**The On’s and Off’s of Online Education.**

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**Author Contributions.**

B.L. proposed the research question, designed the study, conducted the survey, analysed the results, drafted and edited the paper.

**Abstract.**

This Study collated and analysed the works of 8 articles written comparing a student’s satisfaction with an online course compared to a traditional one. This was done to ascertain knowledge on how a student’s educational satisfaction would differ between the two mediums of courses. The articles were categorised by what kind of conclusions they could draw about the self-efficacy and motivational differences or whether significant performance differences existed between the two. Those articles which did not find any significant changes in these areas were marked as indifferent. It was found that 6 out of the 8 articles supported a positive difference in one or more of the areas listed. These results are important because they provide information to both mature aged students and their institutions about the use of online to provide online courses that support a student’s satisfaction.

**Keywords.**

Higher education, Online and traditional students, Motivation, Student satisfaction

**Introduction.**

Online teaching and learning are making a significant impact on the students in tertiary institutions. This is Especially relevant due to the recent Covid-19 crises. More of the world is adopting similar online technologies to keep the world running. However this topic has not been limited by the recent crises, there has been substantial efforts to increase the knowledge base in distance education (Zhao et al. 2005) or online educational technologies (Hamid et al. 2015). The use of technology to enable education through distance or other web applications have risen and outpaced traditional enrollment in recent years (Atchley, Wingenbach, and Akers 2013).It is the aim of this study is to answer the research question of How the educational satisfaction of students differ between an online university course when compared to a more traditional, interpersonal course. This is a timely study for numerous reasons, relating to Covid-19 and the need to always improve accessibility and effectiveness of education. There have been other studies into the area of online education however a common limitation of the studies would involve a lack of generalization (Mullen & Tallent-Runnels, 2006). It is a priority of this paper to provide results that can be more reasonably generalized to a larger population.

The critical components of student satisfaction that will be addressed in this article will include.

**Motivation & Self-efficacy.**

Motivation has been marked as an important factor in educational satisfaction due to a higher reliance on self-learning during an online course (Mullen and Tallent-Runnels 2006). And as such a greater level of motivation is required to facilitate the difference in the focus of the learning. As such a greater level of motivation will result in a higher level of satisfaction in the course

Similarly to motivation, self-efficacy has been identified as a key component of educational satisfaction, as the perception of the students ability to complete tasks or problem solve will contribute highly to their overall satisfaction with the course, with a higher self-efficacy rating the student should experience a higher satisfaction.

**Performance.**

A student’s performance in a course for the purpose of this study is a combination of results and course completion (Atchley, Wingenbach, and Akers 2013). Whilst performance may not seem like an obvious indicator of satisfaction, it takes the importance due to

In the remaining sections of this paper the methodology used to select articles for the survey will be presented along with the method of data analysis for the results of the literature survey. Followed by the presentation of the data collected, followed by a discussion section where the validity of the results will be checked. Finally following this will be the conclusion from this paper where any generalizations will be included along with limitations of the study. A bibliography will be included at the end of the paper to include all citations within this paper.

**Method:**

A literature Survey was used in this study to explore the differences in online and traditional Courses. This medium allows for a wider range of data to be collected allowing generalization limitations to be addressed. The process in which an article will be selected into the survey will be as follows. An initial 4 articles will be selected from a google scholar search using the keywords “Online vs traditional Courses”, “Differences”, “Student Satisfaction”. From the results turned up, Articles which used interviews or surveyed a student population will be shortlisted, given the articles looks to compare or measure the effectiveness of an Online style higher education course. From the given 4 articles a further 4 will be selected through reading through the citations in the shortlisted articles. This will provide a broad network of connected works that will allow for a strong analysis. Articles will be priorities by where they were undertaken so that broad generalizations may be made.

**Results.**

Interesting and relevant figures found in the literature survey can be found below.

A screenshot of a cell phone

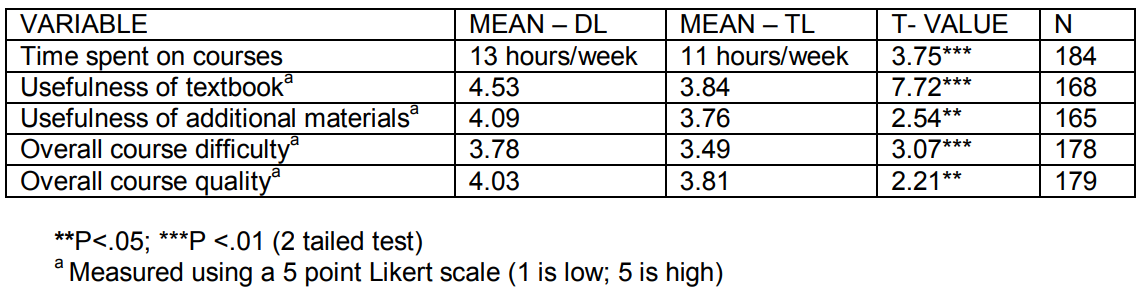
Description automatically generated

Table 1 (Hannay and Newvine 2006) - above

\*\*P<.05;\*\*\*P<.01(2 tailed test)

a Measured using a 5-point Likert scale

Table 2 (Mullen and Tallent-Runnels 2006) – Left

In Table 1 the data collected was of self-evaluation, which since the aim of the study is a students satisfaction this is an appropriate data collection. The students in the survey indicated that online courses were easier, and of a higher quality than their traditional counterpart whilst spending more time on the online course (DL).

In Table 2 there were many significant differences in their study however of the critical components selected for this study, (Mullen & Tallent-Runnels, 2006) found that self-efficacy was not a significant difference and thus there was no difference between the self-efficacy during traditional course and online course.

**Summary of literature survey.**

Using a brief overview, I had categorised the 8 articles into a few groups based on their relevance to the methodology and what their findings were. Using this analysis it was found that 6 of the 8 found that students participating in online courses had higher satisfaction then compared to traditional ones.(Hannay & Newvine 2006; Mullen & Tallent-Runnels 2006; Hamid et al. 2015; Atchley, Wingenbach and Akers 2013;Schramm, Wagner & Werner 2000;Haas & Senjo 2006). One article’s findings were indifferent or not significant enough to take note (Kim, Liu & Bonk 2005), with the last article finding significance in the negative direction and that teacher interaction was necessary(Zhai et al. 2005).

**Discussion.**

**Summary of Results.**

The results from the study have shown that there are certainly differences in educational satisfaction between an online course when compared with a more traditional one. Thus, partially answering the research question. Some of which even support the argument that the students had a higher satisfaction with online courses than with traditional ones. However, this may not be the case for everyone. As many of the participants in the studies were of a mature age (Hannay and Newvine 2006) and as such we might have found a very different result if we were focussing on a more typical university student aged between 18-19(Hannay and Newvine 2006). It is possible that because of the mature age of the participants that they would value different aspects of an educational course. As an example, many of the students may value flexibility, and as such due to the added flexibility may feel more motivated to work hard leading to a higher level of self-efficacy.This study adds to the works of many researchers before me as it shows a collective and more collated analysis of the results for a more generalisable outcome. That is that it appears as though for mature age students who are potentially have other commitments that the use of online courses can aid them in their motivation and results due to several factors outlined in the various studies surveyed (Atchley, Wingenbach, and Akers 2013).

**Limitations.**

The most significant limitation of the study was the availability of resources, notably time. A strict timeline was given to the study so that it could be assessed.

Another limitation of the study is the variety in the articles, the articles were selected broad by design and as such, it is a potential that due to this it is possible that some of the results may not be as heavily supported as found in the analysis. In future a collection of similar papers should be considered to ensure that results are not that of anomalies.

As many of the selected articles were written and conducted in the southern states of the USA, and were older students it may be unlikely to be able to generalise finding to all students, and as such it is more appropriate that the results should be related to American students who are of a more mature age.

**Conclusion.**

Whilst the number of articles sampled was small, the findings from this study support the importance of how enabling students to access a course through online means can improve their satisfaction and overall performance for certain types of students. This study has seen results that support in the right circumstances an online course can improve motivation and self-efficacy in the students including leading to better institutional outcomes in their academic endeavours.

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