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Effects of Ai Human Instructors' Social Presence on Learning Experience in Cyber Universities

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Abstract

This study empirically examined the effects of AI Human instructors' social presence on learners' overall learning experience in cyber universities. With the growing adoption of AI-based instructors in higher education, it has become important to understand how social connections between instructors and learners influence engagement, satisfaction, and the perceived quality of learning. The purpose of this study was to identify whether the social presence of AI Human instructors functions as a key factor in enhancing learners' engagement and satisfaction, which together define the learning experience. The AI Human class applied in this study featured a virtual avatar instructor (AI Human Instructor) modeled after a real professor's speech, gestures, and facial expressions. In several segments, the AI instructor interacted with an AI learner to simulate dialogic communication and emotional engagement. Participants were 101 students enrolled in the "Career Design with AI" course at Seoul Cyber University. A structured survey measured social presence, learning engagement, satisfaction, and perceived learning experience. Data were analyzed using regression analysis. The results showed that AI Human instructors' social presence had a strong positive effect on both engagement and satisfaction ($p < .001$), thereby improving the overall quality of learning experience. These findings suggest that AI Human instructors can act as a new form of instructional presence that fosters emotional participation and interaction, offering practical insights for designing AI-based and learner-centered instruction in cyber universities.

Keywords: Engagement; Motivation; Online Learning; Satisfaction; Virtual Instructor