Self-Regulation and Metacognition in Online Learning: The Influence of Prior Experience

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Abstract

Based on the theoretical foundations of self-regulated learning and metacognitive strategies, this study explores how online students manage and monitor their own learning processes. Self-regulation involves the ability to set goals, plan, monitor, and evaluate performance—skills that are essential in autonomous learning contexts. Metacognitive strategies refer to the awareness and control of one's cognitive processes, enabling students to adapt their study approaches more effectively. These competencies are especially relevant in virtual learning environments, where flexibility and learner responsibility are central. We conducted a study with a sample of 195 online students, 84% of whom are female, with an average age of 40 years (SD = 8.23). A two-part questionnaire was used: Part I focused on self-regulated learning, and Part II on metacognitive strategies. Results revealed high levels of both self-regulation and metacognitive strategy use. No significant gender differences were found in either dimension. However, students with prior experience in online courses demonstrated higher levels of self-regulation and use of specific metacognitive strategies. These findings highlight the importance of previous learning experience in the development of self-regulatory and metacognitive skills in online education.

Keywords: adult learners**;** learner autonomy**;** learning experience; online education; prior experience