

## Adjustment to Online Learning in Higher Education during COVID-19 World Crisis: Using the Knowledge of Support Centers to Promote Inclusion (panel)

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### Abstract

The covid-19 world crisis affected higher education and especially university students worldwide. Due to the crisis, students and lecturers had to adjust to online learning at once, developing new strategies within a troubled reality composed of emotional stress, social isolation, and financial crisis (Sahu, 2020). Low adjustment to higher education might increase retention rates among students from disadvantage and minority groups (Abu-Kishk, and Mendels (2020 [hebrew])).

Based on the knowledge relating adjustment to higher education and learning strategies that developed in support centers for students with disabilities, and on findings from new research executed by the writers, the current panel will discuss the effect of the covid-19 crisis on universities from the point of view of the students, the lecturers and academic administrations.

The panel will include findings from a longitudinal study that started in May 2020 (corona semester-1) included 390 undergraduate students from four academic colleges in Israel. The study uses mixed methods: online questionnaires regarding

role adjustment to online learning, learning strategies, and resilience, along with and semi-structured interviews. More data, including lecturers' point of view on online learning, will be collected during this upcoming academic year (corona semester 2 +3) as well as a follow up on the students' Questionnaire and interviews.

Findings of the first corona-semester indicate that 70% of all students reported low adjustment to online learning. Young students ( $\leq 35$ ) adjusted better to online learning than Older students ( $> 35$ )  $t(388)=3.35, p=.001$ . In addition, students with sufficient internet infrastructures adjusted better to online learning than students with poor ones. Factors related to online learning adjustment included personal factors (self-regulation and time management strategies and resilience) and environmental factors (internet infrastructures and quiet learning environment). While only 25% of the sample reported as being diagnosed with ADHD, 60% reported having attention difficulties.

These findings emphasize the need to create a more inclusive, student-focused academic environment, setting, and culture. Support centers for students with disabilities already have knowledge about learning strategies relevant to students from different ages, abilities, and cultures that can help improve online learning engagement. The panel will discuss the following questions:

1. What are the characteristics of a rapid change in online learning during the Covid-19 crisis?
2. What are the barriers to online learning?
3. Which factors influence students' adjustment to online learning?
4. How can we enhance adjustment to online learning from the support centers, lecturers, and academic administrators' points of view?

**Keywords:** Covid-19, online learning, higher education, adjustment, learning strategies.

## References

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