



Student Support, the Missing Link of Virtual Learning in the Era of COVID-19

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Dear Editor,

Student support services in virtual learning are a multidimensional and crucial factor for enhancing student engagement and promoting academic progress (1). One of the main goals of student support services is to help students overcome loneliness because of staying away from the academic community, including peers, professors, and the institution itself (2).

Support means the development of a condition that predisposes to learning and expands strategies that cause integration in the community. Support creates a sense of belonging with the academic community in the student and causes a sense of self-direction and management and a sense of control. These cases generally induce a sense of satisfaction and motivation in the student and give them stability in online learning (3).

The COVID-19 pandemic, followed by social distancing, has affected educational systems in countries around the world, and higher education institutions have been forced to close university campuses in response to this global emergency and turn to virtual learning (4).

Virtual learning puts extra strain and demands on the student, like cognitive, social, emotional, and technological demands. These matters lead to increased anxiety, to the extent that virtual education programs are met with an early lack of motivation in students and, in many cases, reduced academic performance and dropout (5).

Providing students with efficient support services is crucial to reducing and overcoming problems and challenges that students face in virtual learning (6).

Student support services can be classified into two categories: academic and non-academic. Academic support is in line with the development of cognitive and learning skills, while non-academic support deals with emotional

and organizational aspects such as counseling and guidance services. This includes technological support. Academic support helps students with writing assignments and provides feedback on their progress (2).

Effective learning support considers students' needs, increases interaction between students and the university, and promotes educational and technological advances (7).

Satisfactory learning experiences promote education and lifelong learning. Thus, we must first be aware of the devastating effects of high dropout rates on virtual learning environments to develop better support services to avoid this first obstacle. Therefore, reducing dropouts should be the goal and action of student support services (3).

Finally, we need to be aware that student support in virtual learning is not only an urgency but a quality issue. The quality assurance model in virtual learning consists of specific indexes of student support services. These indexes should guide institutions in developing student support services (3).

Footnotes

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has been a reviewer for about three years. We declared that one of our authors ([Soleiman Ahmadi], [EIC]) is one of the editorial board. The journal confirmed that the mentioned author with CoI was completely excluded from all review processes. We also introduced this author with CoI during the submission as an opposed reviewer. We declared that one of our authors ([Zohreh Khoshgoftar], [AE]) is one of the editorial board. The journal confirmed that the mentioned author with CoI was completely excluded from all review processes. We also introduced this author with CoI during the submission as an opposed reviewer. We declared that one of our authors ([Somaye Sohrabi], [Reviewer]) is one of the editorial board. The journal confirmed that the mentioned author with CoI was completely excluded from all review processes. We also introduced this author with CoI during the submission as an opposed reviewer. Funding or research support: Anywhere; Employment: Shahid Beheshti University of Medical Sciences; Personal financial interests: None; Stocks or shares in companies: No; Consultation fees: No; Patents: No; Personal or professional relations with organizations and individuals (parents and children, wife and husband, family relationships, etc.): No; Unpaid membership in a government or non-governmental organization: No; Are you one of the editorial board members or a reviewer of this journal? Yes, I

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