Chapter 27

A Conceptual Study on Self-Regulation Skills in the Context of Virtual Identity Use in Distance Education

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ABSTRACT

In distance education, instructor control over learners is limited compared to traditional settings. Learning in distance education includes the process of developing the virtual identity of the individual. Learners and instructors use their virtual identities to share ideas and promote themselves by participating in social. Therefore, this research aims to evaluate self-regulation skills in the context of virtual identity use strategies in distance education and to evaluate them in a conceptual framework. Considering the literature, self-regulation skills need to be rearranged according to virtual learning to achieve academic success in distance education environments. It should be accepted that virtual identities are crucial to create participation in the classroom and support knowledge construction, and instructors should guide this. It is recommended to provide training to instructors and learners on the effective use of virtual identity and to carry out incentive activities to reflect self-regulation skills in the use of virtual identity and lessons.

INTRODUCTION

Distance education has become a frequently preferred educational approach, this is because of its ease of access and flexibility of participation to ensure the training services to the large masses. Internet-based distance education was relatively more demanded at the higher education institutions until 2019, due to the opportunities that it offers. Due to the negative impact of the COVID-19 pandemic especially in the field of education worldwide, it has ceased to be a relatively preferred learning approach and has gained

a compulsory structure at all levels of education, including even K-12. The participation of the learners and instructors in distance education activities implemented in internet-based learning environments takes place virtually. Therefore, the term "virtual identity" emerges as a brand-new concept that should be taken into consideration regarding the way users present themselves in virtual learning environments. It is also a non-negligible necessity for learners to create a "virtual identity" for participation and engagement for distance education which have become a necessity in education during the Covid-19 pandemic. Virtual profiles are established in virtual learning environments, and learners utilize these profiles to engage in the learning process. The most basic kind of virtual identity is the virtual profiles that must be generated in order to participate in learning settings. When distance education is scrutinized according to Bloom's (1956) taxonomy, virtual identity is expected to play a significant role in the development of cognitive and emotional domain abilities in distance education. So much so that, although virtual identity serves as a facilitator and a mediator role for the development of cognitive abilities, the acquisition of affective skills may be both the cause and the effect of using the virtual identity. However, because psychomotor skills are dependent on physical activity (Hoque et al, 2021), it may be stated that the contribution of virtual identity to the development of psychomotor skills is probably limited. In addition, classroom management in distance education is quite limited compared to traditional settings. Hence, in the processes of participation, engagement, and assuring the performance stably, the responsibility is piled on the learners. Consequently, learners need to develop their self-regulation skills to cope with open-ended learning processes in virtual learning environments (Greene et al., 2014).

The strategies for managing virtual identities and self-regulation skills to ensure learning performances are the crucial subjects in the distance education phase. Accordingly, the current study aims to scrutinize the learners' self-regulation skills in the context of virtual identity utilization strategies in distance education based on relevant literature and evaluate them in a theoretical framework. Thus, it is thought that practical implications will be discussed to support the participation and engagement of learners, instructors, administrators, and staff in distance education at any of the stage for distance education.

USING VIRTUAL IDENTITY IN VIRTUAL LEARNING ENVIRONMENTS

Learning and identity are associated (Wenger, 1998). Social identities used in virtual environments are a function of social access and create social perception. People use their virtual identities through social participation to share their ideas and promote themselves (Barut Tuğtekin & Dursun, 2020). The use of virtual identity is directly related to establishing and managing the connection between real and virtual in a social environment (Goel, 2014). Proper use of virtual identity is important to understand the importance of relationships in virtual environments and to manage strong social interactions. When the literature is examined, it is understood that there are very limited studies on virtual identity in virtual learning environments. In this respect, social networks, social environment, virtual learning platforms, and identity connections are discussed to explain the concept of virtual identity.

Online social identity is defined as the self-concept created by individuals by identifying with the social groups in which they are online (Pegg et al., 2018). Virtual identity is shaped by the individual creating an account or a profile on the internet and presence himself/herself in a virtual environment (Lee et al., 2010). In the virtual environment, users come together to share content and form a community network. Individuals, on the other hand, organize their profiles, accounts and shares to check their social presence. Individuals' virtual identity is developed and managed in these online and social community networks

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