**Journal Analysis: Distance Learning in Higher Education**

Nakisha D. Smith

School of Education, Liberty University

**Author Note**

Nakisha D. Smith

I have no known conflict of interest to disclose.

Correspondence concerning this article should be addressed to Nakisha D. Smith

 Email: ndsmith10@liberty.edu

**Journal Analysis: Distance Learning in Higher Education**

The COVID-19 pandemic has reshaped the landscape of higher education, forcing institutions to rapidly transition to online learning platforms. In the onset of the onset of the pandemic higher education leadership, faculty and administrators were challenged to rapidly implement safety measures for students and formulate a strategic plan to continue instruction through an unprecedented time. Paul wrote to the Corinthian church in 2 Corinthians 5:7 “for we walk by faith, not by sight*”* *King James Bible (1769/2023)*. The world had to believe in its heart and have faith in Jesus Christ that through the midst of this storm, we would come out better than before. As a result, researchers have focused on various aspects of online distance learning, examining the physical learning environments of students, exploring e-learning innovations, and evaluating the impact of online course taking on college completion. We will aim to compare the viewpoints presented in three articles: "The Physical Learning Environment of Online Distance Learners in Higher Education – A Conceptual Model," (Ng, 2021), "Advantages and Disadvantages of E-Learning Innovations during COVID-19 Pandemic in Higher Education in Poland," (Stecuła & Wolniak, 2022), and "Increasing Success in Higher Education: The Relationships of Online Course Taking With College Completion and Time-to-Degree." (Fischer et al., 2021).

**Physical Learning Environments and Barriers to Learning**

The article "The Physical Learning Environment of Online Distance Learners in Higher Education – A Conceptual Model" by Cheuk Fan Ng proposes a conceptual model that examines the physical learning environment experienced by adult, online distance learners. The model highlights the significance of various factors which include ergonomics, technology, social interaction, and environmental distractions, on the overall learning experience. Ng ultimately argues that a conducive physical learning environment positively influences engagement, motivation, and satisfaction among online distance learners (Ng, 2021).

On the other hand, the article "Advantages and Disadvantages of E-Learning Innovations during COVID-19 Pandemic in Higher Education in Poland" by Kinga Stecuła and Radosław Wolniak emphasizes the challenges faced by learners during the sudden shift to online education. They argue that the physical learning environment of online distance learners may vary significantly, depending on the resources available to students. Limited access to appropriate technology, unstable internet connections, and inadequate study spaces are identified as barriers to effective online learning (Stecuła & Wolniak, 2022).

**E-Learning Innovations during COVID-19 Pandemic:**

While the second article highlights the challenges of online learning, it also acknowledges the advantages brought about by e-learning innovations during the COVID-19 pandemic. Stecuła & Wolniak argue that advantages of online education have provided opportunities for flexible learning, self-paced studying, and the use of various multimedia resources. Additionally, e-learning has opened avenues for international collaborations and widened access to education for individuals who face geographical or physical limitations (Stecuła & Wolniak, 2022).

In contrast, the article "Increasing Success in Higher Education: The Relationships of Online Course Taking With College Completion and Time-to-Degree" by Christian Fischer et al., explores the impact of online course taking on college completion rates and time-to-degree. Fischer presents findings from a study that indicates a positive association between online course taking and improved student outcomes. The research suggests that online courses provide flexibility, enabling students to balance work and family responsibilities while pursuing their degrees. Moreover, the study finds that online course taking can accelerate time-to-degree and enhance the likelihood of college completion (Fischer et al., 2022).

**Comparisons and Contrasts**

When comparing the viewpoints of the articles, we find both similarities and differences. Firstly, all three articles acknowledge the impact of the physical learning environment on online distance learners. While Cheuk Fan Ng focuses on creating an ideal environment, Kinga Stecuła and Radosław Wolniak highlight the challenges faced by students with limited resources. However, both articles recognize the importance of technology and ergonomics in clearing the way for effective online learning.

Secondly, both Stecuła & Radosław and Fischer et al. discuss the advantages of e-learning innovations during the COVID-19 pandemic. However, their perspectives differ. Stecuła & Radosław emphasize the overall advantages, including flexibility and accessibility, while acknowledging the existing challenges. On the other hand, Fischer et al. focus on the specific benefits of online course taking, such as improved student outcomes, accelerated time-to-degree, and increased college completion rates.

**Conclusion**

In closing, the articles examined in this work shed light on different aspects of online distance learning in higher education. While the first article highlights the importance of the physical learning environment, the second article presents the advantages and disadvantages of e-learning innovations during the COVID-19 pandemic. The third article explores the positive impact of online course taking on college completion rates and time-to-degree. By comparing these viewpoints, we gain a comprehensive understanding of the challenges, opportunities, and outcomes associated with online distance learning. The findings from these articles provide valuable insights for educators, policymakers, and students as they navigate the ever-evolving landscape of higher education. Therefore, it may be reasonably deduced that although the constituents of numerous institutions for postsecondary learning were challenged by unforeseen circumstances during a global emergency, technology, innovation, and revolutionary thinking have unequivocally changed the effects that distance learning will hold over higher education.

# References

Fischer, C., Baker, R., Li, Q., Orona, G. A., & Warschauer, M. (2021). Increasing success in higher education: The relationships of online course taking with college completion and time-to-degree. *Educational Evaluation and Policy Analysis*, *44*(3), 016237372110557. <https://doi.org/10.3102/01623737211055768>

King James Bible. (2023). King James Bible Online. <https://www.kingjamesbibleonline.org/>

 (Original work published 1769)

Ng, C. F. (2021). The physical learning environment of online distance learners in higher education – A conceptual model. *Frontiers in Psychology*, *12*, 635117. <https://doi.org/10.3389/fpsyg.2021.635117>

Stecuła, K., & Wolniak, R. (2022). Advantages and disadvantages of e-learning innovations during covid-19 pandemic in higher education in Poland. *Journal of Open Innovation: Technology, Market, and Complexity*, *8*(3), 159. <https://doi.org/10.3390/joitmc8030159>