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Guidelines for Tackling Student Attrition in Open and Distance e-Learning Environments: Admin and Support Insights

Rendani Sipho Netanda¹ and Madidimalo Richard Moila²

*University of South Africa, Department of Communication Science,
College of Human Sciences, South Africa, Pretoria
E-mail:¹<netanrs@unisa.ac.za>, ²<moilamr@unisa.ac.za>*

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ABSTRACT Open and distance e-learning (ODEL) institutions leverage technological advancements and digital pedagogies to enhance accessibility and flexibility in higher education. However, student attrition remains a significant challenge, impacting students, institutions, governments, and societies. This study examines how governance and support services can reduce attrition rates in ODEL institutions. By integrating literature perspectives and empirical research findings, the study proposes guidelines for effective governance to improve student retention and success. The research is guided by an integrated student support services process model, social contract theory, in-depth interviews with lecturers, and thematic analysis. Findings indicate that both institutional and external environments contribute to high attrition rates. The study emphasises the importance of supportive learning environments, effective governance structures, preventive measures, and blended pedagogical approaches to enhance student engagement and collaborative learning. The proposed guidelines aim to help policymakers, educators, and ODEL administrators plan and implement responsive support programs to mitigate attrition.