist, interactive, collaborative, learner centered, and just-in-time

on (Contd)



- Perhaps more than any other distance media, the Internet and the Web help overcome the barriers of time and space in teaching and learning.
- The use of Internet for eLearning offers many advantages over traditional distance learning modes.
- Some of these advantages are: time and place flexibility; potential to reach a global audience; quick deployment and easy updating of content; no concerns of compatibility of hardware and software and archival capabilities

on (Contd)



- In Saudi Arabia, public access to Internet was allowed in April 1997.
- After a slow start for few years, Internet subscription and use is rapidly increasing.
- In last three years around 700,000 users have become on-line.
- The latest figure shows that there are approximately 1.1 million users in Saudi Arabia (July 2002).

Learning in Saudi Arabia



- The Internet has the capability to level the learning needs of variety of individuals.
- Being such a promising technology,
 - an effective e-Learning system can ignite a sweeping revolution in education which will empower the society to school the illiterate,
 - bring job training to the unskilled,
 - open a universe of knowledge to students at all levels,
 - and enrich the understanding of the lifelong learner.
- This will definitely improve
 - the technical skills of the national workforce, and
 - guarantee a continued supply of highly qualified technical personnel capable of improving the country's productivity

eLearning (Contd)



- With over 50% of the country's population under the age of 20 and one of the highest birth rates in the world, Saudi Arabian higher education institutions have been facing a growing demand for enrollment.
- The capacity growth rate of existing Saudi universities doesn't match the current growth rate in enrollment demand.
- This has resulted in overcrowded classrooms with a consequent reduction in the quality of learning.
- A viable eLearning system represents an excellent cost-effective solution to these problems. Furthermore, it addresses other problems such as shortage of instructors, sparsely located schools and educational needs of population in remote areas.

in Saudi Arabia



- In this regard a project has been launched to connect schools and educational directorates by means of a wide area network covering the entire country.
- This project is known as WATANI Schoolsø Net project. The project is also going to establish local area networks within every educational directorate.
- The Schools' Net Project will provide every student, teacher, parent and educator with a multitude of services and a huge source of reference information.
- The resources will be mostly developed in Arabic Language and involves the technological training of more than 300,000 male and female teachers and other support staff. This phase of the project involves use of on-line training for teachers and support staff.

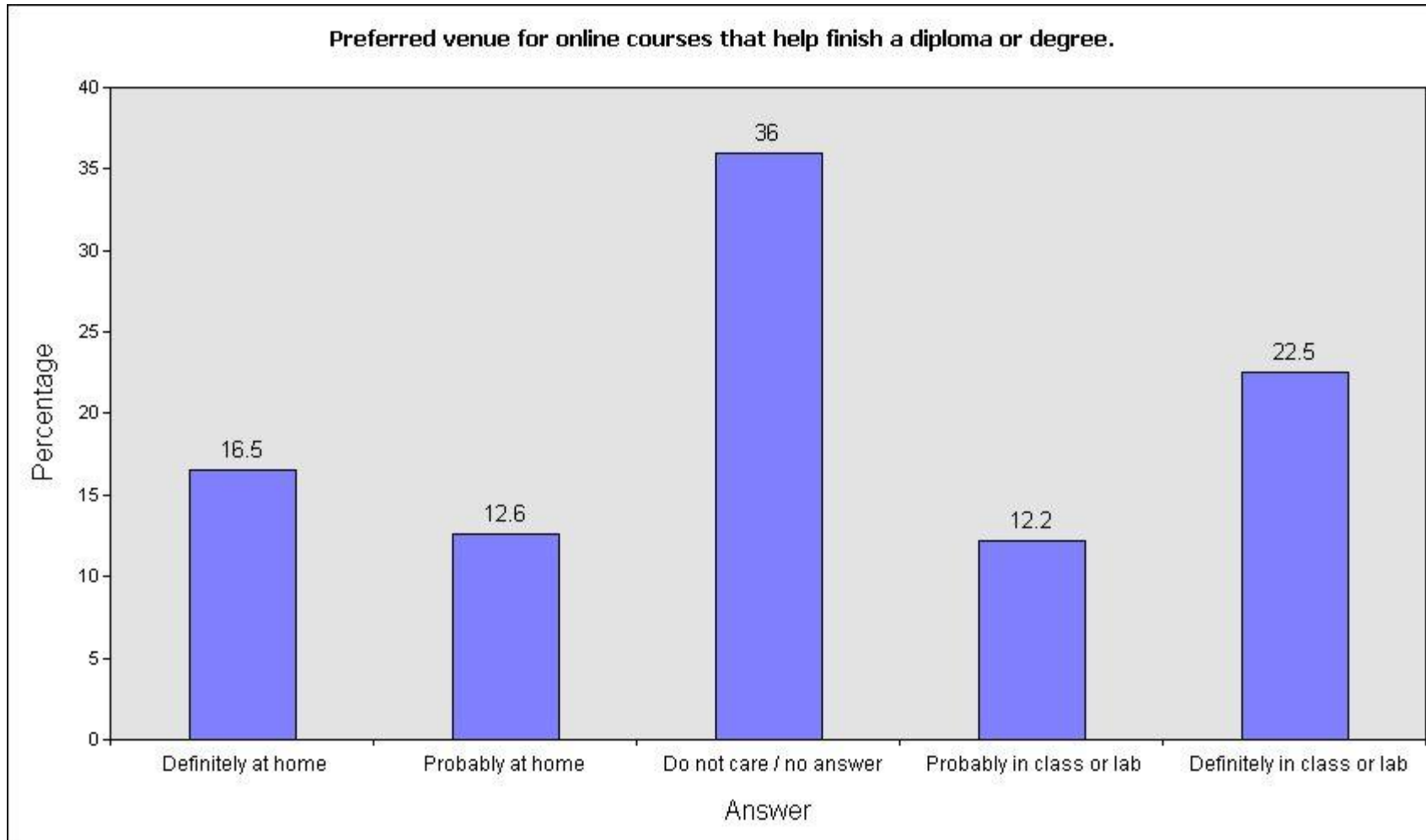
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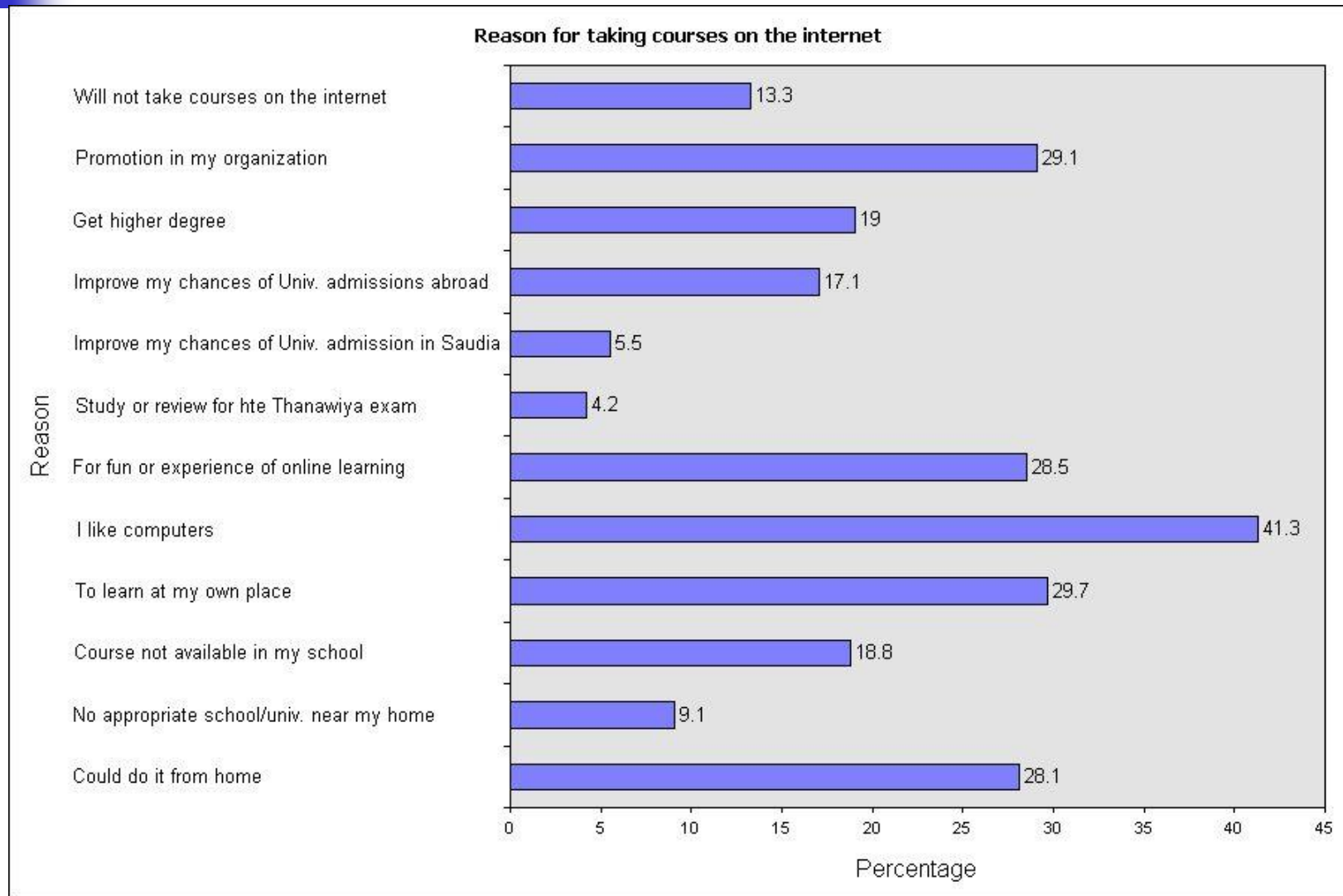
- During the course of our study project entitled "Use and Effect on Internet in Saudi Arabia" we conducted a web-based survey to solicit responses from users to determine use and effect of Internet in Saudi Arabia.
- In the following slides, results and analysis of user views in response to questions related to distance education are reported.



venue for online courses

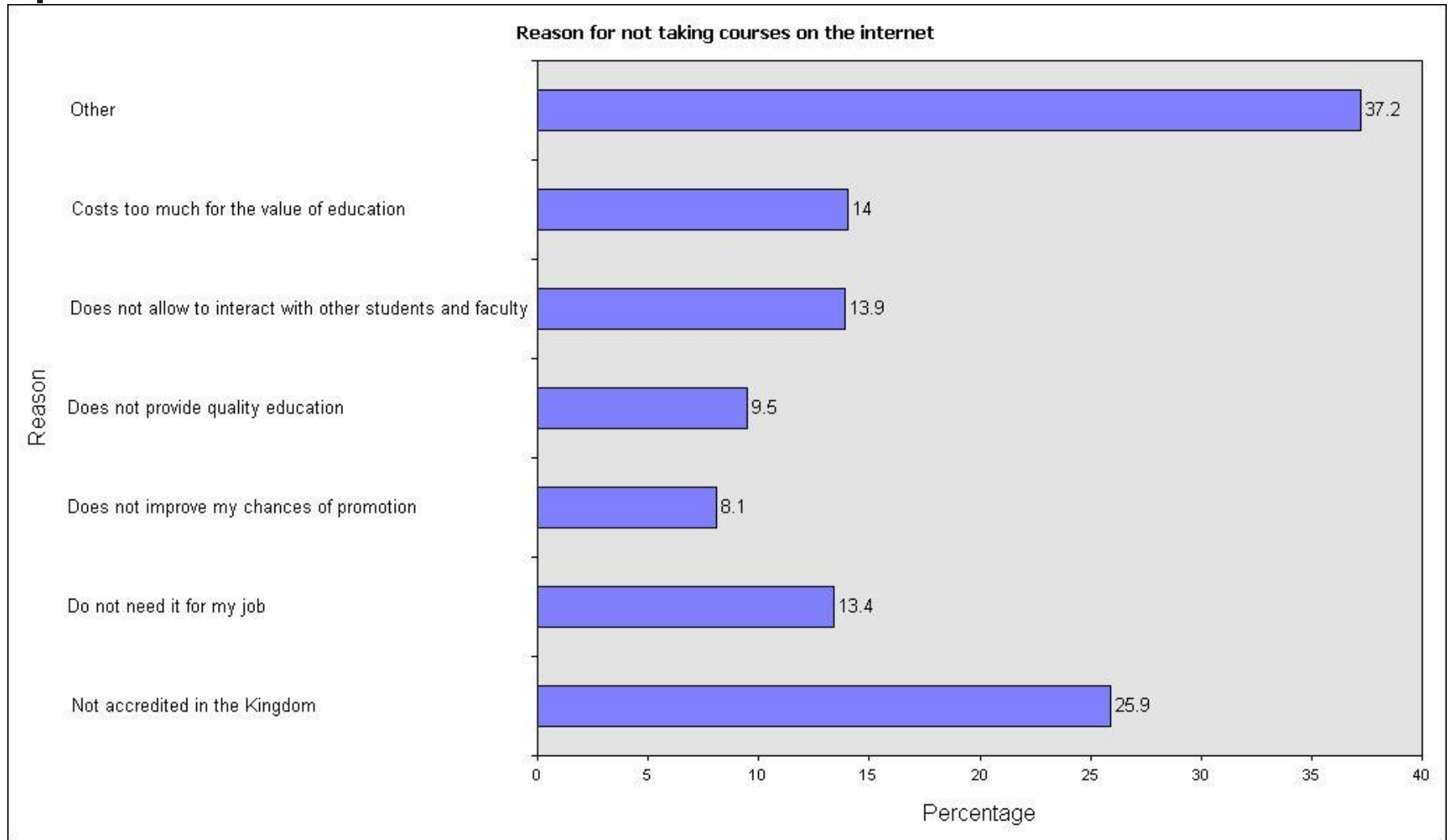


or taking online courses





Reasons for not taking online courses

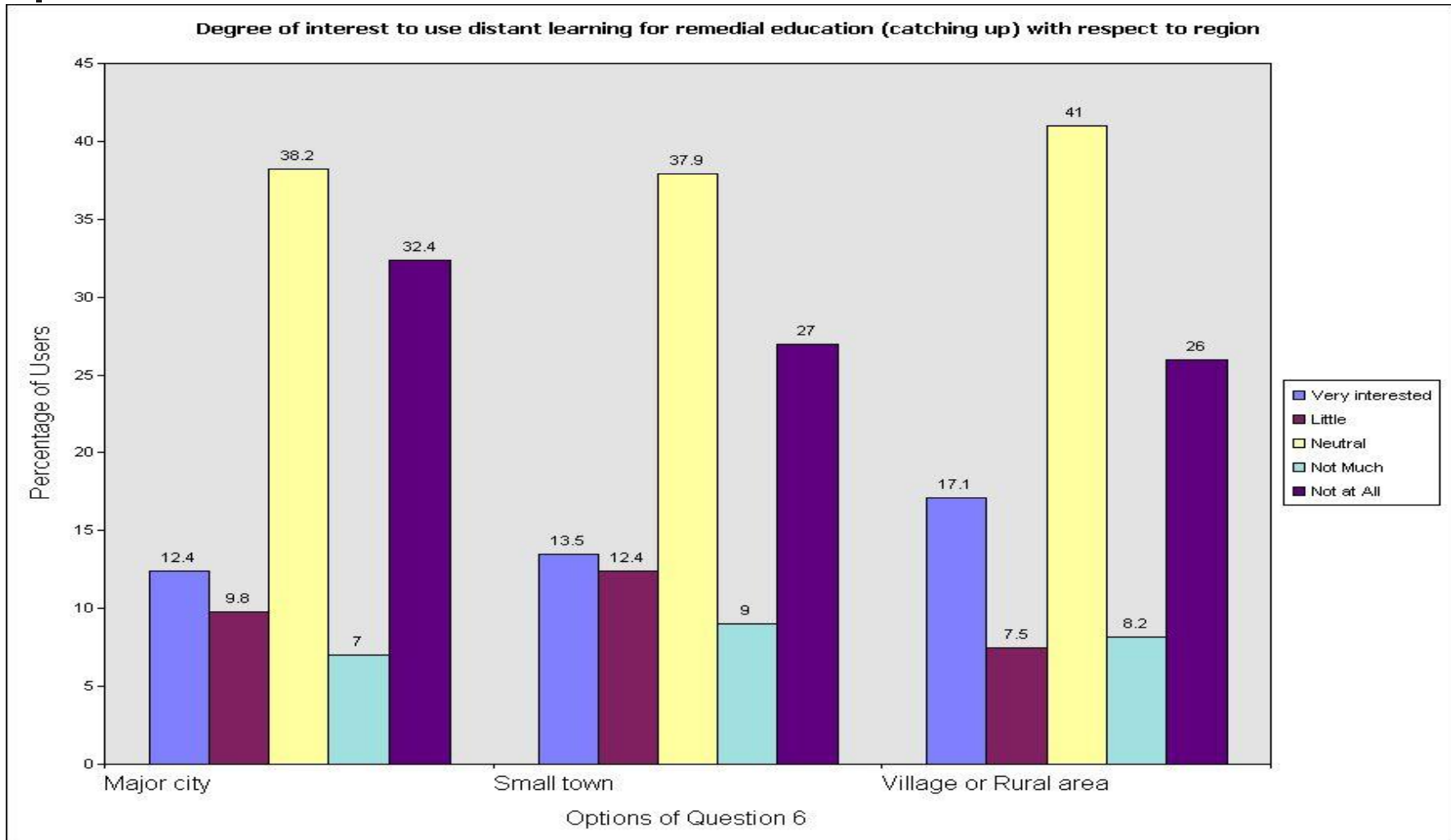


Differences in taking online courses

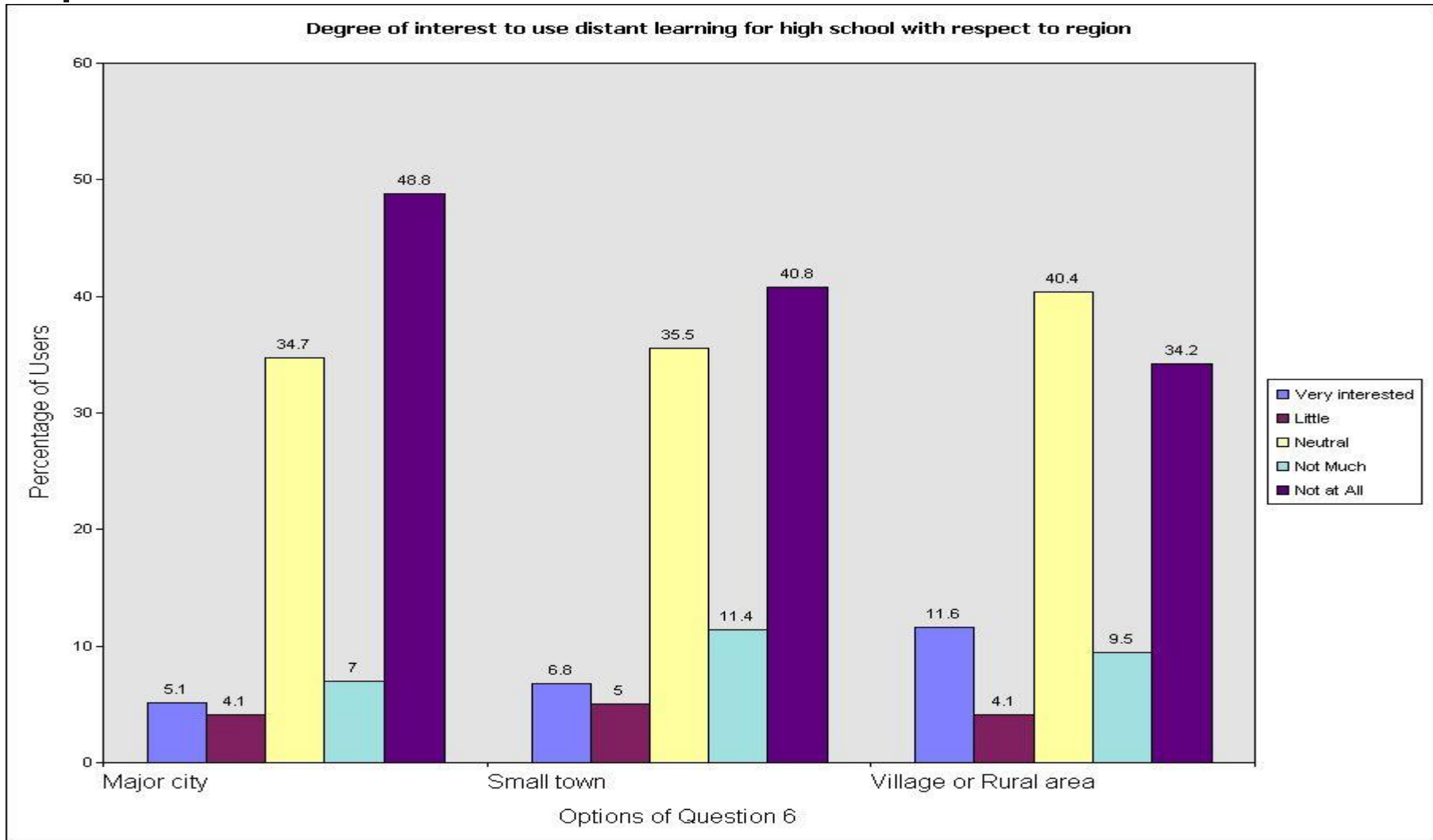


- Generally it is believed that Saudi Arabia being a segregated education system where male and female students take their education in separate institutions, women will prefer to take distance learning classes at home than men.
- However, according to our findings gender doesn't affect user responses.
- Only 30% male and 26% female users prefer to take distance-learning courses at home.
- Similar results are observed while analyzing the effect of gender on types of courses to be taken online or otherwise.
- Responses of male and female are more or else identical on this issue too.

on taking online remedial education



on taking online high school course



Education level of respondent



- As the education level of respondents increase they are **less** interested in taking distance learning means to improve their education level like getting university degree or taking remedial education on-line.
- This is probably due to the reason that distance education degrees are not accredited in the country therefore already educated respondents are not very keen for distance learning.
- However, those who are less educated or missed formal education are some what interested in advancing their education level through these new avenues.



- According to our survey, majority of the respondents prefer not to take courses on the Internet.
- Those who want to take courses on the Internet; they do so because they like computers.
- The major reason for not taking courses on the Internet is that these courses are not considered equivalent to regular courses in the country and moreover online courses are not accredited in the country.
- Gender doesn't affect user responses for distance learning.
- However, respondents living in remote areas and small villages are more interested in receiving distance education than those who live in major cities.

gments



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