

Self-regulated learning of anatomy during the COVID-19 lockdown period in a low-income setting

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Abstract

In March 2020, universities in Zimbabwe temporarily closed and switched to remote learning to contain the spread of SARS Cov2 infections. The sudden change to distance learning gave autonomy to students to direct their own learning. To understand how the students at the University of Zimbabwe and Midlands State University adapted to emergency remote learning, focus group discussions and a self-administered questionnaire survey based on the self-regulated learning inventory were conducted to capture cognitive, motivational, and emotional aspects of anatomy learning during the COVID-19 pandemic. Thematic analysis was used to identify patterns among these students' lived experiences. Two coders analyzed the data independently and discussed the codes to reach a consensus. The results showed that students at the two medical schools cognitively and meta-cognitively planned, executed and evaluated self-regulated strategies in different ways that suited their environments during the COVID-19 lockdown. Several factors, such as demographic location, home setting/situation, socioeconomic background and expertise in using online platforms, affected the students' self-directed learning. Students generally adapted well to the constraints brought about by the lockdown on their anatomy learning in order to learn effectively. This study was able to highlight important self-regulated learning strategies that were implemented during COVID-19 by anatomy learners, especially those in low-income settings, and these strategies equip teachers and learners alike in preparation for similar future situations that may result in forced remote learning of anatomy.

Keywords: Self-regulated learning, Remote learning, Anatomy, Low income setting