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Contents

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FEATURE ARTICLE

Psychosocial Aspects of Academic Life

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STRESS IN ACADEMIA

Stress is a normal part of life. Yaribeygi et al. (2017) define stress as any intrinsic or extrinsic stimulus that evokes a biological response, and responses to these stressors are called stress responses. Depending upon the type, timing, and severity of stressors, the body can respond in different ways. Today's students deal with more stressors than ever before, whether it is the K-12 system or higher education programs. Graduate and doctoral students often struggle with stressors as they meet the demands of completing their education. Many times, students find themselves more vulnerable because of the highly competitive nature of higher education programs. Graduate students who seek advanced degrees often experience anxiety and challenges as they transition from undergraduate programs or professional positions (Hullinger & Hogan, 2014). Other issues facing graduate students include feelings of not belonging among underrepresented racial or ethnic groups (Miller & Orsillo, 2020; Stone et al., 2018), and even international students struggling to adjust to new protocols and practices within American institutions (Bang & Montgomery, 2013). Earning a doctoral degree is a high point in one's education, with approximately 100,000 students beginning their degree in the United States (Carnegie Classification, n.d.). With this being the highest level of education one can attain, we often find some of the brightest and most ambitious students within this level of higher education. With these positive attributes also comes much pressure. Astonishingly, it is estimated that 50% of all doctoral students complete their degrees, with many leaving their programs during the first year (Walker, Golde, Jones, Bueschel, & Hutchings, 2008; Esping, 2010; Lovitts, 2001). Therefore, it is necessary to better understand students' psychosocial well-being and academic life and positive coping strategies.

COMPONENTS OF STUDENT PSYCHOSOCIAL HEALTH

The term psychosocial well-being includes a broad spectrum of emotional, social, and physical components of health. Gustafsson et al. (2010) revealed that the psychosocial environment can be divided into two areas: (1) factors related to school failure and academic stress and (2) factors related to teacher-student and student-student relationships and the social climate of the school setting. Specific psychosocial factors related to the first area may include stressors such as maintaining grades, attitudes, motivation, persistence, learning abilities, and emotions (Tindle et al., 2022). The second set of

factors relate to the pressures of meeting the expectations of parents' and instructors' expectations and even competitiveness among other students. These also include the factor of social isolation that stemmed from the recent pandemic. The absence of social connections due to isolation practices during the pandemic left students confused about program expectations and miscommunication or lack of communication with their peers and instructors (Ali & Kohun, 2006; Lovitts, 2001). In addition to the financial burdens of paying for their education, these factors often complicate the educational process for graduate and doctoral students.

IMPORTANCE OF PSYCHOSOCIAL HEALTH AND COPING SKILLS

So, one may ask why the psychosocial aspects of academic life is an important topic to discuss. For starters, there is a growing interest among colleges and universities as federal monies are now tied to student retention rates as well as services provided to students. The interest universities and colleges have in developing support services for healthy lifestyles and assistance programs has increased in recent years. Student needs have become a concern as higher education identifies the importance of providing specific care in the academic context. By addressing the psychosocial aspects of academic life, student academic performance and health can be improved.

Another important consideration is helping students with positive coping strategies while earning advanced degrees. In our daily lives, we must learn coping skills to positively process stimulus factors each and every day. The way we cope depends upon the individual personality and situation. Folkman (2010) states that coping skills are cognitive and behavioral strategies used to deal with stressors. Social needs have been identified as one of the most important coping tools. Having a close social circle can provide students with emotional support from family and friends, professional support through mentoring and guidance of instructors and professionals, and practical support as it relates to finances and completing tasks (Heller & Rook, 1997; House, 1981; Nelson & Brice, 2008; Rosenholtz, 1989; Schaefer, Coyne, & Lazarus, 1981; Singh & Billingsley, 1998). As challenges arise, support services and coping strategies are placed on students. Knowing how to cope with the psychosocial aspects of academia not only equips students with the necessary tools and strategies to succeed but also enables colleges and universities to better understand student needs while completing their degree programs.

CONCLUSION

Given the nature of earning advanced degrees, institutions of higher education can be a positive part of a student's academic achievements. Positive psychosocial skills can provide students with richer educational experiences long after graduation. Understanding the stressors of academic life can positively impact student GPA, persistence in obtaining their degrees, and overall well-being. This issue looks at the psychosocial aspects of the academic life of graduate and doctoral students. The articles consider the different ways students encounter and deal with the stressors of academia. We have completed a group of interesting studies of well-being and coping.

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ORIGINAL REPORT

"Roadblocks and Passageways": Pandemic Lessons for Helping Graduate Students Survive and Thrive in Times of Crisis

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ABSTRACT

Graduate students and universities continue to be challenged by the COVID-19 pandemic. This qualitative study explored how U.S. graduate students (n=19) experienced and navigated pandemic challenges to their education by using Pierre Bourdieu's concepts of habitus, capital, and field. Respondents' abilities to manage changes caused by the pandemic were largely dependent on the capital they or their informal networks had and the field where they positioned during pre-pandemic and pandemic. Institutions' characteristics and supports greatly influenced students' habitus and sense of belonging. Study respondents' ability to maintain their educational trajectories was tied to both their assessment of their institution as caring and inclusive and their own existing resources. Overall, respondents considered themselves "super lucky," recognizing their privilege and the relative safety that allowed them to continue their education, and expressed compassion for people who faced struggles greater than their own. We provide recommendations for how students and institutions can create sustainable and inclusive support systems to enhance graduate students' abilities to adapt and respond to individual and social crises.

Keywords

Graduate students, Graduate education, COVID-19, Habitus, Crisis Institutional support

STUDENT EXPERIENCES DURING COVID-19

Institutions of higher education navigated unprecedented challenges during the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic, including changes in student recruitment, retention, and engagement. Students reported difficulties adjusting to educational changes and taking full advantage of online learning opportunities (Baloran, 2020; Johnson et al., 2020; Kapasia et al., 2020; Kee, 2021). Studies worldwide reported heightened levels of PTSD, anxiety, loneliness and isolation, and depression among students pursuing higher education (Baloran, 2020; Cohen et al., 2020; Craig et al., 2020; Kapasia et al., 2020; Rakhmanov & Dane, 2020). Studies also reported microaggressions and racial disparities, including increased vulnerability to COVID and poorer care and outcomes (Gray et al., 2020; Jones, 2021). An emerging body of literature reported that students dissipated emotional burdens and distress by utilizing a variety of coping strategies (Raaper et al., 2022; Velarde-Garcia et al., 2022). Moxham et al. (2022, p. 3) found that "staying connected" to social networks and "creating a routine" and "exercise" were among the main coping strategies employed by nursing students.

Literature indicates that a sense of belonging among traditionally excluded student populations can develop when institutional environments foster a feeling safe, valued, and understood. One mixed-methods study on inclusive learning environments in nursing education (Dowling et al., 2021) found that a sense of safety enhanced student well-being, cognitive development, increased engagement, motivation, satisfaction with learning, and confidence. Imeri and colleagues (2021) suggest that graduate students may be better positioned for a successful education, even when facing serious challenges, if institutions implement tailored support strategies.

COVID-19 provides an opportunity to better understand what allows students to survive and thrive during times of individual and collective crisis. In light of ongoing public health concerns, natural disasters, and political upheaval, it is important for institutions of higher education to better understand how to support students and help them work toward academic and professional goals, or, in the words of one respondent, to set up "passageways" rather than "roadblocks."

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

This study examined personal and institutional characteristics which provided sustainable support systems for graduate students during times of crisis using Pierre Bourdieu's (1977) concepts of capital, field, habitus, and hysteresis. We chose this framework for its insights into the totality of student experiences as they unfold over time and for its attention to the interplay of personal, social, and institutional factors (Bathmaker, 2015; Bathmaker, 2021). Bourdieu (1977) defines capital as resources possessed by individuals and groups, which take three primary forms. Economic capital includes money, material ownership, and property rights; social capital includes social connections and networks; and cultural capital is the resources an individual acquires throughout life (Richardson, 1986). Cultural capital often manifests in knowing how to successfully navigate social situations and settings (Fearnley, 2020). Bourdieu's concept of field is comprised of often overlapping social structures, such as educational institutions or families, where individuals are situated. Field can foster or impede the creation and maintenance of various forms of capital. For example, an educational institution (field) can hold social events for its students to help foster peer networks (social capital). Bourdieu's concept of habitus is the relationship between the social structures and experiences accrued over a person's life (Maton, 2008). Crisis (which Bourdieu described as hysteresis[1]) occurs when there is disequilibrium between the habitus and the field. The struggle to adjust one's habitus to respond to adverse changes occurring (like a pandemic) in the field can result in crisis (Bourdieu, 2000; Donovan et al., 2017). In this study, we use the lens of capital, field, habitus, and crisis to analyze how graduate students adjusted to changes in their educational experiences and explore the implications of these experiences for graduate schools in helping students manage their education during times of personal or collective crisis.

METHODS

In this study, we analyzed data from interviews in the fall of 2020 with 19 graduate students and recent alumni. We asked: 1) how challenges caused by COVID-19 impacted them, 2) how they coped with changes, and 3) what supports were helpful.

SAMPLE AND DATA COLLECTION

We recruited study respondents through existing networks and snowball sampling (Parker et al., 2019). To capture diverse experiences, we recruited participants from different schools and disciplines in different stages of their respective programs. Most were women, pursued a master's degree, and lived with family members, significant others, or roommates. See Table 1 for participant characteristics.

Table 1

Characteristics of the Interview Sample (N = 19)

Gender Identity	14 Women (73.7%) 5 Men (26.3%)
School Type	13 Public (68.4%) 6 Private (31.6%)
Academic Discipline	5 Health professions (26.3%) 6 Helping professions[2] (31.6%) 3 STEM[3] (15.8%) 3 Business (15.8%) 2 Social sciences and humanities (10.5%)
Degree	12 Master's (63.2%) 7 PhD (36.8%)
Domestic/ International	15 Domestic students (78.9%) 4 International students (21.1%)
Graduation status	18 Current students (94.7%) 1 Recent graduate (5.3%)
Living Arrangement	9 Living with their spouse/partner or children (47.3%) 5 Living with parents/grandparents (26.3%) 4 Living with roommate(s) (21.1%) 1 Living alone (5.3%)

[1] We adopt the term crisis due to derogatory associations of the term hysteria/hysteresis.

[2] Includes master's level social work, counseling, education, and psychology programs

[3] Science, technology, engineering, and math

Participation was voluntary and confidential; we referred to respondents by chosen pseudonyms except for one duplicated pseudonym that we changed. Study procedures were approved by the authors' IRB. Semi-structured interviews lasting between 45-80 minutes were conducted virtually by the second author, a third-year PhD student, and PhD students in the first author's doctoral-level qualitative research class, including the third author. Authors' experiences of attending/teaching graduate school during COVID-19 provided generative insights for data collection and analysis (Cousin, 2010). We mitigated bias by using multiple interviewers and a three-person data analysis team comprised of students and faculty (Padgett, 2017). Interviews were transcribed using automated technology and cleaned by the research team.

DATA ANALYSIS

The authors implemented a multi-step process that began by reading through transcripts while listening to recorded interviews to check for accuracy while immersing ourselves in the data. We then selected one transcript for simultaneous independent coding using codes grounded in the conceptual framework (e.g., cultural capital) and emergent from the data (e.g., super lucky) (Bowen, 2006). The authors discussed our independent codes and created a consensus coding scheme which the first two authors used to code the remaining interviews, revising as new codes emerged in subsequent interviews. The third author served as a quality check by coding two interviews. The first two authors met weekly for peer debriefing to discuss coding and their understanding of the dataset as a whole (Maxwell, 2012). All four authors collaborated on the final data analyses and interpretive framing.

FINDINGS

We report our findings analyzed according to Bourdieu's concepts of capital, habitus, and crisis. A summary of themes, codes, and exemplary quotes is provided in Table 2, followed by narrative detail.

Table 2

Summary of Themes Codes and Exemplary Quotes

Themes	Codes	Exemplary Quotes
Economic Capital	Employment Housing Financial support	I don't ever feel like complaining too much because...I'm gonna come out with a master's degree and that's just a huge privilege in general... I've been able to stay home, rely on my parents, even [when] I was unemployed for...three full months. And even during that time, I was still able to be at home, be completely secure and not be too worried for basic things. (*Ally)*
Social Capital	Inside information Coping mechanisms Networks Peers	The group of people that they selected to the program [is] an empathetic group of people and I think there's just sort of an understanding that this is a rough time for everybody. It's not a competitive program. We're not trying to outrank each other. With the election yesterday: "How's everybody doing," "I know we're all stressed. Remember to take care of yourselves." (*Jill)*
Cultural Capital	Academics Family Geography Virtual learning	This has really negatively impacted my relationship with my cohort because we... start[ed] in September, we're all new. We start to slowly get to know each other and, you know how long that takes. And then March...it just all ended…. we all used to do work in the same space of grad student lounge and so I definitely don't see my cohort anymore. I don't talk to them. And then some people who I started to make friendships with also didn't come back to the city. (*Molly)*
Field	Communication Feeling supported Virtual proficiency Institutional or department culture	[My advisor] has always wanted to find out how I was doing mentally and that I was coping with all the changes in the world. And also my department. Actually, my entire program. Also with the death of George Floyd and all the racial issues that happened concurrently with the pandemic...they had some sessions with all students just to discuss how graduate students were feeling about that, how they're processing the racial tensions in the country. Actually, they actually even bought, they purchased certain books, two books on racial tensions for all the students in the program. And sent them in the mail to us to read. And so we are having book club discussions about that, just so that we can keep the conversation going. (*David)*
Habitus	"Super lucky" Compassion Pandemic opportunities	[Y]ou can't just rely on routine and habit, [which are] pretty much worthless at this point, whatever your reference points were before… especially when you're trying to develop a product or service or a mission or whatever it is, considering the way the world is and hearing the things that people are struggling with, has provided opportunity for innovative ideas and being very clever...there are so many chances for students to be coming out of school to start their own businesses, to start their own initiatives, to look at things entirely different. And I think that is a huge bright spot. *(John)*

CAPITAL

Economic Capital

Economic capital was primarily manifested through living situations as they related to financial stability and their ability to study. No longer able to afford housing, Zoe moved in with her boyfriend and his daughter. "Prior to the pandemic… I could afford to live by myself and work and go to school. After that, though, [it] wasn't an option for me to work and support

myself and go to school." While Zoe struggled to balance her new responsibilities with her graduate student workload, she was grateful for the financial security that enabled her to remain in school. After losing her job, Ally moved in with her family. Similarly grateful for her safety net, Ally struggled to concentrate while dogs barked, and her mother taught virtual kindergarten in the next room. David "had to request extensions on almost all deadliness for my courses," forced to work at home with two young children. He explained: "before the pandemic, my strategy for work was to do my work in the office… [During the COVID lockdown] it was difficult for me to work productively at home [except] in the middle of the night." John's spacious home that he shared with pets and his partner "made his life a lot better." He mused that in closer quarters "I would have had a really, really hard time."

The second most prevalent concern was health costs. Linda refrained from going to the emergency room after contracting COVID-19 because of concerns that her school insurance might not cover the cost. Her health insurance-related concerns grew upon graduation without job prospects, contrary to pre-pandemic expectations of immediate employment with health benefits. As a student in a health-related profession, her own experience led Linda to question her own professional path and the healthcare system more broadly.

While most respondents suffered losses, some saw benefits. Biochemistry engineering student Dan gained valuable experience "working in a COVID lab" that helped him get his "foot in the door in an industry."

Social Capital

Existing social capital was key to respondents' pandemic experience. Molly lived with her "friend who was also a PhD student last year." She explained: "talking with her, debriefing at the end of the days, definitely keeps me sane because… I haven't left the house in five days." Virtual instruction left many respondents disconnected from their academic institutions and peers. Sophia moved away from her university to live with her husband. While satisfied with the emotional and financial benefits, she suffered academically: "[Philosophy students] heavily rely on interactions between students and [between] the students and the teachers….the pandemic and online process made this harder."

Loss of informal interactions also reduced academic support. Helen perceived reaching out to peers virtually as intrusive because she was unable to gauge people's openness to conversation like she would during in-person interactions. Others similarly noted that lack of face-to-face encounters necessitated formal meeting requests with advisors or instructors. Such concerns were pronounced among international students, like Molly, who had limited opportunities to build pre-pandemic relationships: "Th[e pandemic] has really negatively impacted my relationship with my cohort because …we started to slowly get to know each other [in September]…and then [in] March...it just all ended." Conversely, the uncertainty and confusion of the pandemic brought first-year student Jessica closer to her peers.

> It was really helpful to have friends in the class [and]...not go through it alone and just ask for help and support others when they need it and have some solidarity. We always joke that we're trauma bonding cause this has been very extreme.

Academic support and social connection among peers were key strengths for respondents who had them. Respondents noted the difficulty of their academic experiences when such ties were absent, which some tried to remedy. David was one of several respondents who created co-learning opportunities; he and a peer "set up study groups virtually and we almost meet every other day... [T]hings have improved education-wise, learning-wise [so they can] keep...learning at a steady pace."

Cultural Capital

Cultural capital represents non-economic factors such as family, language, values, and social mobility. Involvement in his educational institution as a teaching assistant gave John access to insider information. "I get a little bit more information or maybe earlier information because I've TAed... I already knew what they were projecting ….[which] makes it easier for me."

Respondents described adaptations that helped them cope with new educational and personal realities. Helen used special eyeglasses, eye drops, and dual monitors to cope with prolonged screen exposure. Zoe relied on her refrigerator calendar to manage increased personal, family, and school-related obligations. Bella appreciated virtual learning opportunities: "this pandemic [is] actually telling people 'you actually can start study[ing] in another way.'" Molly devised a system of structured breaks to avoid "working 24/7." Jill, who described herself as "a pretty anxious person," sought counseling. Other respondents used exercise for physical and emotional relief. Brian found running "really beneficial, just to get out of the house and…see some greenery." Bella's exercise routine provided her with a sense of normalcy; she tried to "work out every day and try to have a regular life."

Respondents took precautions to protect their own health and their loved ones, mitigating concerns through actions they were able to control, although these tradeoffs often exacted a social price. Jessica was frustrated by the cavalier attitudes of her peers and administrators in her health-related course of study and also felt isolated by her discordant experience:

> Now that I know that people in our class have COVID, I'm definitely…wary about going in…. Which kind of sucks, because the building is beautiful, it's got …a

> nice library, and obviously spending more time with classmates would be great...

Students whose education required experiential training, such as internships or laboratory work, found the virtual environment especially divergent from their graduate school expectations. However, most students believed that their university adaptations were justified.

FIELD

In this study, the primary field of interest was the graduate institution in which each participant was situated. Students in universities with existing IT infrastructure that had already been utilizing technology in teaching fared better at the onset of the pandemic. Respondents also noted the program type and culture, the institution's willingness to engage with other pressing social issues that impact students, and institutional communication as factors within the field that influenced their experience.

Institutions' Type, Culture, and Resources

Becca's university had hybrid in-person and online learning prior to the pandemic. "we already had Zoom as a platform that we knew how to work...that familiarity that we had with these online platforms was very helpful in just transitioning over." David also found his school very helpful when he had computer difficulties.

> the IT support teams [at my school] have tried to put a lot of troubleshooting information online and try to make it simple. I've had one person remotely access my computer … and fix what needed to be done. So I think that's very important for people who are not tech-savvy.

In addition to technical support, respondents reported helpful pedagogical adjustments. John's school changed curricular content to enhance students' learning: "they flipped the semesters [of a core content course] because the 2nd semester's big project actually fits better if you are remote." In contrast, Linda's school was unprepared and ill-adapted for the virtual learning that COVID-19 precipitated. "They bought some online [simulation] programs that allowed us to 'practice' medicine ... Honestly, the things that they implemented didn't help me at all…[when] we couldn't be on [in-person] rotations."

The six respondents studying in helping professions (e.g., social work or teaching) and those in smaller programs felt supported by their university or program.

> I'm just lucky, because [in my field], they're very supportive people, they're like, "we know how you feel." They're validating me, they're telling me like, here are my options, and that I can contact them whenever. So I…really felt supported. (Anne, counseling program)

A number of other students described how their university or department culture or environment impacted them personally and academically.
David, characterized his "small [health] program" as "big on a culture of togetherness while learning advances in science." Holistic caring was a hallmark of school culture that shaped his graduate experiences.

> [My advisor] has always wanted to find out how I was doing mentally and that I was coping with all the changes in the world. And also my department, actually, my entire program. Also with the death of George Floyd and all the racial issues that happened concurrently with the pandemic...they had some sessions with all students just to discuss how graduate students were feeling about that, how they're processing the racial tensions in the country. They actually even bought…two books on racial tensions for all the students in the program and sent them in the mail to us to read. And so we are having book club discussions…[to] keep the conversation going.

David was "impressed" and "relieved" that his school addressed racial tensions. "The leadership around me has been empathic and concerning and responsible." The institution's choice not to live in a bubble helped David feel supported.

In contrast, Dan's large university had a poor record of responding to health-related crises. He described a pre-pandemic incident where the university's inaction and inappropriate medical care allegedly contributed to a student's death. Dan believed this tragic, well-publicized incident led to his university's better pandemic response, an example of how pre-pandemic factors could influence institutional responses to the pandemic.

Communication

Communication played a major role in student assessments of school performance. These views shifted as communication strategies and student needs changed. Respondents described varied and multiple information sources, including program directors, department heads, advisors, and university-level administrators. Regardless of their source, quantity and quality of communication were important.

Roadblocks or Passages

Communications gave respondents the sense that their institutions cared, even when they merely conveyed a lack of new information. Dan's department head "was very proactive...as soon as he found out big news or any teacher had big news, they would email the students. So I never really, actually had to go out of my way to find stuff out." Conversely, lack of communication characterized Linda's pandemic

education: "weeks [w]ould go by and we wouldn't hear anything from our school…they didn't update us on the progress of anything...We were sitting at home and we're like 'cool, so what are we doing, am I graduating in December?'"

Initially, "daily emails" made Mary feel "like things were being told to us in a transparent and genuine way." Over time, she and her classmates suspected that the school's guidance "was driven by…risk aversion or brand reputation risk, and not what [students] cared about, which was just science and safety." The "shift toward fear tactics" and "[very complex] guidance [which] formed a bit of a maze about what gatherings you are or are not allowed to do" caused mistrust when Mary started "to feel like the administration is more interested in setting up roadblocks than setting up passages."

Mary's suspicion that student wellbeing was secondary was echoed by other respondents who reported unsatisfactory institutional responses. Dante's university's response was "iffy" when it "made national news because we brought all the students back and then like two weeks later sent everyone home because cases were spiking." Dante criticized his university for sending inconsistent messages.

> you're still expected to go into [the] lab and get research done, which was kind of at odds with what the Chancellor was sending out with his emails….[W]e weren't sure what to make of [the] inconsistency between the Dean of grad students and higher administration.

Dante noted conflicting messages: "we're going to follow the local [government guidance], but actually, we're not,"

Mary and Dante's experience contrasted markedly with John's: our university has done a good job communicating with the students about what they're doing and why they're doing it. The 'why' is really important because regardless of how much you have science literacy and believe in it, you want to know that these things are being done intelligently and not haphazardly.

Transparency bolstered John's trust in his institution's guidance. Dan similarly appreciated his supervisor, whose "strict adherence to COVID guidelines is justified" and "reinforces the idea in our minds that COVID is a really serious illness, and it's something that we shouldn't take lightly."

Feeling Supported: They Care

Respondents appreciated hearing a diverse set of institutional actors who addressed different aspects of their education. Some took advantage of pre-existing channels of communication; Helen's department used weekly seminars to touch base and share information. Helen also had a department chair "always willing to have a meeting" and an advisor who "care[d] about me a lot." While students did not avail themselves of all services offered, those who received regular and appropriate communication felt that when and if they needed assistance, their institution would be responsive. Jill got a sense from her university that "they care":

> We get a lot of email blasts from the [Large University] about everything. I'm not gonna lie and say that I read them all. I appreciate that they're checking in… I haven't felt out of the loop and from the beginning… [My program director] was checking in and keeping us updated and I didn't feel like it was over-communicative. I thought it was the perfect amount like she was listening... She took a poll to check in and see how we were feeling about online versus possibly going in.

One facet of Jill's satisfaction echoed by other respondents is that her university communicated to elicit student feedback, rather than only to disseminate information.

Respondents' assessments of institutional communications were largely based on what these communications implied or signaled. Compassion and recognition of student difficulties offered comfort, reassurance, and connections. Institutional communications that seemed cavalier or out of touch made students feel that their institutions were callous or dismissive. When asked what advice she would have for administrators or faculty, Linda replied that "although this probably seems like a leisurely time for students", institutions should know that it is "still a very challenging time." For example, she shared that lack of "structure" and "face-to-face interaction…might very very negatively influence the [a]bility to study and their ability to focus" for students who needed these. In this regard, respondents appreciated all forms of flexibility that could be adapted to individual student needs and priorities. These included pass/fail grading, changes in the types and number of required internship hours, and liberal extension policies. Brian's university prioritized student wellbeing: "They were hyper understanding and very flexible in terms of trying to make sure that everybody was taking care of themselves, first and foremost, instead of stressing about academics."

On the other hand, some students who were frustrated by their institution's responses indicated that institutions did not center on student well-being. At least two students (Linda and Zoe) believed that their schools should have considered partial tuition reimbursement. Linda shared her frustration: "I wasn't doing anything. I wasn't learning anything…I was paying for all the fees that the school charged us... my school decided to increase tuition…"

HABITUS

Study participants explicitly described how their habitus impacted their ongoing experience of graduate education. Findings regarding habitus included recognition of relative good fortune and privilege, critique avoidance of self or others, and new opportunities.

"Super Lucky"

An overarching theme was a sense of being fortunate, often in comparison to imagined others. Despite losing her job employment and housing, Ally felt "super lucky" to be able to move back into her childhood home.

> I don't ever feel like complaining too much because...I'm gonna come out with a master's degree and that's just a huge privilege in general ... that I've been able to… rely on my parents, even [when] I was unemployed for...three full months [and] be completely secure and not be too worried for basic things.

Jill was grateful for her parents' "generosity" in paying part of her tuition, and being spared the worry of having to care for others:

> I don't have any caregiving responsibilities, no children, no elderly family to take care of right now. As I understand it, it's very, very difficult to both parent and work from home full-time during a pandemic, so I'm immensely grateful that's one less thing... [I] count myself among the lucky ones.

Linda's partner helped her maintain housing: "if I [were] single, if I [were] by myself, this would be a very different conversation."

Other respondents considered themselves fortunate academically. Dan had already finished gathering laboratory data before the shutdown, which would not have been possible after access to campus facilities became inaccessible. He compared his situation to lab mates who were at the earlier stages of their research.

> I lost maybe a month or two in the lab time. I was writing a paper to get published so I focused on that rather than gathering data for other papers [at a lab]. So, I didn't miss too much, but… I have lab mates that really needed those two months of time.

Similarly, Dante considered himself lucky compared to his undergraduate students and his graduate student partner, because his graduation date and "timeline [weren't] significantly affected."

Respondents are often managed by pooling resources or relying on friends, family, or significant others. Despite hardships, participants were grateful for the ability to progress on their educational goals, often noting that this was not a possibility for everyone.

Pandemic Opportunities

While some respondents were uncertain of the long-term impact of COVID-19 on their future plans, a few saw opportunities stemming from the pandemic. John observed that new insights and new needs provide openings to

> …think things through differently….[H]hearing the things that people are struggling with, has provided an opportunity for innovative ideas and being very clever...there are so many chances for students to be coming out of school to start their own businesses, to look at things entirely different. And I think that is a huge bright spot.

Becca learned "about how to be ethical and how to create boundaries" in the virtual world that she had not considered before by being "forced to go out of [her] comfort zone and try new things and test new technology" during the pandemic. David welcomed the increased use of virtual platforms that created employment possibilities that were not geographically limited.

DISCUSSION

We analyzed our findings using Bourdieu's lenses of capital, field, and habitus. Respondents pre-existing cultural, social, and economic capital played a key role in their ability to continue their education with little disruption. Respondents often relied on a combination of resources and support such as living with a family member and having a peer network to remain in graduate school. These social networks helped students stay on track academically; some respondents also used them as spaces to "feel okay and not go through things alone" (Jessica). While social support mitigated immediate financial, emotional, and academic concerns, it seemed less effective in relieving concerns related to future employment or health worries.

Access to cultural and social capital was particularly challenging for the self-identified international students in our study (Bella, Helen, Sophia, and Zoe). All four struggled with remote instruction and reduced social ties with peers. John, who was not an international student himself, also noted such concerns. This is consistent with literature reporting that international students may lack social networks, including peers, which can make it hard to acculturate, adjust, achieve a sense of belonging, or experience stable mental health (Han et al., 2017; Matusitz, 2015; Yakunina et al., 2013). The same may be true for others whose pre-existing social capital is not well-matched for higher education settings, such as first-generation students, or those who are immigrants.

In the face of many challenges, students' habitus was characterized by a shared appreciation, empathy, and further understanding. One central finding was the development of what we call a "super lucky" narrative. Super lucky narratives conveyed a sense of good fortune even when respondents'

situation was not optimal. They included gratitude (Emmons & McCullough, 2003) for their own economic and social capital (e.g., financial resources, a job, or being in their country of origin), which they compared to imagined others who may have had to leave school due to job or financial loss, or who were far away from family and familiar surroundings. They expressed empathy for these imagined others, often within a social justice framework that centered on the experience of immigrants, racialized minorities, and those who struggled financially or socially. Super lucky narratives that construct respondents' conditions in a relatively positive light and avoid criticizing others warrant further exploration as a possible protective factor or coping mechanism in the face of crisis or ongoing hardships.

The fact that respondents were enrolled in graduate programs (field) implies that our respondents possessed sufficient capital to navigate higher education coming into the pandemic. Nevertheless, respondents with less social and economic capital to fall back on (e.g., international students, students with less financial means, or students away from family) experienced added challenges during the pandemic. This provides support for Bourdieu's (1984) contention that institutions of higher education were set up to reward the upper classes and devalue students from the lower and working classes. Students in our study with less financial or social capital, as well as less facility and experience with US higher education, struggled more than respondents who had these resources. Our findings suggest that Bourdieu's argument may apply to other axes of privilege and marginalization, such as nationality or ethnoracial identification.

Respondents' habitus included an adaptation of existing capital within their institutional field. In some cases, these were simple or temporary adjustments to personal space, such as creating a desk from an upside-down hamper or changing one's living situation or routine. In the academic setting, students found new ways to study such as virtual study groups, which often improved their learning. When academic or living adaptations were compromised, students mitigated their fears and frustrations by exercising, using adaptive tools, or connecting socially. Many respondents viewed their adaptations with pride and humor, which may have enhanced their sense of self-efficacy and alleviated feelings of despair or hopelessness. Some respondents also saw opportunities for the future, envisioning new career paths and learning opportunities or, as in the case of John, a chance to rethink what mattered to him in life.

As they recounted examples of resilience in the face of difficulty, respondents noted that how they were situated academically impacted their pandemic experiences. One factor that came up repeatedly was their area of study, which is consistent with Chirikov et al. (2020) finding that students from science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM) fields reported fewer mental health concerns than students from outside of STEM fields. We also found that respondents' fields of study mattered in distinct ways. For example, respondents in the helping professions appreciated the stance and attitude of peers and institutions that seemed primed to understand the emotional toll of the pandemic and meet it using professional sensitivity to the need for empathy and support. At the same time, most respondents from biomedical fields felt they were joining a crucial field during the pandemic, which came with job prospects and a sense of purpose. These were in contrast with students from humanities-related majors, who shared more concerns about their chosen field and did not indicate specialized awareness or acknowledgment of the pandemic impact on students. Respondents also noted that the timing of the pandemic in relation to their stage of education or training influenced their experiences and perceptions of disruption.
Respondents felt cared for by their institutions when their institutions communicated regularly about important news or the progression of COVID-19. They also noted the importance of institutions actively soliciting input on how students were doing and creating channels for ongoing two-way communication between students and the administration. Our findings also support Imeri and colleagues' (2021) recommendations to create safe environments for communication, indicating prioritizing to avoid flooding and cultivating good relationships (e.g., between students and advisors, mentors, or department-level administrators or support staff) that can be adapted to various circumstances and address students' non-academic needs.

One qualitative study exploring non-traditional student experiences during COVID-19 found that non-traditional students rarely utilized formal institutional support (Raaper et al., 2022). In contrast, another study showed the benefit of the communication model used by the University of Wisconsin at Milwaukee (UWM) (Brown, 2021, July 27), when it found through a school survey that approximately 70% of students and staff were experiencing traumatic symptoms affected by the pandemic. UWM has more students of color and vulnerable students than any other University of Wisconsin System institution, and many experienced deaths of family members or friends and heavy caregiver burden. In response to this finding, the school launched several programs designed to help students return to campus, including creating meditation spaces and guided discussion. Our study respondents indicated that racial and ethnic minority groups often faced what is often referred to as "twin pandemics" of systemic racism compounded by COVID-19 (Hershberg & Sandmeyer, 2021; Jones, 2021), which may also contribute to the disproportionate negative impacts found in Brown (2021) and corroborates that institutional support seems to be particularly critical to students who experience other forms of marginalization or struggles that can compound their experiences and the impacts of crises.

LIMITATIONS

This study has important limitations. The first is the sample size. While 19 respondents may be considered a small sample, it meets Nelson's (2017) "conceptual depth criteria" (p. 559) in that it is of sufficient size to provide important insights into

graduate student experiences during the pandemic. We recruited through pre-existing networks and snowball sampling, which may have introduced sampling bias. To mitigate the possibility of sampling bias in recruitment, we made efforts to include participants with diverse backgrounds, disciplines, and academic settings. Another potential sampling bias is that our respondents were all students who remained in school or who graduated; we did not interview students who dropped out of school. This means that our respondents' experiences may not reflect the experiences of those who were unable to sustain graduate education during the pandemic. Additional research is required to better understand the pandemic experiences of this latter group including how they fared upon leaving and whether they returned to graduate school. Based on what our respondents shared, it is likely that students who halted their education may have been more marginalized and have had less capital than current study respondents, which bears further investigation.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Our findings suggest recommendations to support graduate student success during episodic or ongoing hardship; these suggestions may also enhance graduate students' general well-being. At the individual level, students should consider whether graduate education is financially and socially feasible. If possible, they should identify and develop necessary capital prior to embarking on graduate education and seek institutions that can augment their existing personal capital – for example through the provision of financial aid or mentorship programs. If universities and graduate schools wish to attract and retain a diverse student body, they must be aware of the need for different types of capital and how such needs for capital may impact student educational success. Programs that facilitate student financial stability may include paid internships and campus employment opportunities, as well as expanding government-supported programs such as federal work-study.

Our study also points to the need for institutional efforts toward meaningful social inclusion rather than placing such responsibilities exclusively on students. Coe-Nesbitt and colleagues (2021) defined graduate student thriving as a "holistic, interconnected, and multi-dimensional construct" (p. 4). Engaging and connecting were two of six overarching themes that graduate students in their study identified as components of thriving, characterized by a sense of belonging and involvement in academic and social activities, that were echoed in our findings. University-based peer and community networks may provide important safety nets during times of personal or societal upheaval and may foster inclusion more generally. For example, a mixed-methods study found that undergraduate students in a peer mentor program achieved better academic outcomes, and more students remained in school for both first-generation students and non-first-generation students (Graham et al., 2022). We therefore recommend institutional support for peer mentoring or study groups that may facilitate academic and social integration, as well as campus activities to create and foster community among students. Since graduate students are less likely than undergraduate students to live on campus, universities may need to carefully and creatively target such efforts to coincide with students' presence and be sensitive to how they access and use university spaces and events.

Our findings underscore the need for holistic consideration of graduate students, for whom their studies are but one part of their multifaceted lives. The literature that corroborates our findings points to the importance of overall well-being on student academic performance and success. It also points to the importance of recognizing the varying resources and needs among a diverse array of students, which necessitates a flexible approach. A combination of templated responses such as peer mentoring systems should be paired with more personalized responses. Our study indicates that such investments can be beneficial for students, especially during times of crisis, and can also help with student recruitment and retention; these measures of success also contribute to the university's reputation and ranking, making them worthwhile institutional investments.

Our study also points to pandemic-generated adaptations which may be beneficial during "normal" times. Mirroring study respondents' resourcefulness and learning in adversity, we recommend that universities take stock of promising adaptations. For example, virtual or flex classrooms, where some students are virtual and others face-to-face, may help universities recruit and support students outside of their geographical areas (Hill, 2021; National Center for Education

Statistics, 2021). Regularly recording lectures (with adequate privacy provisions) with closed captioning technology is another adaptation suggested by our respondents as being overall beneficial to their learning. We recommend working closely with students, who can best articulate what they find most helpful. Consistent and reliable communication with students will allow institutions to learn about health, safety, and other concerns. Institutions should establish channels for under-resourced students and marginalized students so that their voices and concerns can be heard and addressed.

Finally, our study shows the importance of personal attitude in students' coping with upheaval. Individual students may cultivate gratitude or a positive outlook. Our findings also indicate that student attitudes do not develop in a vacuum; students are greatly influenced by the responses and culture of their institutions. Our respondents were concerned about societal issues of social justice and fairness and were appreciative of institutional responses to calls for racial justice. We recommend institutions pay attention to the special needs of students and people who are marginalized in society.

CONCLUSION

Even as the challenges wrought by the COVID-19 pandemic wane, universities continue to struggle with enrollment,

retention, and student success. Study respondents described varied adaptations to the crisis based on an intersection of their individual circumstances and the institutional environments in which they were situated. Prominent resources that impacted their experience were cultural, social, and economic capital. These forms of capital were sources of concern and strength. Respondents developed and used innovative strategies to manage academics, social lives, and financial challenges that emerged from the pandemic and maximize their capital.

Their abilities to manage these factors were often dependent on support and resources that they had, or that their informal networks could provide, to forge ahead with their graduate studies despite the challenges. Institutional characteristics (e.g., supportive environment and involvement in racial/social issues) greatly influence students' habitus (experiences and attitudes) and augment or detract from their social, institutional, or economic capital. This underscores the important role of institutions during crises and more generally in their ability to enable respondents to pursue their education, especially when respondents struggle. As a group, respondents in this study considered themselves super lucky, highlighting recognition of the relative safety and privilege that allowed them to continue their education, especially when these were accompanied by academic, financial, and administrative institutional support.

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ORIGINAL REPORT

Effects of Occupational Violence and Aggression on Teacher Wellbeing in Australian Schools: A Meta-Analysis

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ABSTRACT

Occupational violence and aggression (OVA) is an extremely prevalent and concerning issue in all school contexts around the world. International research highlights high prevalence rates of OVA against teachers and identifies a wide range of alarming impacts of OVA on teacher wellbeing. These impacts include risk of anxiety, depression, PTSD, poor sleep, stress, burnout, poor job performance and leaving the profession. The topic of OVA in Australia has been increasing in the media over recent years, as well as the introduction of new OVA prevention strategies. A systematic literature review was conducted to critically analyse and synthesise all of the current available Australian research on the impacts of OVA on teacher wellbeing. The main findings identified that there is a major lack in Australian research and that there are physical and psychological impacts to the many teachers who experience OVA in Australia. This study highlights the gap in Australian research about the effects of occupational violence and aggression on teacher wellbeing, and highlights the need for further in-depth research in Australia.

Keywords

Violence, Teacher, Wellbeing

INTRODUCTION

RATIONALE AND SCOPE

Occupational violence and aggression (OVA) against teachers has increased globally in recent years and is causing negative impacts on the physical and mental wellbeing of teachers (Espelage et al., 2013; Longobardi et al., 2018; Reddy et al., 2018). Impacts of long-term exposure to OVA include decreased motivation and job satisfaction (Kapa & Gimbert, 2018), detrimental effects to mental and physical health (Moon et al., 2019), increased burnout (Wei et al., 2013) and in some cases, symptoms of anxiety, depression and PTSD (Billet et al., 2019).

The Department of Education Australia (2021b, p.1) defines OVA as “any action, incident or behaviour that departs from reasonable conduct in which a person is, threatened, harmed, injured by another person in the course of, or as the direct result of his or her work”. Examples of OVA provided in the Department of Education Occupational Violence Prevention Procedure (Department of Education, 2021b, p.6) include: spitting, biting, hitting, kicking, punching, physical or verbal intimidation and threatening behaviour, malicious damage to an individual’s property, gendered violence, and online/virtual harassment.

In December 2021, The Department of Education published their Occupational Violence and Aggression Prevention Strategy 2021-2023. The purpose is to outline "the minimum standard for the prevention and management of occupational violence risks" with the goal of protecting the health, safety and wellbeing of department workers who may experience OVA (Department of Education, 2021a, p.6).

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

The purpose of this research was to collect, analyze data and summarize how the effects of occupational violence and aggression on teachers, effect their wellbeing. The following research question and three guiding sub-research questions were used to guide the research:

1. What are the effects of occupational violence and aggression on teacher wellbeing in Australia?

Guiding sub questions

2. What is occupational violence and aggression?
3. How does occupational violence and aggression affect professional performance?
4. How does occupational violence and aggression affect the mental and physical health?

OUTCOMES

A meta-analysis was chosen for this research project. This enabled a thorough analysis of the current Australian literature on the effects of OVA on teacher wellbeing. Analysis of international research was also included in the literature review to provide further context for the research.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Within the education sector, there are increasing concerns surrounding OVA against teachers. OVA against teachers has been referred to in other studies as 'teacher-directed violence' (Lowe et al., 2020), 'educator-targeted bullying' (De Wet, 2010) and 'teacher-targeted bullying and harassment' (TTBH) (Fogelgarn et al., 2019). The rise of acts of violence occurring in schools in recent times, has led to increased attention within the media and community (Anderman et al., 2018).

For this reason, OVA and wellbeing have both been prominent topics within The Department of Education Queensland in recent years. In September 2021, the Queensland Government launched a new Safe and Respectful School Communities Campaign aiming to prevent OVA in schools by raising awareness that OVA is not acceptable. This campaign was to further the Occupational Violence and Aggression Prevention Strategy 2021-2023 (Department of Education, 2021a). The strategy details initiatives to guarantee schools and workplaces overseen by the Department of Education, are safe for staff, students and community members.

In addition to this strategy, The Department of Education Queensland (2017), created a Staff Wellbeing Framework, outlining a model for wellbeing, which includes five interdependent dimensions: physical, financial, occupational, psychological and social and community engagement. The framework was designed to support and improve staffs' health and wellbeing, as well as embed wellbeing into the workplace through raising awareness and providing online resources (Department of Education, 2017). The Department of Education also implemented a Principal Health and Wellbeing Strategy 2020-2022 (Department of Education, 2020). In 2019, it was reported that more than 84% of school leaders experienced offensive behavior, 51% received threats of violence, and 42% were subjected to physical violence (Riley et al., 2020).

OVA against school staff is a growing world-wide issue, negatively affecting wellbeing (Espelage et al., 2013; Longobardi et al., 2018). The majority of the limited studies researching OVA against teachers and its effects, have emerged from the United States of America (Longobardi et al., 2018; Reddy et al., 2018).

A United States national survey of K-12 teachers from 48 states found that 80% of teachers reported suffering from OVA at least once in the past year (McMahon et al., 2014). Large scale studies conducted in Canada (Wilson et al., 2011), Slovlakia (Dzuka & Dalbert, 2007), South Korea (Moon et al., 2015) and Israel (Khoury-kassabri et al., 2009) highlight the negative effects of violence on teachers' emotional and physical wellbeing, life satisfaction and career satisfaction. Chappell and Di Martino's (2006) findings support this and also note that additional longer-term effects on the victims can include difficulties continuing to work and enjoy social and family interactions. A study by Ceballos & Carvalho (2020) found that teachers who had experienced verbal aggression in the past six months were more likely to suffer from upper extremity (neck, shoulder, upper back) musculoskeletal pain than those who did not. OVA can also cause impaired personal relationships (Moon, McCluskey 2014).

Teachers who experience OVA also have an increased risk of teacher burnout and are more likely to leave the profession (Barr et al., 2022). In a recent study, Burns et al. (2020) stated that teachers experienced varied substantial effects from OVA, regardless of their gender, experience and age. Previous research shows that the risk of OVA and its effects are not largely affected by socio-demographic characteristics, instead are affected by perceived school context (Galand et al., 2007). Reports from Wei et al. (2013) and Martinez et al. (2015) concluded that more years of teaching experience were associated with less reports of OVA.

PSYCHOLOGICAL WELLBEING IMPACTS

Teachers who are exposed to OVA have poorer mental health than those who are not (Konda et al., 2020). The range of effects

are severe (Adewusi, 2021) and can last months after the OVA has occurred (Santor et al., 2021). Teachers who have experienced OVA may suffer from impaired sleep quality (Chu et al., 2021) and increased sleep disturbances (Gluschkoff et al., 2017). Other effects can include chronic exhaustion (Smetackova et al., 2019) and risk of depression (Andersen et al., 2021 Merida-Lopez et al., 2021). The most common finding experienced by victims of OVA was emotional distress (Moon et al., 2021; Moon et al., 2015; Adewusi, 2021; Moon & McCluskey, 2014). Emotional exhaustion (Oliver et al., 2021; Melanda et al., 2021), emotional withdrawal (Maring & Koblinsky, 2013; Adewusi, 2021), disempowerment (Woudstra et al., 2018), negative perceptions of self (Skaland, 2016), and avoiding difficult students (Maring & Koblinsky, 2013) were other psychological impact findings. A finding to note is that of Wei et al. (2013) who found the effects of non-physical violence compared to physical violence, was perceived as more severe.

OCCUPATIONAL WELLBEING IMPACTS

Global research has found that the effects of OVA reduces the occupational wellbeing of teachers in varied ways (De Cordova et al., 2019; Merida-Lopez et al., 2021). OVA on teachers can cause stress (Konda et al., 2020; Tiesman et al., 2014), feelings of unsafeness (Moon et al., 2019), effect autonomy and decision making (Peist et al., 2020), fewer problem-solving strategies (Wink et al., 2021) and effect job performance (Smetackova et al., 2019; Moon et al., 2019; Santor et al., 2021; Moon et al., 2015).

Negative impacts on teachers' job satisfaction (Won & Chang, 2019; Kapa & Gimbert, 2018; Konda et al., 2020; Smetackova et al., 2019; Moon et al., 2019; Maran & Begotti, 2022; Moon et al., 2021; Tiesman et al., 2014) and feelings of connectedness to their school (Moon et al., 2021; Moon et al., 2019; Maran & Begotti, 2022) are also prevalent. OVA was found to effect relationships with students (De Cordova et al., 2019; Smetackova et al., 2019; Wink et al., 2021) as well as the wellbeing of students (Rivers et al., 2009).

A number of recent studies found that OVA was a predictor for teacher burnout (Winding et al., 2022; Barr et al., 2022; Maran & Begotti, 2022; Wink et al., 2021; Chirico et al., 2021; Smetackova et al., 2019; Bass et al., 2016). Teacher burnout is "a state of physical, emotional, and mental exhaustion that results from long-term involvement in work situations that are emotionally demanding" (Schaufeli & Greenglass, 2001, p.501). One recent study also found statistically significant links between OVA and teacher burnout one year later (Winding et al., 2022). There was a strong link between teacher burnout and intent to leave the career (Goddard & Goddard, 2006). After experiencing OVA many teachers reported thoughts about leaving their school (Curran et al., 2017), thoughts about leaving their career (Moon et al., 2019; Moon & McCluskey, 2018), and many teachers who did leave their career (Adewusi, 2021; Barr et al., 2022; Tiesman et al., 2014; Curran et al., 2017; Moon et al., 2020).

AUSTRALIAN RESEARCH

There are limited studies to date reporting on the prevalence and effects of OVA on Australian teachers (Lowe et al., 2020). However, one study found that 85.2% of teacher participants believed that OVA is an issue in Australian schools (Fogelgarn et al., 2019). The same study also found that 55.6% of teachers experienced OVA from both students and parents (Fogelgarn et al., 2019). Further Australian research found that 42.7% of educators who experienced OVA, had at least moderate effects (i.e. needing first aid and/or including distress lasting more than 24 hours), and for 15.5% the effects were categorized as major (i.e. injury requiring medical aid and/or emotional distress lasting longer than 7 days) or worse (Stevenson et al., 2022).

In another recent study, Burns et al. (2020) stated that teachers experienced varied substantial effects from OVA, regardless of their gender, experience and age. A notable finding from Fogelgarn et al. (2019) found that the repeated exposure to 'harmless' events, eventually depleted the self-confidence, self-efficacy and job satisfaction of the teachers. Other detrimental effects of OVA suffered by Australian teachers include symptoms of anxiety, depression, PTSD, panic attacks, uncontrollable shaking and nausea (Billett et al., 2019). Some teachers reported taking stress leave, sick leave or unpaid leave to avoid OVA (Billet et al., 2019).

Recent research in Australia found that teachers and teacher aides had lower rates of injury claims in comparison to other professions, however had a higher rate of claims for mental health conditions and assault (Al Alfreed et al., 2022). Special education teachers and teacher aides have the highest risk of all educators in Australia (Fatimah et al., 2022).

Teachers are not the only ones impacted by OVA. A recent study by Arnold et al. (2021) revealed that reported OVA towards school leaders is also a concern. Arnold et al. (2021) found that 36.2% of school leaders at Australian government schools experienced bullying in the previous 12 months. 48.2% of school leaders received threats of violence and 28.7% experienced physical violence in the previous 12 months (Arnold et al., 2021). The study also found that female school leaders had a greater risk of suffering physical violence than males and those in regional areas are more likely to experience threats of violence.

METHODOLOGY

A systematic literature review was chosen to investigate the research question 'what are the effects of occupational violence and aggression on teacher wellbeing in Australia?'. By conducting a systematic literature review, data was collected, critically analysed and synthesized to highlight all available evidence on the effects of OVA on teachers' wellbeing in

Australia. The methodology was chosen to develop the existing evidence-based literature on OVA experienced by teachers in Australia to and provide suggestions for future research on the impacts of OVA on the wellbeing of Australian teachers.

SEARCH STRATEGY

The research question was devised using the 'PICO protocol' for qualitative research (Schardt et al., 2007). This outlines the Population (Australian teachers), Intervention/Exposure (occupational violence and aggression), and Outcome/Context (effect on wellbeing). The additional inclusion criteria used to search for articles included peer reviewed, academic journal, published between 12/12/2002 to 12/12/20222 and English only. A preliminary database search was done in four databases: Scopus, EBSCOhost, PubMed and ProQuest. This search returned a limited number of Australian articles, and limited articles focusing on the teachers as the victims. The search was then altered to include international research and the search terms were revised. ProQuest was removed from the list of databases being searched, as it returned an excessive number of articles, majority of which were completely unrelated to the search terms. After these modifications, 65 hits from the three remaining databases were returned. The Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Reviews and Meta-Analyses (PRISMA) protocol as detailed by Moher et al. (2009) was utilized to identify relevant articles due to its empirical support base and accessible methods for implementation (Moher et al., 2009). The full list of search terms and total article hits is provided in Table 1.

Grey literature searching, reference list checking and citation searching were also used to find articles and added to the PRISMA protocol. The duplicate articles were removed and then remaining articles were screened for relevance. The references of the relevant articles then checked for further hits. The duplicates of citations identified in the manual search were removed and the remaining citations were searched and screened for relevance. This process identified a further four articles.

Table 1

Total Number of Hits and Relevant Hits from Database and Reference List Searches

Literature Search						
Date	Database	Search Terms	Limits	No. Articles Hits	No. Articles Relevant	Notes
10/01/2023	PubMed	(Student AND violence AND directed AND against AND teachers)	12/12/2002-11/12/2022 (20 years) peer reviewed; full text, English	26	0	Reviewed abstracts and removed articles irrelevant to the review, included only empirical studies
10/01/2023	Scopus	(Student AND violence AND directed AND against AND teachers)	12/12/2002-11/12/2022 (20 years) peer reviewed; full text, English	18	1	Reviewed abstracts and removed articles irrelevant to the review, included only empirical studies
10/01/2023	EBSCOhost Megafile Ultimate	(Student AND violence AND directed AND against AND teachers)	12/12/2002-11/12/2022 (20 years) peer reviewed; full text, English	21	0	Reviewed abstracts and removed articles irrelevant to the review, included only empirical studies
10/01/2023	Citation Searching – Database hits	(Student AND violence AND directed AND against AND teachers)	12/12/2002-11/12/2022 (20 years) peer reviewed; full text, English	1	1	Reviewed abstracts and removed articles irrelevant to the review, included only empirical studies
10/01/2023	Citation searching – reference list hits	(Student AND violence AND directed AND against AND teachers)	12/12/2002-11/12/2022 (20 years) peer reviewed; full text, English	1	1	Reviewed abstracts and removed articles irrelevant to the review, included only empirical studies

ARTICLE SELECTION AND QUALITY ASSESSMENT

The combined three database searches identified 65 records. An additional four records identified through other sources were included. After duplicates were removed, there were 43 articles remaining. The articles were selected using Cohen's (1990) method of Preview, Question, Read, and Summarise (PQRS; as cited in Cronin et al., 2008). The initial stage of screening involved previewing the title and abstract of the 43 articles. This stage of screening eliminated 38 articles that were not relevant to the context of the meta-analysis due to location of the studies and the participants not being teachers. The second stage of PQRS included questioning and reading the full text of the remaining five articles, and assessing them against the criteria for inclusion/exclusion. The inclusion criteria used for this systematic literature review, included articles published within the last 20 years, written in English, peer reviewed, and the participants were Australian teachers. Three articles were excluded, leaving two articles remaining to be included in the qualitative synthesis. The process of article selection can be viewed in the PRISMA diagram in Figure 1 (Moher et al., 2009). The two articles which met all of the inclusion criteria are both qualitative articles, and thus were assessed and ranked using the Critical Appraisal Skills Programme (CASP; Majid & Vanstone, 2018) criteria, documented in Table 2.

Figure 1

PRISMA Flow Diagram Demonstrating The Search Process, Inclusion Of Relevant Empirical Research (N = 2), And The Exclusion Of Irrelevant Articles (N = 67). Adapted From Moher Et Al. (2009)

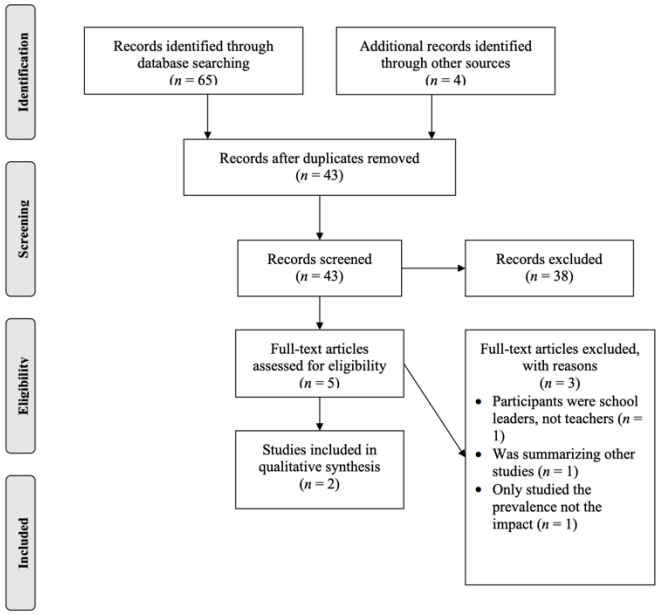

Table 2

Quality Assessment of Qualitative Articles: Aims Methodologies Design Data Ethics and Value to the Review. Adapted from (Majid & Vanstone, 2018)

CASP Qualitative Studies Assessment									
Study	Clear statement of the aims of the research	Appropriate use of qualitative methodologies	Appropriate research design to address the aims of the research	Recruitment strategy appropriate for the aims of the research	Data collected in a way that addresses the research question	Relationship between researcher and [participant adequately/ explicitly considered	Ethical issues explicitly taken into consideration	Sufficiently rigorous data analysis	Research is of value
Steve-nson et al. (2022)	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Billett et al. (2020)	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes

DATA SYNTHESIS: EMERGING THEMES

Ensuing the quality assessment, the remaining two articles were entered into a synthesis matrix tool as detailed in Table 3 (Wright et al., 2007). The synthesis matrix tool was used to organize, analyze and synthesize the sections of each article and identify emerging themes and interactions across the data (Wright et al., 2007).

A multiphase top-down thematic analysis was used to discover the themes of the two articles, in response to the research question. Table 3 formed the total data sample for this systematic literature review. The entire data set was re-read (Phase 1), interesting and key features coded (Phase 2) and data collated relevant to each code to develop broad first order themes (Phase 3) (Braun & Clarke, 2006). The first order descriptive themes were presented and synthesized below the results (themes) heading of Table 3 (Braun & Clarke, 2006; Wright et al., 2007). The themes were refined again and a thematic "map" of themes and supporting codes were generated (Phase 4). The themes were consolidated (Phase 5) an integrated into the report and drawn together for analysis (Phase 6).

Table 3

Synthesis Matrix Tool used for the Analysis and Synthesis of Prior Occupational Violence and Aggression Impacts on Teachers Research

Synthesis Matrix Tool							
Reference	Quality of resource (peer reviewed)	Participants	Aims of study (underlying arguments)	Methodology (research design)	Limitations	Results (themes)	Conclusions of paper
Stevenson et al. (2022)	Peer reviewed	369 ACT government primary school staff	The study aimed to identify: -What is the frequency of OV from students? -What is the impact on educators of OV from students? -How do educators prevent OV from students? -What strategies do educators use to cope with OV? -What sources of support do educators use and perceive as the most helpful?	Mixed methods research design with -convenience sampling -self-reported questionnaire which included questions with scales & 4 open-ended questions	-All ACT government primary school principals were invited to share the survey with their staff, however there was no way of knowing how many did so. -The use of convenience sampling may have led to a self-selection bias by staff who have experienced more OV or are interested in the topic. -There was an attrition rate of 1 in 8 who did not complete the survey. -Due to COVID-19, the survey questions referred to experiences prior to 2020 which may have made the participants' recollections/ responses less accurate.	-Majority of staff reported frequent (daily or weekly) experiences of OV from students with notable negative impacts -Abusive Language (n=334): Insignificant=25.7%, Minor=48.5% Moderate=17.4%, Major=6%, Severe=1.5% -Physical Aggression (n=320): Insignificant=10.9%, Minor=42.2%, Moderate=26.6%, Major=14.4%, Severe=5.9% -Other threatening behavior(n=302): Insignificant=15.9%, Minor=45.4%, Moderate=24.5%, Major=9.9%, Severe=3.0% -Bullying/harassment (n=192): Insignificant=24.5%, Minor=39.1%, Moderate=22.9%, Major=8.9%, Severe=3.1% -Overall (n=323): Insignificant=15.2%, Minor=40.2%, Moderate=27.2%, Major=12.1%, Severe=3.4% -Key prevention strategies: focusing on staff response to individual students, collaborating with colleagues, seeking to understand and address individual student needs, developing and maintaining positive relationships with students, implementing aggression-reducing programs, having clear plans and structured responses to OV incidents. -Coping strategies: support from colleagues through debriefing, positive, self-care mindset, support from partner.	Most staff surveyed experienced frequent (daily or weekly) OV from students with negative impacts ranging from insignificant to severe.
Billet et al. (2020)	Peer reviewed	1213 educators (82.9% teachers) across primary and secondary schools in the Government, Catholic and Independent Sector.	The study aimed to identify: -what levels and types of TTBH by students and parents are encountered by teachers -if there is a correlation between types of TTBH and a school's relative social-education advantage -the role a school's geographical location plays in the prevalence and impact of TTBH. -what ways management's handling of reports of TTBH affect teacher's sense of wellbeing and self-efficacy.	Mixed methods research design -online survey followed by semi-structured interviews	None listed	-84.5% experienced some form of student/parent enacted teacher targeted bullying and harassment over the last 9-12 month period -50.6% felt that TTBH by students/parents was an issue in Australian schools -secondary and primary were just as likely to experience TTBH -54.4% considered leaving the profession due to TTBH -65.2% considered leaving the profession due to bullying	Forms of verbal aggression may have more of an impact on teachers leaving the profession than physical aggression

RESULTS

The thematic analysis of the two articles found four third order themes: the lack of research on OVA, what is OVA in Australian education, prevalence of OVA in Australian education, and effects of OVA on Australian teachers. These third order themes are labelled below with Level 2 headings. The related subthemes that contribute to the third order themes are: categories of OVA, perpetrators of OVA, frequency of OVA, risk factors for OVA, and mental and physical impacts. These subthemes are presented as Level 3 headings, and outlined below.

LACK OF RESEARCH ON OVA

The most significant finding of this meta-analysis is the lack of research available about OVA in Australia. The data search conducted for the purpose of this meta-analysis found eight studies relating to the occurrence of OVA in Australian schools. Of these, only two articles, those used in the data set, identified some effects of OVA on the wellbeing of teachers. The effects that were identified were general and merely identify that OVA is a prevalent issue in Australia, that has the potential to cause negative effects. The current Australian research does not allow for an in-depth understanding of the short- or long-term impacts

of OVA against teachers in Australia, in comparison to recent international research, which has uncovered specific effects on teacher wellbeing.

WHAT IS OVA IN AUSTRALIAN EDUCATION

Categories of OVA

Categories of OVA was a third order theme in both articles used in this review. Stevenson et al. (2022) adapted and used the five types of OV from the ACT Education Directorate reporting system, when gathering and reporting the data. These categories included: abusive language, physical aggression, other threatening behavior, bullying/harassment, and overall (Stevenson et al., 2022). Billett et al. (2020) conducted their study using 12 different types of teacher targeted bullying and harassment. These types included: yelling, swearing, hitting or punching, damaging personal property, disparaging remarks (verbal), disparaging remarks (social media), standing over/invading personal space, organizing others against a teacher, lying to get a teacher into trouble, harassing through text and phone calls, discriminatory behavior, and students engaging parents to argue on their behalf (Billett et al., 2020). Billett et al. (2020) found the most prevalent form of student enacted OVA was different in each education sector. Hitting or punching (89.4%) was the most common in the Catholic sector, disparaging remarks (49.5%) in the Independent sector, and swearing (64.0%) in the Government sector. In all three sectors the most prevalent type of OVA enacted by parents was disparaging remarks (Catholic sector 41.9%, Independent sector 46.6%, Government sector 41.9%).

Perpetrators of OVA

Both articles highlight which perpetrators in the school setting are being reported on in their study. Perpetrators of OVA can be students, parents and also colleagues. The study by Stevenson et al. (2022) only looks at students from prep to year six as perpetrators. However, the study by Billett et al. (2020) reports on students across both primary and high school, and their parents, as perpetrators. Billett et al. (2020) reported that in the previous nine to twelve months, 44.6% of teachers stated they had experienced OVA from both students and parents. A further 25.3% of teachers had suffered from exclusively student enacted OVA and 13.4% from exclusively parent enacted OVA. Billett et al. (2020) also reported that student enacted OVA was more prevalent than parental bullying of teachers working in all sectors (Catholic 59.0%, Independent 57.3%, Government 60.7%).

PREVALENCE OF OVA IN AUSTRALIAN EDUCATION

Frequency of OVA

The frequency of OVA was a third order theme in both Billet et al.'s (2020) and Stevenson et al.'s (2022) study. In 2019, 84.5% of participants in Billett et al.'s (2020) study reported having experienced some type of student or parent enacted OVA over the last nine to twelve-month period. This was a similar finding to their 2018 data, where 80% of participants reported having experienced some type of student or parent enacted OVA over a nine to twelve-month period. In Stevenson et al.'s (2022) study, 49.4% of participants reported experiencing at least one type of OVA from students on at least a weekly basis. On a at least once every 6-month basis, participants experienced: abusive language (91%), physical aggression (87%), other threatening behavior (82.2%), bullying/harassment (52.3%), and overall (88.9%) (Stevenson et al. 2022). The study by Billett et al. (2020) also found that in the previous 12 months, verbal aggression was the most common reported type of OVA from students (swearing 56%, yelling 53.8%, disparaging verbal comments 56.6%) and parents (disparaging verbal comments 42.1%, yelling 26.4%).

Risk factors for OVA

There are certain risk factors that coincide with OVA. Stevenson et al. (2022) did not look at possible factors affecting the prevalence of OVA. However, Billett et al. (2020) studied the effects of geographical location, socio-economic backgrounds, teacher gender, teacher age and teacher experience.

There was an equal probability of teachers facing OVA by students and parents across all geographic areas (Billett et al., 2020). The study found that teachers reported comparable levels of OVA in split metro/rural areas (90.7%), metropolitan areas (84.5%), and rural areas (84.3%). High school teachers were just as probable to experience OVA (85.8%) as primary school teachers (83.2%) (Billett et al., 2020). Billett et al. (2020) observed the effects of school's Index of Community Socio-Educational Advantage (ICSEA) on rates of OVA. Significant differences in rates of types of OVA included: swearing (low ICSEA schools 73.8%, high ICSEA schools 45.7%), hitting and punching (low ICSEA schools 24.6%, high ICSEA schools 10.3%), and damaging personal property (low ICSEA schools 28.6%, high ICSEA schools 15.1%) (Billett et al., 2020).

Billett et al. (2020) reported that male (74.3%) and female (70.5%) teachers were equally likely to report student OVA. The only statistically different types of OVA reported by gender were students engaging a parent to argue on their behalf (males 47.2%, females 38.5%), and lie about teacher/principal to get them into trouble (males 36.8%, females 28.1%).

EFFECTS OF OVA ON TEACHERS IN AUSTRALIA

Mental and physical impacts

The effects of OVA towards teachers extends beyond immediate incidents, resulting in consequences for the mental and physical wellbeing of teachers. Stevenson et al. (2022) asked participants to rate the impacts of the different types of

OVA on a severity scale: "insignificant – no perceived impact on psychological of physical wellbeing, minor – pain inflicted at site, but not first aid required and/or some initial psychological distress that decreased over the day, moderate – injury requiring first aid and/or psychological distress that persisted past 24 hours, major – injury requiring medical assistance and/or psychological distress that persisted more than one week, severe – injury requiring hospital admission and/or psychological distress resulting in ongoing psychological condition such as anxiety/depression/PTSD". The results found that physical aggression had the most significant effect (46.9% reported at least moderate impact, 89.1% reported at least minor impact). Next was other threatening behaviors (37.4% reported at least moderate impact, 82.8% reported at least minor impact). Followed by bullying/harassment (34.9% reported at least moderate impact, 74% reported at least minor impact), and abusive language (24.9% reported at least moderate impact, 73.4% reported at least minor impact) (Stevenson et al. 2022). The survey by Billett et al. (2020) revealed that 54.4% of teachers who experienced OVA had considered leaving the teaching profession.

DISCUSSION

The findings of this meta-analysis appear to indicate that OVA against Australian teachers may be a prevalent issue, causing negative physical and psychological impacts that range from insignificant to severe, as well as highlighting a significant lack in Australian research. The data set used for this meta-analysis, was composed of only two journal articles. This was due to only two articles meeting the eligibility criteria, the participants being Australian teachers, and reporting on the impacts of OVA on teachers. A study by Lowe et al. (2020) also found that there are limited Australian studies to date reporting on the prevalence and effects of OVA on Australian teachers. A strength of the two articles used in this review, is the findings support those of recent international research. However, the weakness of these studies is the lack of detail of the effects of OVA on teachers.

An Australian study by Fogelgarn et al. (2019) found that 85.2% of teachers believed that OVA is an issue in Australian schools. This review does not study the perspectives of Australian teachers, however the incident rates clearly indicate that OVA is a problem experienced by many Australian teachers. The results from Stevenson et al. (2022) and Billett (2020) in this review, are supported by large scale international research conducted in Canada (Wilson et al., 2011), Slovlakia (Dzuka & Dalbert, 2007), South Korea (Moon et al., 2015) and Israel (Khoury-kassabri et al., 2009) which highlight the negative effects of OVA on teachers' emotional and physical wellbeing, life satisfaction and career satisfaction. The recent international research is in-depth and provides a deeper understanding of the types of psychological wellbeing impacts experienced by teachers exposed to OVA. The most common finding was emotional distress (Moon et al., 2021; Moon et al., 2015; Adewusi, 2021; Moon & McCluskey, 2014), as well as emotional exhaustion (Oliver et al., 2021; Melanda et al., 2021), emotional withdrawal (Maring & Koblinsky, 2013; Adewusi, 2021), disempowerment (Woudstra et al., 2018), negative perceptions of self (Skaland, 2016), and avoiding difficult students (Maring & Koblinsky, 2013). Additional effects identified in international research are impaired sleep quality (Chu et al., 2021), increased sleep disturbances (Gluschkoff et al., 2017), chronic exhaustion (Smetackova et al., 2019), and risk of depression (Andersen et al., 2021 Merida-Lopez et al., 2021).

This review identified that there was a high rate of teachers who considered leaving the profession due to OVA, which is also supported by international research (Moon et al., 2019; Moon & McCluskey, 2018). Some international studies also revealed that many teachers did leave their career (Adewusi, 2021; Barr et al., 2022; Tiesman et al., 2014; Curran et al., 2017; Moon et al., 2020). It is believed that OVA effects teacher recruitment and retention rates (Newman et al., 2004). This statement highlights the importance for the continuation and development of strategies to prevent OVA in education. Teacher attrition also effects student's engagement and achievement (National Center for the Analysis of Longitudinal Data in Education Research, 2009; Rockoff, 2004).

There are an abundance of occupational wellbeing impacts which were not identified in this review, however are identified in international research. These include stress (Konda et al., 2020; Tiesman et al., 2014), feelings of unsafeness (Moon et al., 2019), effects on autonomy and decision making (Peist et al., 2020), fewer problem-solving strategies (Wink et al., 2021), job performance (Smetackova et al., 2019; Moon et al., 2019; Santor et al., 2021; Moon et al., 2015), job satisfaction (Won & Chang, 2019; Kapa & Gimbert, 2018; Konda et al., 2020; Smetackova et al., 2019; Moon et al., 2019; Maran & Begotti, 2022; Moon et al., 2021; Tiesman et al., 2014), feelings of connectedness to their school (Moon et al., 2021; Moon et al., 2019; Maran & Begotti, 2022), and teacher burnout (Winding et al., 2022; Barr et al., 2022; Maran & Begotti, 2022; Wink et al., 2021; Chirico et al., 2021; Smetackova et al., 2019; Bass et al., 2016). These findings demonstrate the significant requirement for further in-depth research in Australia on the effects of OVA on teacher wellbeing, and the implementation of strategies to reduce OVA and support teachers' wellbeing.

LIMITATIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

In order to ensure a comprehensive understanding of the study's findings, it is important to note the researcher's identified limitations. Stevenson et al. (2022) reported that the use of convenience sampling may have led to a self-selection bias by staff who have experienced more OVA or have an interest in the topic. Stevenson et al. (2022) also reported that the survey questions referred to OVA experiences prior to 2020, due to the COVID-19 pandemic, which may have led to the participant's

recollections and responses being less accurate. Billett et al. (2020) reported no limitations or bias in their article, and none were identified when writing this review.

Based on the synthesis of the current research of the effects of OVA on teacher wellbeing in Australia, it is recommended that future research explores the specific effects of different types of OVA on teacher wellbeing, using a mixed methods approach. This research would benefit from the collection of retrospective narrative accounts through the use of interviews, of those who have experienced different types of OVA and the implications this has had in relation to their wellbeing. Another recommendation for future research would be to compare the effects of OVA experienced by teachers in different Australian school sectors including public, private, catholic, primary school, high school and special education schools.

CONCLUSION

The systematic literature review identified several dominant themes from the data on the effects of OVA on teacher wellbeing in Australia. The themes highlighted were: categories of OVA, perpetrators of OVA, frequency of OVA, risk factors for OVA, and mental and physical impacts. The results from the current study indicate that OVA is prevalent in Australian schools, researchers categorize OVA differently, there are risk factors for OVA and that there can be physical and psychological impacts from OVA against teachers. Furthermore, the results of the current study signify that teachers' wellbeing is at risk when exposed to OVA from students and parents. The systematic literature review could not examine the specific physical and psychological impacts of OVA against Australian teachers. Through evidence collected from this review, it is recommended that further in-depth research must be conducted in Australia about the impacts of OVA on the wellbeing of teachers.

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JGER | JOURNAL OF GRADUATE EDUCATION RESEARCH

ORIGINAL REPORT

Gender, Graduate School Stage, and the Impostor Phenomenon

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ABSTRACT

The impostor phenomenon (IP) includes five central factors: (a) a sense of fraudulence or phoniness; (b) a fear of failure and discovery; (c) compensatory perfectionism (i.e., procrastination and/or over-preparation); (d) interpersonal anxiety; and (e) externalized success and/or discounted positive feedback. After the final stage, the process starts over with reinforced vigor, creating a self-reinforcing cycle in which success is associated with psychological suffering. IP was initially used to describe the reports of high-achieving women, but recent studies have shown that IP is experienced across genders. Additionally, while graduate school is an achievement-oriented environment with many characteristics that could promote IP, it has never been studied within graduate students specifically. The current investigation assessed graduate student endorsements of IP across genders (i.e., female and male) and graduate school stages (i.e., incoming and established students). Though the hypotheses were not supported, the results led to multiple areas of future study that could help explain the unexpected findings and promote graduate student well-being and success.

Keywords

Impostor phenomenon, Gender, Graduate School

GENDER, GRADUATE SCHOOL STAGE, AND THE IMPOSTOR PHENOMENON

Clance and Imes (1978) introduced the term *impostor phenomenon* (IP) to describe the reports of high-achieving women who felt fraudulent, feared others would discover and expose their true abilities, and externalized their ensuing successes. These women would consistently doubt their abilities, become fearful and work exceedingly hard to prevent others from seeing their perceived phoniness, and attribute their successes to luck, evaluative error, or inordinately hard work. Therefore, rather than reducing IP, success and positive feedback were shown to reinforce self-doubt and social fear. These unpleasant experiences were the central contributors to the behaviors (e.g., hard work) that were associated with positive outcomes.

IP is often conceptualized as a cyclical, multidimensional construct that includes five central factors: (a) a sense of fraudulence or phoniness; (b) a fear of failure and discovery; (c) compensatory perfectionism (i.e., procrastination and/or over-preparation); (d) interpersonal anxiety; and (e) externalized success and/or discounted positive feedback (Caselman et al., 2006; Clance & Imes, 1978; Clance & O'Toole, 1988; Hutchins & Rainbolt, 2017; Tigranyan et al., 2020; Vaughn et al., 2020). After the final stage (i.e., externalized success and discounted positive feedback), the IP process starts over with reinforced vigor, and years of similar experiences create a powerful, self-reinforcing cycle in which success is associated with

psychological suffering and positive feedback is met with skepticism because it is inconsistent with internal experiences (Clance & O'Toole, 1988).

Others have conducted research based on a unidimensional IP construct (i.e., a sense of fraudulence or inauthenticity) that is intended to represent the essence of IP (Leary et al., 2000). Leary and colleagues (2000) developed the *Leary Impostorism Scale* based on this notion and found that it maintained a correlation of .70-.80 with existing IP measures with no statistically significant gender differences.

Researchers have continued to investigate IP, and it has since been expanded to describe the experiences of high-achieving individuals across genders and settings, especially those like higher education that select for and reinforce high-achievement attitudes (Lee et al., 2022; Muradoglu et al., 2022; Vaughn et al., 2020). In their seminal study, Clance and Imes (1978) included undergraduates, graduate students, and faculty members to study IP across developmental stages. Subsequent studies have investigated the effects of professional stage (i.e., early career vs. late career) on IP among individuals in various university positions (Muradoglu et al., 2022; Vaughn et al., 2020), but student experiences within graduate school have not been specifically assessed. Thus, the current study was designed to study the incidence of IP among graduate students of all genders who occupy different graduate school stages (i.e., incoming first-year students vs. established students who had spent at least one full semester in graduate school).

IP IN HIGHER EDUCATION

In the context of IP, higher education can be conceptualized as an achievement-oriented community that is populated by high-achieving individuals (Posselt, 2016). Applicants with the most historical achievement are generally the ones who gain admission (Cassuto, 2015) because their experiences suggest they can meet the demands of such an environment (Cassuto, 2015; Council of Graduate Schools, 2012). Meanwhile, environmental demands often require students to step out of their comfort zones as they learn new information, acquire new skills, and get evaluated on their performances in these pursuits (Mangan, 2021). Performance is often considered a signal of value (Posselt, 2016) since grades are a major factor in gaining acceptance into internships, fellowships, and other scholastic programs in this competitive atmosphere.

The strength of this person-environment fit would only intensify in the highest levels of higher education (e.g., graduate school and medical school) in which communities with the greatest achievement-related demands would only select those with the strongest historical achievement. Thus, the characteristics of university life would seem to promote an increased prevalence of IP, and indeed, studies consistently show that it is a place where students (Muradoglu et al., 2021; Tigranyan et al., 2020) and faculty members (Hutchins & Rainbolt, 2017) alike often feel under-prepared, phony, and anxious. However, there is evidence to suggest that IP experiences might be influenced by other contextualizing factors, such as gender and graduate school stage.

Gender

Despite its early emphasis on the experiences of women (Clance & Imes, 1978), there are mixed findings regarding gender differences in IP, and men often experience it as well (Clance & Imes, 1988; Vaughn et al., 2020). However, those of a minority gender in a given field (Hutchins & Rainbolt, 2017; Vaughn et al., 2020) or those with a stronger sense of gender stigma consciousness (Cokley et al., 2015) have been shown to be particularly vulnerable. At present, there is a dearth of information about IP experiences amongst LGBTQ+ students.

Graduate School Stage

IP is consistently elevated in early career academics (Muradoglu et al., 2021) as well as in those who are engaging with novel, challenging environments (Vaughn et al., 2020). However, there is no information regarding the experiences of graduate students across years of study. It seems that incoming students, who have some or no experience in graduate school and are entering a novel, challenging environment, would likely endorse higher rates of IP compared to their established colleagues, who are contending with a challenging but less novel environment. Moreover, established students have had the opportunity to build relationships with classmates, thus potentially diminishing the social effects of IP.

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

1. Is the impostor phenomenon equally endorsed across genders?
2. Do incoming graduate students endorse higher rates of imposter phenomenon than established students?

HYPOTHESES

To answer these questions, the current study aimed to study group differences within the domains of gender (male and female) and graduate school stage (established students and incoming students). The following hypotheses were naturally generated:

H_{0a}: There will be no statistically significant difference of reported IP between genders.

H_{1a}: There will be a statistically significant difference of reported IP between genders.

H_{0b}: There will be no statistically significant difference of reported IP between graduate school stage groups.

H_{1b}: There will be a statistically significant difference of reported IP between graduate school stage groups.

Previous studies have shown that IP is present across genders and higher among those who are engaging with novel, challenging environments. These findings suggested that

hypotheses H_{0a} and H_{1b} would be supported in this study. Thus, it was predicted that IP would be equally distributed across genders, resulting in non-significant results between males and females, and incoming students would endorse higher rates of IP compared to established students.

METHOD

PARTICIPANTS

The participants consisted of female (n = 234) and male (n = 65) identifying graduate students at a southern university (N = 299). The representation of racial/ethnic identities within the sample are listed in Table 1.

Table 1

Representation of Racial/Ethnic Identities within the Sample

Racial/Ethnic Identity	Percentage of Sample	
	Established Students	Incoming Students
African American/ Black	9.2	10.0
Asian	1.8	2.9
Native American/ Alaska Native	2.6	1.4
Native Hawaiian/ Pacific Islander	0.4	0.0
White	87.3	84.3
Prefer not to respond	0.9	1.4
I prefer to type my answer	1.8	0.0

Note. The cumulative percentage is greater than 100 because participants were allowed to choose multiple responses.

The sample was also divided into two groups designed to represent different graduate school stages: one group of respondents at the end of the 2022 academic year (established students group, n = 229) and another group of respondents from incoming students in 2023 (incoming students group, n = 70). The majority of participants were from age 18 to 34 (66.8%). The age breakdown within the sample is represented in Table 2.

Table 2

Age Breakdown within the Sample

Age	Percentage of Sample	
	Established Students	Incoming Students
Under 18	0.0	0.0
18 - 24	33.6	48.6
25 - 34	34.5	18.6
35 - 44	14.8	22.9
45 - 54	12.7	5.7
55 - 64	3.5	5.7
Over 65	1.8	0.0

MEASURE: LEARY IMPOSTORISM SCALE

Participants completed the Leary Impostorism Scale (LIS; Leary et al., 2000). In the developmental study, the LIS demonstrated high inter-item reliability (Cronbach's α = .87), strong correlations (r = .70 – .80) with existing measures, substantial support for construct validity, and no evidence of gender bias. In the current study, the scale was administered online via a digital form.

PROCEDURE

The administration started with a demographics section in which the students were asked to provide their age (under 18, 18 - 24 years old, 25 - 34 years old, 35 - 44 years old, 45 -54 years old, 55 - 64 years old, 65 years or older, prefer not to respond), race (African American/Black, Asian, Native American/Alaska Native, Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander, White, prefer not to respond, I prefer to type my answer), and gender (male, female, non-binary, transgender, intersex, prefer not to respond, I prefer to type my answer). Then, the LIS was administered asynchronously to two groups of graduate students.

The first administration was open to all graduate students and administered towards the end of the academic year. After completing the LIS, respondents were given the option of providing their school email to enter a giveaway for a prize. The second group consisted of incoming graduate students, and they received a link to the questionnaire during new student orientation webinars at the beginning of the following academic year. Upon completing the LIS, the respondents were also given the option of providing their school email to enter a giveaway for a prize.

RESULTS

The research design called for a 2 x 2 between-subjects factorial ANOVA, which requires the satisfaction of several assumptions including independence of observations, homogeneity of variance, and normality of residuals. To promote the independence of observations, the established student group was sampled before the incoming students group. Moreover, only students who were labeled by the university as an incoming student received an invite to attend the incoming students webinar where the survey link was released. Homogeneity of variance was tested by Levene's Test, which showed that the variances of impostorism were similar across groups, $F(3, 295) = 1.48$, $p = .22$, thus satisfying the assumption. However, the Shapiro-Wilk test revealed that the residuals significantly deviated from normality, $W(299) = .93$, $p < .001$, which violates the assumption of normality of residuals. Analyses with sample sizes greater than 30 to 40 are believed to be robust to violations of normality in accordance with the central limit theory (Ghasemi & Zahediasl, 2012). Given the current study's total sample size ($N = 299$), the violation was considered minor, and the analysis continued.

A 2 x 2 between-subjects factorial ANOVA was performed to determine if there were differences in impostorism for graduate students depending upon gender and graduate school stage. There was no significant main effect for graduate school stage $F(1, 295) = .48$, $p = .49$, $\eta^2 p = .002$, which signified there was no significant difference in impostorism scores for established graduate students ($M = 15.25$, $SE = .60$) and incoming students ($M = 14.42$ $SE = 1.05$). However, there was a significant main effect for gender $F(1, 295) = 4.19$, $p = .04$, $\eta^2 p = .02$. Those who identified as female ($M = 16.07$, $SE = .57$) endorsed significantly higher rates of impostorism than those who identified as male ($M = 13.60$, $SE = 1.06$). There were no significant interaction effects for graduate school stage x gender $F(1, 295) = 2.12$, $p = .15$, $\eta^2 p = .01$, or gender x graduate school stage $F(1, 295) = .55$, $p = .46$, $\eta^2 p = .002$.

DISCUSSION

Previous research on IP led to two predictions for this study: 1) there would be no statistically significant difference of reported IP between genders and 2) there would be a statistically significant difference of reported IP between graduate school stage groups. Neither of the proposed hypotheses was supported by the data.

There was a statistically significant difference of reported IP between females and males, which is consistent with seminal IP research (Clance & Imes, 1978) but inconsistent with more recent findings (Clance & Imes, 1988; Vaughn et al, 2020). Those of a minority gender in a given field are indeed vulnerable to experiences of IP (Hutchins & Rainbolt, 2017; Vaughn et al., 2020), but there is no evidence to suggest that females occupy that position at the participating university. However, high gender stigma consciousness, which was not assessed, has also been associated with an increased incidence of IP (Cokley et al., 2015). This factor could help explain the results if female graduate students in this sample were experiencing higher levels of gender stigma consciousness than their male counterparts.

Another possible explanation comes from Big Five personality literature. On average, females have been consistently shown to score higher than males within the personality trait Neuroticism, which is a measure of the proclivity to experience negative emotions, such as anxiety, self-consciousness, and low self-esteem (Weisberg et al., 2011). There have been few studies on the relationship between Big Five personality traits and IP, but given the anxiety and general unpleasantness of IP, Neuroticism could certainly play a role in IP experiences. Available studies support the theoretical link between Neuroticism and IP and report significant correlations ranging from .34 to .63 (Bernard et al., 2002; Choe et al., 1995; Kaur & Jain, 2022; Sawant et al., 2023). Future studies will need to account for gender stigma, personality traits, and other factors that are associated with gender differences when investigating the relationship between gender and IP.

Meanwhile, there was no statistically significant difference of reported IP between established and incoming graduate students. The premise for the predicted difference was based on the notion that incoming students would face more relative challenges and novelty compared to established students, who have presumably adjusted to the difficulties of graduate school. However, established graduate students must also face new challenges, such as theses, dissertations, internships, and graduation, that could reintroduce IP. Indeed, Sawant and colleagues (2023) found that reported IP decreased from year one to year three but then increased to near baseline levels during the final and internship years of medical students.

The null results might also be explained by reinforcement patterns of IP. Established students with their inherent academic successes (e.g., successful progression through graduate school) might have had more time to reinforce IP with those successes. In other words, novel, challenging circumstances might promote initial IP, but it could be reinforced in high-achievement environments where external sources of success (e.g., grades, publications, etc.) might seem more salient than internal ones (e.g., personal development). Future studies could tease apart these contributors by accounting for appraisals, attitudes, values, and other relevant factors that could be related to these reinforcement patterns.

LIMITATIONS

There were three limitations to this study. One limitation was the LIS measure itself. According to Mak et al. (2019), one major limitation of the LIS is that it uses a unidimensional score that may inadequately represent the multidimensionality of IP and diminish the role of success in perpetuating IP. For example, the LIS focuses on general experiences related to the

IP and fails to address success at all. Success is an important factor in IP research because it is often used to justify and reinforce the IP cycle despite the inhibitive and distressing nature of that successful process. Ibrahim et al. (2020) experienced some success in developing a multidimensional IP (IPP31) scale, but it is quite new and has received less psychometric support.

Another limitation was representativeness: the sample might have failed to capture the established graduate student experience. Namely, by administering the sample towards the end of the year, the researchers might have failed to sample experiences from students who were most significantly impacted by IP (i.e., those who became increasingly disengaged or even dropped from their programs). Moreover, those who were experiencing more significant levels of IP might have been less motivated to participate in research in general. Lastly, there were not enough responses to include racial and non-binary gender factors and contribute to important areas of limited research.

A final limitation was specificity. The established students group likely involved students from multiple years of study, which invariably complicated the findings. There was no way to determine how well each stage was represented, how specific graduate years might influence IP, or how many of those in the incoming students group had previous graduate school experience. Overall, participating students were not given the option to specify characteristics that are potentially influential in IP, such as numerical age, program type (certificate, specialist, master's, doctoral), current year of graduate study (1, 2, 3, 4, 5+), previous graduate school experience (yes or no), program delivery (in-person, online, hybrid), previous academic experience at the institution (yes or no), or first-generation student status (yes or no). Other possible confounding variables, such as religion/spirituality, personal values, public versus private institution, and marital status, were also not assessed, but they could be important variables in future studies. If properly accounted for, these variables could provide more context to IP and be of more use to graduate administrators who wish to reduce it.

FUTURE DIRECTIONS

Future gender-related inquiries necessitate the inclusion of important gender-related variables, such as gender stigma consciousness and Big Five personality traits, namely Neuroticism. These factors likely play an influential role in IP experiences and need to be accounted for.

Those investigating specific relationships between graduate school and IP (e.g., academic year and IP) will need to provide appropriate options in the demographic section, including numerical age, program type (certificate, specialist, master's, doctoral), current year of graduate study (1, 2, 3, 4, 5+), previous graduate school experience (yes or no), program delivery (in-person, online, hybrid), previous academic experience at the institution (yes or no), and first-generation student status (yes or no). This will help rule out the influence of extraneous variables and likely provide more useful information to graduate school administrators. Additionally, high-achievement settings, such as graduate schools, will need to assess the success dimension of IP to investigate which distressing IP factors are being reinforced by success and inhibiting optimal functioning.

Overall, future studies will also need to address the multidimensional nature of IP to adequately capture the experiences of graduate students and others. This research could help assess the influences of specific IP factors across demographics and domains.

CONCLUSION

This study was designed to investigate an important, yet under-researched topic: the impostor phenomenon in graduate school. Though the hypotheses were not supported, the results led to multiple areas of future study that could help explain the unexpected findings, add important contributions to IP literature, and promote graduate student well-being and success. In general, it is particularly important for achievement-based settings, such as graduate schools, to assess the level of success-mediated IP and implement interventions that break the IP cycle by dissociating success and distress.

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ORIGINAL REPORT

Collaboration as an Effective Conflict Management Technique for Maximizing Classroom Productivity

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ABSTRACT

The fundamental goal of the classroom is to model behaviour through interaction between students and the tutor. This cannot be achieved in a chaotic environment occasioned by clashes of interests and other forms of incompatibility. Hence, there is a need for effective conflict management techniques applicable to the classroom environment. Using the Choice Theory by Glasser (1965), this work explored the impacts that collaboration as a conflict management technique has within the classroom. The methodology used in this work is a preliminary review of literature from journals and textbooks. The findings from this review revealed that effective conflict management brings about effective learning and cordial relationships. The study recommended, among others, that in order for the purpose of the classroom to be achieved, Peace and Conflict Resolution as an academic discipline should be made a necessary part of teachers' training curriculum.

Keywords

Collaboration, Classroom, Conflict Management, Productivity

INTRODUCTION

Conflict is said to be an inevitable phenomenon in every human relationship or interaction. It can also be latent in the form of intrapersonal conflict such as feelings of indecisiveness within a person. According to Robbins (2005), conflict is traditionally conceived as a malfunction, disruptive, unnatural and something that must be dreaded. It often manifests as discord, contest, struggle, disharmony, clash, feud, rivalry and violence (Denis, 2019). However, beliefs and attitudes differ about conflict. These beliefs and attitudes determine our responses and eventually the positive or negative consequences of our responses. Every behavior (maladaptive or adaptive) is an attempt to meet needs. Conflict is an attempt to meet needs. Resolving it meets needs and may include a host of positive outcomes. Corroborating this view, Schellenberg (1996) avers that conflict can neither be good nor bad, but one of the fundamentals in human social life. Robins (1998) says that conflict is a positive force and necessary for efficient output. If conflict is not an end in itself, it points to how relevant conflict management is, as the positivity or negativity of every conflict is predicated on it. As admitted that conflict is an integral aspect of human life, it is seen in every fabric of the society. Conflict is also present in the school system as a human institution. Whitaker (1996) remarks that about forty percent of head teachers' time in school is spent on conflict management. The classroom as a learning environment cannot achieve its aim without recognizing and limiting conflict. Therefore, this research aims to study the role of collaboration as a conflict

management technique in bringing about high productivity in the classroom.

STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

The classroom needs a calm atmosphere for proper, productive, and successful learning and teaching to be achieved (Atieno et al., 2016). However, the classroom environment increasingly faces enormous challenges. The persistence of such challenges produces inadequacies and brings about a reduction in productivity. Consequently, conflicts or poorly managed conflicts constitute serious barriers to high productivity in the classroom. The manifestations of poorly managed classroom conflicts have become evident as society experiences increasing negative behaviour in interpersonal relationships despite efforts to provide formal education for the populace. Conflict management as a means of employing skills and creative ways to resolve disputes and disagreements is distinct from behaviour management, which could be considered a proactive step taken to build standards conducive to learning through mutual understanding and respect among learners. Hence, this study examined the relevance of collaboration as a conflict management technique in enhancing productivity in the classroom through objectives such as investigating the nature and source of classroom conflicts, the approaches to classroom conflict management, and the effects of resolving conflicts in the classroom.

THEORETICAL PERSPECTIVES

This study is guided by the tenets of Choice Theory. Choice theory is a strand of Reality Therapy developed in 1965 by Glasser. The fundamental assumption of this theory is that individuals have the power to control their behaviour but are limited in their power to control the behaviour of others. The Choice theory, therefore urges individuals to take responsibility for their choices while also helping others to be responsible for their own choices (Glasser, 1965). These choices are generally determined by the quest to satisfy the basic needs of continued existence, love and belonging, power, freedom, and fun (Donna et al., 1994). Glasser emphasized the relevance of the Choice theory to the classroom, suggesting that students have responsibility to make decisions about their learning and as means to solving classroom problems (Bechuke, 2015).

According to Sullo (2011), within the purview of the Choice theory, teachers perform the role of managers by guiding the students to realize the importance of personal freedom and responsibility. The teacher builds a trusting relationship with the students and also exposes them to practical learning experiences as means of developing the student's capacity for success. Hence, the child believes/trusts that the teacher is there to meet the child's needs, not just educational rather holistically. Additionally, to maximize productivity, the teacher ensures that learning materials and lesson plans are designed to suit the needs of the students. Sullo continues that the three common features of Choice theory include minimizing coercion by substituting a trusting relationship between the teacher and the students for the promise of reward and threat of punishment; focusing on quality by encouraging the practical application of what the students have learnt; self-evaluation by involving them in active decision making.

Sullo (2011) also remarks that when Choice theory is applied in the classroom, learning is enhanced while disruption is diminished being that the learners believe that they have been given the opportunity to relate, have a sense of belonging and power, possess some freedom and are secured in a safe environment. In an attempt to relate this theory to conflict management within the classroom, this study shall further examine the nature and sources of classroom conflict.

NATURE AND SOURCES OF CLASSROOM CONFLICT

The more teachers and students understand the nature of conflict, the more they are able to manage it positively (Kinard, 1988, as cited in (Shahmohmmadi, 2014). Conflict in the classroom may appear more subtle and less violent than any other form of conflict, yet very substantial for social harmony. Conflicts that affect classroom management can take different forms ranging from intrapersonal and interpersonal to intragroup and intergroup conflict. It can arise from individual differences such as personality traits, attitude, values and perceptions. According to Thakore (2013), intrapersonal conflict is a conflict between incompatible goals within a person. Such tendencies may manifest in the classroom as indecisiveness on the wrongness or rightness of an action. Other forms of intrapersonal conflict may ignite feelings of frustrations which may later be manifested overtly in forms of sobriety, apathy, boredom, absenteeism, deviance, lousiness, destructive behaviours or one form of addiction or the other. However, it is noteworthy that not all child maladaptive behavior is due to intrapersonal conflict, whereas it can also emanate from interpersonal relations (Koruk & Kara, 2018).

Consequently, in the classroom, conflict may be expressed in the form of truancy, disrespect for teachers, disobedience, theft, bullying, fights, noise making, teachers not teaching well and so on. Often, conflicts spring from one's disturbance of other students, verbal and physical abuse and vandalization of classroom facilities. Shahmohmmadi (2014) identifies student's sources of various forms of disruptive behaviour as students' personalities, family, and cultural environment. A highly heterogeneous class with students having big gaps in ages, differences in cultural background, values and ethics is very prone to conflict (Rahim, 2001). The preoccupation of the teacher is to modify the behaviour of the learner. Conflict ensues when the activity of the teacher becomes ineffective in modifying behaviour or serving the needs of the learners as identified by Glasser (1998), namely survival, freedom, power, belonging and fun. Conflict takes place in the classroom when there are discrepancies between the needs of the teachers and the needs of the students. This can be caused by:

(i) Ineptitude of teachers and lack of mutual trust

Method of lesson delivery could be a major source of conflict in the classroom. Since conflict is basically differences of opinion, it manifests in the class if the students' opinion on the style of teaching differs from that of the teacher. This in turn may lead to some forms of misunderstanding. Theatt and McCroskey (1996) in Ahmad (2014) observe that students may further become afraid of the teacher or end up disliking both the teacher and the course of study. In order for the need of survival, safety and security to be met, Glasser's theory recommends that there must be mutual trust between the teacher and the learners. The learners trust the teacher to provide them with adequate learning experiences, while the teacher in turn trusts the learners to be committed to the tasks given to them (Irvine, 2015).

(ii) Favouristism and feelings of alienation – Belonging

Belonging needs (Glasser, 1998) can be met if favouritism and feelings of alienation are eschewed from the classroom. Students ought to be treated equally and given equal attention as much as possible. When in situations there are students that have some special needs in order to measure up with others, any form of negligence or insensitivity on the part of the teacher can bring about hateful or feelings of alienation. Corroborating this view, Kearney and Plax (1992) observe that learners who feel distanced from other members of the class and the teacher's concern often exhibit aggressive and provocative behaviour.

(iii) Lack of support for cognitive autonomy

Patall et al., (2010) notes that the learner's need for power as postulated by Glasser is undermined when there is no freedom of choice, lack of promotion of deep-level thinking and opportunities for learners to evaluate their growth. On the other hand, when the learner is given opportunity for brainstorming, planning, contributions, discussions and decision making, there is bound to be active participation while the students grow in self confidence and some level cognitive autonomy.

(iv) Classroom environment or setting

Glasser proposes that fun is one of the five major psychological needs (Irvine, 2015). This fun need is very essential for learning as it could help learners recall what occurred in class even after many years. This could be characterized by a sense of playfulness, humor or sessions of recession. The classroom environment can also enhance fun. The classroom setting or the learning environment has to be conducive enough such as not to breed discomfort or dissatisfaction. For instance, a well ventilated, well-lit classroom, a classroom filled with stimulating, didactic and adequate learning materials will bring about a greater satisfaction of the student's fun needs.

(v) Value differences

Oftentimes there are frictions among students and between students and the teachers on the basis of values be it moral or religious values. The student may prefer certain norms, while finding faults with others due to personal beliefs and value systems. A teacher may become very rigid, scrupulous and disciplinary beyond the provisions of the school laws on the basis of specific values or personal worldview. For instance, a particular teacher may frown at a certain dress code which is generally accepted by the school authority. Students may develop feelings of dislike for teachers who hold on to and project particular political ideology, cultural bias or religious sentiments that are not in tandem with their own values. Conflict therefore ensues because the need for freedom as assumed in Glasser's theory has not been respected.

COLLABORATION AS AN EFFECTIVE CONFLICT MANAGEMENT STRATEGY WITHIN THE CLASSROOM

More often than not, teachers think of resolving conflicts in terms of the model of confrontation aiming at win-lose results. However, Maharaj-Sharma (2008) suggests that compromise (win-lose/win-lose) orientation appears as the rallying point of the complicated issue of discipline in schools because many teachers often choose from only two approaches of either being strict or lenient, authoritarian or permissive, tough or soft. This is in acknowledgment that children in the school have little power which springs from their freedom of choice. Albeit, there could arise misunderstanding and unrealistic expectations of children, wherein as a consequence, students see their teachers as enemies and dictators meant to be resisted by all means or on the other hand as softies that they can ignore, disrespect or even take advantage of.

Hence, the traditional collaboration conflict management strategy is among the social skills that fit very well into classroom management. Collaboration is a style of conflict management in which parties work together to resolve a conflict (Crystal, 2007). It is an assertive or cooperative style of conflict management. In collaboration, the parties involved project their standpoints but beyond these they seek for new alternatives. Kofman (2015) in Atieno et al. (2016) explains that by expressing or exposing the positions of the parties, collaboration provides the opportunity for them to understand each one's needs and work together for a new option through the help of the school counselor or other school personnel. Lucy and Jonathan (2016) in Atieno et al. (2016) opine that collaboration involves accepting alternative ways to satisfy all parties.

Fundamental to classroom conflict management is the obligation that the teacher has to teach the students. Thapa (2013) in Thapa (2015) recommends proper communication, inculcating maturity and training students in the techniques of conflict management as some important steps in creating a conducive atmosphere in the school environment. If students are taught conflict management skills, they will be equipped with the basic knowledge and techniques necessary for solving their own problems in more productive manners without even the intervention of the teacher. In support of this opinion,

Glasser (2000) argues that the classroom is well managed when individuals control their behaviour as reduction in external control will enhance compliance, academic success and proper social behaviour.

According to Stronge (2002), effective classroom management goes beyond establishing rules, regulations and modes of discipline for the students. He notes that to manage the classroom efficiently requires involving the students proactively in the process of making and maintaining the rules and regulations. This will make a deeper impact in the life of the student because of the involvement they already have in the decision making process which also provides them the opportunity not just to learn but also interact with the teacher. Hence, the influence of teachers on their students, their methods and strategies for classroom management are very remarkable for enhancing positive attitudes toward learning (Stronge, 2002).

A good illustration of students' involvement in establishing norms is for the students to come up with the classroom rules and say what happens if the rules are broken, in terms of consequences. They should also understand the meaning of the rules and why they are put in place. For instance, to maintain orderliness, it is necessary that one person should talk at a time. The teacher then establishes that the norm guiding this is the raising up of hands and subsequent recognition. The students should then be allowed to suggest what happens if someone talks without raising up their hands. (Peaceful Classroom Model, 2017). By doing so, any student who exhibits a causal behaviour that contravenes this particular rule has already known the consequences. This process also measures the student's level of personal responsibility as it behooves them not to go against the law they collectively legislated.

Teacher-Students collaboration also gives room for peer mediation as one of the effective means to resolving classroom conflict. Mediation is a dispute resolution technique where a neutral party assists disputants to reach a jointly satisfactory resolution (Bentley, 1996). Conflicts between students can as well be handled by student mediators. Students should therefore undergo training on the act of mediation so as to become effective mediators among their peers within the classroom (Stern, 2001, as cited in (Shahmohmmadi, 2014). This is important for a peaceful class where a particular dispute seems to rob the class of the time that should have been used in teaching. Such issues are then referred to trained student mediators for an appropriate time.

In managing conflict within the classroom, the teacher must not respond impulsively of aggressively, they must not share the weaknesses of the learner disclosed in confidence to them with another student or even a teacher on the basis of gossip to avoid being used against such students (Dettmer et al., 2009, as cited in Conderman, 2011). The teacher must learn to address the issues and not the 'person' of the student so as not to spur a sense of intimidation leading to low self-esteem and inferiority complex. Teachers must not dig up past experiences, encounters with students or project other unrelated issues in a bid to address a specific fault. This may ignite a feeling of hatred towards the student. Dettmer et al. (2009) also observes that resorting to a one-for-all method of handling conflict by using the same approach for different kinds of situations is not the best. He adds that total avoidance of conflict should never be an option.

RELEVANCE OF CONFLICT MANAGEMENT IN THE CLASSROOM

Conflict management is an integral part of classroom management. Effective conflict handling brings about a peaceful classroom. Conflict management is important for minimizing the negative results of conflict and increasing the positive outcomes for the purpose of improving learning (Rahim, 2002). Thapa (2015) avers that if there is no congenial, peaceful, democratic environment, teaching and learning will not take place in the proper manner.

A classroom where conflict is improperly managed will be deficient of trust. When fair judgments are not made over disputes and clashes of interests, the students may lose trust in themselves as well as in the teacher or even the teacher may also lose trust in the students. When this happens, its stiffens openness and creates a barrier for the sharing of knowledge. When a dispute is rife, both the teacher and students can get frustrated and become less committed. For instance, the teacher may no longer feel any obligation towards teaching obstinate students or feel accountable for such students' achievement.

As noted previously, methods of conflict management which are appropriate in one case may not necessarily be appropriate when applied to a conflict generated from another source. The choice of appropriate conflict management mechanism from the broad range of approaches for a specific conflict situation within the classroom helps to facilitate effective teaching and learning. On the other hand, if a wrong choice of strategy is made, there is bound to be a disruption of the learning process and will most importantly ruin relationships. Beyond a doubt, the role of conflict management in administering the classroom certainly goes beyond aiding learning but also building relationships that transcend the classroom.

As part of classroom administration, the teacher's conflict management strategy is at once a toolkit for managing conflict and also serves as a learning tool for students who indirectly learn how to mitigate or solve basic problems. When conflict is effectively managed within the classroom, cooperation will be reinforced among the learners and between the learners and the teacher, there will be free and peaceful interactions and students, having seen how profitable it is, will learn to resort to nonviolent alternatives in the face of conflict situations.

For Woolfolk and Hoy (1990) regulation of behaviour in the classroom is of paramount benefit since it enhances active

participation of the students. Considering the fact that the classroom is made up of young adults with youthful exuberance who in addition emerge from different backgrounds, there is bound to be an exhibition of attitudes that may not favour other individuals in the class or behaviours that are inconsistent with the new knowledge that the teacher is trying to impart.

When it is properly managed, it is an opportunity for the class to gain a higher level of understanding, for the instructor to gain more insight into classroom dynamics and for improvement on the curriculum or lesson design and delivery style (Ahmad, 2014). It may also be an opportunity for the teacher to offer more explanation on a particular subject matter that may not be clear to the students.

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This study acknowledged that conflict is inevitable in human relationship and therefore very evident in interaction within the classroom. Remarkably, among the different types of conflict, intrapersonal conflict appears to be one of the most fundamental conflicts within the classroom. A child who comes from an abusive home or environment characterized by high handedness, insensitivity, violence, starvation or some other forms of deprivation easily experiences intrapersonal conflict. Such a child eventually isolates oneself from the company of other children and may also have poor cognitive capacity. Consequently, reactions to these experiences of pressure, frustration, depression, burden, irritation which are actually intrapersonal become antecedents to disturbance, teasing, bullying, loss of concentration and other forms of misbehaviour manifest in the classroom as interpersonal conflicts. Hardly would a child suffer internal conflicts without manifesting or affecting behavior, though often adults could successfully create a dichotomy between their actions and internal struggles. Close monitoring of the learner's behavior and changes in mood with effective counseling can help diagnose such intrapersonal conflicts thereby making efforts to meet the needs of such a child through adequate intervention.

Conflict management is critical for running an effective classroom and for maximum productivity. It starts with proper diagnosis, readiness to resolve the conflicts and use of best conflict practices. One of the challenges to managing conflict within the classroom is that most teachers are ill-equipped with the techniques to manage conflicts because their training programmes may not have adequately underlined conflict management as expedient for classroom management. Therefore, good knowledge of the basic conflict management techniques becomes expedient for the classroom teacher so that when conflict arises, such a teacher can spontaneously choose the best approach. The impact on relationships must be a major determining factor for every choice.

Creating a peaceful classroom where the teacher is looked up to as a model, students are satisfied by the teacher's efforts and where there is a large amount of turnover is an effort achievable with the right application of these conflict management approaches. Finally, it is pertinent to state that this topic has not been well represented in previous literature, hence its novelty. However, the study has certain limitations on the ground of being a purely qualitative study. Further, research on a similar topic or subject matter using a qualitative method of analysis through case studies would be a great innovation. Despite this limitation, this study makes the following recommendations:

- Peace Studies and Conflict Management should be made a basic course of study in the curriculum for teachers training.
- Teachers should model a behaviour such that it is worth emulating by the students and by doing so they will learn maturity by example.
- It is the collective responsibility of the school administrators to make the classroom and at large the school environment conducive for effective learning.
- Teachers must measure the ability of the students so as not to have high expectations of them in terms of the quality of their work and their behaviour towards other students as well as their reaction to issues.
- Adequate learning materials should be made available for the students so as to make learning easier and less tense.
- Extra-curricular activities which aid recreation can go a long way to influence the performance of the student in the classroom, hence, it should be encouraged.
- Students should be involved in the decision making processes within the classroom so as not to force compliance through applying discipline.

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ORIGINAL REPORT

Challenging Elitism in Higher Education and Graduate Employability: A Thinking Piece

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ABSTRACT

This paper critically examines the prevalence of elitism in higher education and the complex challenge it posits for graduate employability. Several sections of this paper explore the concept of elitism through the lens of positional conflict theory and narrow it down to the relative graduate employability challenges that are experienced due to various factors. The current paper contributes to knowledge since the existing pool of literature does not tackle, in isolation, the function of elitism in posing employment challenges for recent graduates and is not expressed in the current conceptualisations selected in this paper. The paper ends with a call for a collective commitment to dismantle elitist structures and empower graduates by fostering a more dynamic educational ecosystem, which is concretised by some recommendations that higher education institutions can implement.

Keywords

Higher Education, Graduate Studies, Elitism, Employability

INTRODUCTION

Before delving into the substantive arguments of this paper, it is imperative to elucidate relevant terminological distinctions as articulated by Trow (2007), aimed at enhancing a nuanced comprehension of the conveyed meanings: (1) elite education – which moulds the character and intellectual faculties of the ruling class and prepares them for roles of elite stature; (2) mass education- refers to the impartation of skills and readiness for a broad spectrum of technical and economic functions; (3) universal education- which adapts the "whole population" to rapid social and technological change. The landscape of higher education has undergone a process of "massification" in recent decades due to the rapid expansion observed in this field (Kapur et al., 2023). Prior studies, however, suggested that the rapid growth of higher education institutions does not correlate with increased social mobility but rather widens the educational inequality gap, eventually impacting graduate employability (Mok and Jiang, 2018). The stand of studies such as that of Brown and James (2020) highlights the stated contradiction since the research proves that education's potential as a source of social mobility is severely constrained without additional employment opportunities. Moreover, the same study also highlights that it is essential to address both conditional and educational opportunity disparities to reduce poverty. Therefore, the nexus between the future of work and higher education has been redefined in the 21st century (Sharma, 2020).

Although there are numerous studies on graduate employability, including those that show inequalities that exist in terms of employment for students graduating from elite and less elite universities (Williams and Filippakou, 2010), the role of elitism in challenging graduate employability has not been tackled in its own right and articulated in current conceptualisations. This is important as concerns have been raised in this regard, especially if higher education institutions and societies aim to decrease inequality that keeps on reproducing.

Considering the background and issues introduced above, this paper is a conceptual thinking piece that builds on a literature review concerning discursive hegemony by offering a new articulation and rejecting essentialist concepts such as global class. By reviewing the literature on graduate employability and using a hybrid literature review on the focused discourse of elitism, this paper explores the challenges of elitism in the context of higher education concerning graduate employability, through the lens of positional conflict theory.

THE APPROACH ADOPTED TO DOCUMENT EXISTING LITERATURE IN THIS PAPER

A Hybrid Literature Review, adopted from the research of Paul and Criado (2020), is conducted for the themes of 'Graduate Employability,' 'Elitism,' and 'Positional Conflict Theory.' The different themes were searched in studies that were related to the context of higher education, and studies ranging from the years 2000 - 2023 were selected. Some of the 'older' studies that the paper refers to are to gain a better grasp of the founding theories or concepts that relate to the area of study in this paper.

What is a Hybrid Literature Review?

A Hybrid Literature Review combines both narrative and systematic reviews; systematic search criteria are applied to the selection of articles, while a narrative approach is used in the synthesis of the retrieved literature (Turnbull et al., 2023). One example of a study using the Hybrid Literature Review within the research area of education to good effect is that of Fleisher (2012).

Rationale for the Choice of Hybrid Literature Review

The preference for a hybrid literature review over content analysis or meta-analysis in this study is grounded in the research question's nature, the study's objectives, and the information sought (Turnbull et al., 2023). A hybrid literature review offers a distinctive advantage by amalgamating systematic review elements with a traditional narrative approach, facilitating the synthesis of diverse perspectives and theoretical frameworks. This proved invaluable in comprehending the intricacies surrounding the prevalence of elitism in higher education and its repercussions on graduate employability. The qualitative nature of the hybrid review aligns seamlessly with the need to delve deeply into complex concepts (Mishra & Dey, 2023) like elitism, providing a nuanced exploration that surpasses the qualitative focus of content analysis and meta-analysis. Additionally, the flexibility to integrate both qualitative and quantitative evidence in a hybrid literature review suits the comprehensive understanding required by the research question, allowing for a more nuanced exploration that extends beyond numerical data. Lastly, the encouragement of critical engagement with the literature aligns seamlessly with the research question's call for critical examination of elitism in higher education.

Key Elements for Writing a Hybrid Literature Review

This sections emphasise the critical components of the suggested methodology for a Hybrid Literature Review, as brought forward by Turnbull et al. (2023) and each key element's application in the current paper is explained in the sub-sections below.

Research Questions

Since research procedures are chosen based on how well they address the research questions (Cipriani and Geddes, 2003), it is important to have a clear and well-defined research question. The current paper already defines a concise and clear research question in its initial section to enhance the hybrid literature review process.

Justification

In a Hybrid Literature review, there is a need to include inclusion/exclusion criteria, drawn from the systematic review practice, while applying a narrative approach to analyse the shortlisted articles (Turnbull et al., 2020). In the current paper, the main criteria for shortlisted studies are that they must adhere to a minimum of 2 elements described below. The paper adopted the following inclusion criteria, which can be overviewed in the table below, with a tick (✓) suggesting the elements that were present in each study:

Table 1

Studies/Research and The Inclusion Criteria (Author's work)

Studies/Research	Author(s) & Year	Element 1: Higher Education Context	Element 2: Graduate Employability/ Employability	Element 3: Elitism	Element 4: Positional Conflict Theory	Element 5: Inequality of opportunities in higher education or employment
Infrastructures of Sociality: How Disadvantaged Students Navigate Inequity at the University.	Budhiraja, 2023	✓		✓		✓
Re-Framing Employability as a Problem of Perceived Opportunities: The Case of Internships in a U.S. College Using the Student Perceptions of Employment Opportunities (SPEO) Framework.	Hora, 2023		✓	✓	✓	✓
Relative Employability: Applying the Insights of Positional Competition and Conflict Theories Within the Current Higher Education Landscape	Isopahkala - Bouret & Tholen, 2023		✓	✓	✓	✓
Student mentoring to enhance graduates' employability potential.	Bolton-King, 2022	✓	✓			✓
Impact of work-integrated learning and co-curricular activities on graduate labour force outcomes.	Jackson and Rowe, 2022	✓	✓			✓
Expanding or restricting access to tertiary education? A tale of two sectors and two countries.	Kish-Gephart et al., 2022			✓	✓	✓
Expanding or restricting access to tertiary education? A tale of two sectors and two countries.	Smith., 2022	✓		✓	✓	✓
Defining Social Justice in Education	Brady and Pijanowki, 2021	✓				✓
Can university qualification promote social mobility? A review of higher education expansion and graduate employment in China	Chan and Ngok, 2021	✓	✓	✓		✓
Chapter 10: *Teaching to Empower: Social Justice Action Projects as Imperatives for Educational Justice.*	Hancock et al., 2021	✓		✓		✓
Talent management, identity construction and the burden of elitism: The case of management trainees in Hong Kong.	Kamoche and Leigh, 2021		✓	✓		✓
A new elite? Higher education as seen through the lens of young people working in innovative technologies	Pantea, 2021	✓	✓	✓		✓
Inequalities in higher education in low and middle- income countries: A scoping review of the literature	Reindeers et al., 2021	✓		✓		✓
Revisiting the concept of employability through economic theories: Contributions, limitations and policy implications.	Suleman, 2021		✓	✓	✓	✓

Internships and the graduate labour market: how upper-middle-class students 'get ahead'	Wright and Mulvey, 2021		✓	✓	✓	✓
Educational expansion, poverty reduction and social mobility: Reframing the debate.	Brown and James, 2020	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
The Nexus between Future of Work and Future of Higher Education: Redefining Employability and Equity	Sharma, 2020	✓	✓			✓
The curious promise of educationalising technological unemployment: What can places of learning really do about the future of work?	Peters et al., 2019		✓	✓	✓	✓
'I am competent so I can be choosy': Choosiness and its implication on graduate employability.	Jayasingam et al., 2018		✓	✓	✓	
How college education promotes intergenerational mobility: An empirical study on the comparison of graduates' city of birth, college and job	Liping and Yanlin, 2018		✓	✓	✓	✓
Massification of Higher Education and challenges for graduate employment and Social Mobility: East Asian experiences and sociological reflections,"	Mok and Jiang, 2018	✓	✓	✓		✓
Who are gaining the highly paid elite placements in UK higher education?	Wang and Crawford, 2018	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
The Illusion of Meritocracy and the Audacity of Elitism: Expanding the Evaluative Space in Education.	Gale et al., 2017	✓	✓	✓		✓
Symbolic closure: Towards a renewed sociological perspective on the relationship between higher education, credentials and the graduate labour market.	Tholen, 2017	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Graduate Employability in Context : Theory, Research and Debate	Tomlinson et al., 2017	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Higher education, elite formation and social stratification in contemporary China: Preliminary findings from the Beijing College Students Panel Survey.	Wu, 2017	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Honourable mobility or shameless entitlement? Habitus and graduate employment.	Abrahams, 2016		✓	✓	✓	✓
Higher education, social class, and social mobility:	Bathmaker et al., 2016	✓		✓	✓	✓
Class advantage, commitment penalty: The gendered effect of social class signals in an elite labor market.	Riviera and Tilcsik, 2016		✓	✓	✓	✓
A Comparative Analysis of Graduate Employment Prospects in European Labour Markets: A Study of Graduate Recruitment in Four Countries	Branine and Avramenko, 2015		✓	✓		✓
A systematic review of current understandings of employability	Williams et al., 2015		✓	✓	✓	✓

What is the role of education in the recruitment process? Employers' practices and experiences of graduates from tertiary educational institutions in Estonia.	Saar et al., 2013	✓	✓	✓		✓
Ralph Dahrendorf's Conflict Theory of Social Differentiation and Elite Theory	Tittenbrun, 2013	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
The student perspective on employability	Tymon, 2013	✓	✓		✓	✓
Becoming employable students and 'ideal' creative workers: Exclusion and inequality in higher education work placements	Allen et al., 2012	✓	✓		✓	✓
Accumulating human capital while increasing educational inequality: a study on higher education policy in China	Chan and Ngok, 2011		✓			✓
Higher education and UK elite formation in the twentieth century	Williams and Filippakou, 2009	✓	✓		✓	✓
The mismanagement of talent: Employability and jobs in the knowledge economy.	Brown & Hesketh, 2004		✓	✓	✓	✓
The opportunity trap: Education and employment in a global economy.	Brown, 2003	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Employability in a Knowledge-driven Economy	Brown et al, 2003	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
The Globalisation of Positional Competition	Brown, 2000	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓

Literature Sources

In order to reduce publication bias (Paez, 2017), the current study included more than one bibliographic database, for example, Proquest, OneSearch, Google Scholar, and Springer.

Search Parameters

The literature review consists of only peer-reviewed articles. Boolean search strings (AND, OR and NOT) were used for each of the key themes of this paper, namely: Elitism, Inequality, Graduate Employability, and Higher Education.

Data Cleaning

The articles that have been selected above, were further examined to determine their relevance to the research under study. The process followed the suggestion of Linnenluecke et al. (2020) who posit that an article's inclusion in a particular study can be determined only after examining the abstract.

Information Synthesis

To synthesise information for this paper, the studies that are selected are analysed using content analysis, where the text is categorised against emerging codes that signify commonalities and differences between the research found.

ELITISM AS AN ELEMENT OF SOCIAL JUSTICE AND ITS RELATIONSHIP TO EMPLOYABILITY

Social justice is a concept that very broadly aims to ensure that every individual receives fair treatment in society (Brady & Pijanowki, 2021). Elitism is one of the concerns of social justice that can and often does result in educational disadvantage and thus inevitably affect employability opportunities (Gale, Molla, and Parker, 2017). The research of Gale, Molla, and Parker (2017) evokes that the relevance of education in achieving social justice has increased in the context of growing global inequities between privileged and disadvantaged social groups.

The employability agenda aims to create a benchmark of only desired and applicable skill sets, acknowledging that merely having access to a university does not ensure that one would receive an equivalent education or, for that matter, have similar employment chances. Bourdieu (1984, 1986, 1998, 2000) asserted that social injustices are perpetuated through educational disparities, which is a way of maintaining the status quo. According to Aronowitz (2004), who agrees with Bourdieu's contention that the primary goal of education is to prepare students for the workplace, this instrumental model has a broad expansion of educational attainment but is unable to address inequalities that arise as a result of different perceptions within higher education.

There are interdependent forces and inhibitors that result in specific consequences when the concept of social justice is used in higher education (Nieuwenhuis, 2010). Reexamining social justice in higher education exposes the political party in power's ideological assumptions, which are then followed by educational adjustments shaped by the state's social justice agenda. When the state develops frameworks for policy to deal with issues that delight its audience, it may create sophisticated frameworks that function more as political representations than actual attempts at tackling the underlying problems (Jansen, 2001), which ultimately results in legislation taking on a symbolic aspect. Furthermore, by giving one issue priority over another, the state will allocate resources to that issue at the expense of other social justice issues that could have been addressed. This leads to pursuing social justice issues that are exclusively on the state agenda, which may cause the gap between social "injustices" within higher education to expand.

The "consensus theory" of employability, which maintains that upskilling communities in a knowledge-based economy is a good thing that benefits all stakeholders, is unduly optimistic, (Brown, Hesketh, and Williams, 2003). The "conflict theory," on the other hand, contends that employment is an effort to rationalize unequal possibilities in school and the labor market at a time of rising income inequalities (Brown, Hesketh, and Williams 2003). In contrast, the aforementioned researchers are inclined toward this view. By proposing a "positional conflict theory" strategy that considers both the "rigging" of the system for credentials (by relying on Weber's notions of social closure) and the "ranking" of candidates based on their social and cultural capital in the job market, they enhance conflict theory.

Research suggests that social elitist status is often associated with over-education across various contexts. In parallel to this argument, the research of Chang and Zhang (2021) posits that the existing higher education model in China does not promote social mobility and is obligated to play a role designed by the state. In congruence with the argument brought forward, Li and Ou's (2019) work concludes that family background, parents' educational attainment, occupational status, and income level remain the most influential factors in determining children's access to higher education, and, therefore, influence their graduate employability. It is worth mentioning previous empirical studies that identified numerous factors such as location, household status, and gender, impacting access to higher education and therefore, having an influence on whether or not the graduate has the same access to employment (Chang & Ngok, 2011, Pang, 2016; Wu, 2016; Ma & Liu, 2018, Wu, 2019).

An important study reveals that in measuring intellectual elitism, one can objectively measure educational attainment or qualifications. However, measuring social elitism is a more difficult task since there is a need to measure one's work unit and the social influence attached to the society in which one lives (Chang & Zhang, 2021).

GRADUATE'S EMPLOYABILITY THROUGH THE LENS OF POSITIONAL CONFLICT THEORY

The early theories on the positionality of education and employability stem from the belief that the labour market is largely dependent on other people's actions can be found in writings on economics from the 1970s (Isopahkala-Bouret and Tholen. 2023). In addition to meeting the requirements of a specific job, one's relative employability also depends on where they fall in the hierarchy of job seekers (Brown et al., 2003). Therefore, positional competition and conflict between various social groups and individuals that strategise to gain an advantage over others in the labour market by utilising various types of resources, including graduate degrees, are involved in relative employability (Brown et al., 2003; Tholen, 2017).

The conflict theory interprets bias in the present educational policies and contends that there is economic instability that causes the social divide to deepen (Sharma, 2020). Drawing on founding theorists such as Bourdieu (1997), Hesketh and Williams (2003) argue that the consensus perspective is flawed since employability reflects an effort to justify unequal prospects in education and the labour market, where instead of boosting productivity, personal traits are emphasised in an effort to legitimise the perpetuation of disparities (Stoten, 2018). Therefore, Positional Conflict Theory offers a potent critique of the employability agenda that goes beyond just identifying desirable characteristics in the graduate labour force (Stolen, 2018) and is used in this paper as a lens to analyse the impacts of elitism on graduate employability.

Divergent viewpoints on the subject of understudy, act as a barometer for the difference between different colleges and their student enrolment and connect the idea of social justice in higher education to employability. For instance, the study by Boden and Neveda (2010) identifies the issue that local interpretations and notions about what qualifies graduates for employment may vary between Anglia Ruskin University and the University of Oxford. Although there isn't a statement about employability on the University of Oxford website, graduates from Oxford are typically regarded as having fantastic employability. The study also shows that Oxford's curriculum has not changed to reflect any emphasis on employability, as it did at many other universities, by building a broad base of knowledge and cultural capital. To put it another way, Oxford produces a highly sought-after cadre of "employers" with significant social and cultural capital, whereas Anglia Ruskin builds a re-trainable, flexible "employees" and work environment with highly specialized skills on behalf of employers. Elite institutions use their reputational capital to create their special capacity to place graduates in desirable professions (Brown et al., 2003).

CONFLICTING POSITIONS IN THE GRADUATE JOB MARKET

Graduate job markets around the world have undergone a fundamental change as a result of mass higher education., where everyone is urged to participate in higher education as an investment in their human capital under the rhetoric of the knowledge-based economy (Hora, 2023). Consequently, a sociological literature that specifically examined how the rising involvement affected the competition for graduate positions eventually came into existence; some sociologists (Brown, 2000, 2003; Brown et al., 2003; Brown and Hesketh, 2004) contend that graduate employability is socially structured and becoming increasingly relative as similarly educated people compete for a finite number of high-skilled jobs. The stated theory was built on earlier insights into the changing conditions for graduates and the role of the middle class in the competition for graduate jobs.

This section details some of the salient features of graduate employability and also provides background on the elements of positional conflict that affect graduate employability. Graduate employability refers to the way social class directly or indirectly affects employment results (Holmes, 2013). Indirect effects impact educational experience through the type of university attended, degree specialisation, and level of accomplishment, while direct impacts are demonstrated in terms of the type of employment that graduates from economically disadvantaged families are likely to secure (Clarke, 2017). The previous viewpoint is supported by Brown and Scase (2005), who contend that despite the expansion of the higher education system, highly sought "fast track" graduate positions are still mostly offered to people from wealthy backgrounds. However, the research by Clarke (2017) provides insight into the role of capital, individual attributes, and context while rethinking graduate employability and reflects that there are constructs that are beyond the control of an individual or even of the institution to curb elitist practices that might even be subconscious to some employers and practitioners.

In order for social groupings to gain a competitive edge in the graduate labour market, Brown et al. (2003) made a distinction between "rigging" and "ranking" techniques. "Rigging" is the practice of professional status organisations utilising exclusionary measures frequently in the recruiting process, to manipulate markets and competition laws to their own advantage (Brown et al., 2003), "Ranking" refers to a person's capacity to mobilise social, cultural, and economic resources to gain a competitive advantage in the job market. Critical sociologists have emphasised the significance of social closure in the distribution of labour where groups and individuals can use educational credentials as a barrier to employment (Hora, 2023). Furthering the idea put forward by Hora (2023), by establishing strict entry standards for certain professions or occupations, one might increase the relative employability of graduates. The previous statement means that the rising demand for talents has not led to a rise in educational requirements for jobs, and instead, as higher education involvement rises throughout the general population, businesses choose applicants according to their cultural or professional preferences. This viewpoint emphasises the relative nature of employability as well as the significance of other rivals in the job market (Tholen, 2017).

THE COMPLEXITY OF EDUCATIONAL ELITISM

Since the study combines the main domain theory of elitism with graduate employability, there is a need to investigate educational elitism to better analyse the dimensions affecting the concepts in this paper. A recent study by Telling (2020) focuses on the Bourdieusian concept of the sociology of education which reveals a complex mix of meanings held in educators' minds, hinting at educational elitism and the link to misrecognition. The study of Telling (2020) also hints at several underlying factors; how educators are themselves, think of the link between class and education type, or even the choice of students for certain universities. The research equally expands on three main axes: domestic (personal qualities also framed as 'culture'), civic (performance in examinations), and inspirational (personal qualities linked to intrinsic values such as integrity or intellect) (Telling, 2020). The same research draws attention to the slippage between the intellectual attributes of students and their social background; the author also critiques the link between the ideal student's intellectual ability (measured by academic attainment) and their inspirational worth (intellectual openness and love for learning). The international baccalaureate is then used as a measure of this openness (domestic worth). In simple words, it is as though the pupil's choice to enroll in the IB program and attend a private school is being applauded here because it demonstrates their intellectual curiosity. The kind of qualitative data gathered by the research of Telling (2020) portrays that the opinions of educators, elite employees, and graduates are supported by some seemingly legitimate set of ideals (typically meritocratic), yet they have the unintended consequence of perpetuating societal elites.

NAVIGATING THE LABYRINTH OF ELITISM: A COMPREHENSIVE EXAMINATION OF LABOUR MARKET DYNAMICS AND GRADUATE OPPORTUNITIES

The dynamics of elitism within the labour market are intricate and influenced by a myriad of factors that extend beyond conventional academic metrics. Riviera and Tilcsik (2016) and Jackson and Rowe (2022) underscore the salient impact of gender and social class, revealing a trend wherein individuals from higher social strata, particularly men, tend to secure employment more expeditiously. In contrast, lower-class applicants often encounter challenges assimilating into elite work cultures, such as those prevalent in law firms.

Suleman's (2021) research introduces the conceptual framework of employability, placing a significant emphasis on

the intricate interplay of social and personal barriers encompassing social and cultural capital. This framework not only shapes access to higher education but also profoundly influences subsequent graduate employability. Tomlinson (2017) further expounds on this discourse by incorporating human capital, social capital (networks) and cultural capital (knowledge, habits and taste) as pivotal elements exerting a substantial impact on employment outcomes. Additionally, Williams et al. (2016) introduce the notion of psychological capital, recognizing personal qualities like adaptability and resilience as significant contributors to employee retention.

Despite the inherent complexities, institutional reputation emerges as a decisive factor in determining employability, as elucidated by Saar (2014). The preferences of graduates from specific higher education institutions are intricately linked to perceptions of enhanced cognitive and interpersonal skills. However, it is imperative to acknowledge the nuanced variations in these preferences across nations, contributing to the segmentation among institutions, students, and graduates.

Byrne's (2020) study introduces an additional layer of complexity, disclosing that factors influencing graduate employability extend beyond the sphere of individual universities' control. Notably, ethnicity continues to be a determinant of perceived employability, notwithstanding concerted efforts to broaden participation.

The subsequent section delves into the notion of the 'new elite' within the context of technology-related fields, as scrutinised by Pantea (2021). This exploration reveals that traditional university functions may not resonate with the experiences of certain bright and creative individuals, leading them to opt for unconventional paths, such as dropping out of choosing not to attend. The study challenges the conventional understanding of university dropout, contending that it does not uniformly signify failure or social disadvantage.

Furthermore, the research conducted by Wright and Mulvey (2021) sheds light on how upper-middle-class students strategically leverage family resources to secure high-status internships, thereby positioning themselves advantageously in the competitive labour market. This underscores the pivotal role of internships as a class tactic, contributing significantly to the social reproduction of inequalities in graduate employment. Wang and Crawford (2019) propose a potential remedy to this by suggesting that structured, paid, and regulated university-organised work placement programs can offer a more equitable opportunity for students lacking family networks or connections.

In synthesis, these sections collectively underscore the intricate interplay of various factors shaping elitism within the labour market. These factors encompass gender, social class, institutional reputation, employability barriers, and the evolving dynamics of the 'new elite'. The ensuing discussion emphasises the imperative of a nuanced and comprehensive understanding of these multifaceted influences to effectively address and mitigate inequalities in graduate opportunities and employment outcomes.

REPOSITIONING HIGHER EDUCATION AS A GLOBAL COMMODITY TO MINIMISE THE IMPACTS OF ELITISM

Based on the analysis of the topics under study, there is a need to revisit and reconstruct opportunities for a more equitable balance for graduates' enhanced employability skills. This subsection focuses on three axes that are crucial for a less elitist approach to graduate employability which is enhanced if there is a repositioning of higher education as a global commodity on financial and regulatory frameworks, knowledge distribution, and knowledge generation in higher education.

Axis I - Financial and Regulatory Frameworks

Bourdieu's work is interesting to apply in this section: through Bourdieu's (1988, 1996) constructs of "field", "capital" and "habitus", universities have been conceptualised as relatively autonomous contexts governed by deeply ingrained cultures, values, and professional protocols that are distinct from those found in other domains of practice. Thus, it is conceivable that the university serves as an important mediating framework through which the forces of commodification may be dislodged, reorganised, or even subverted (Naidoo, 2003). Therefore, in order to curb the negative impacts of elitism, theoretical frameworks, and empirical data can analyse how these external influences, namely financial and regulatory frameworks, could be altered by logic and structure unique to the institutional environment of universities.

Axis II - Knowledge Distribution

Another argument to enhance the repositioning of higher education institutions in view to minimise elitism is the fact that higher education sociological research has tended to be defined by macro-level analyses that ignore university internal operations. Recently, there have been changes to this strategy and much research has been done on the effects of outside forces on management and administration in higher educational institutions (Naidoo, 2003). Nevertheless, the influence of forces for monetisation on what must be two of the most crucial roles of universities - knowledge production and knowledge reproduction remain a little unexplored (Nonaka and Toyama, 2015). Furthermore, government reforms are predicted based on the idea that current policy changes in research and education will result in increased equity, improved quality and a closer connection to economic productivity (Machlup, 2014).

Axis III - Knowledge Production

At the macro level, commodification forces may be very diverse between various university types. Higher-ranking universities with significant financial, reputational, and

scholarly capital as well as high levels of autonomy may be more resistant to commodification pressures than other universities, The implication is that vulnerable institutions that accept students from underprivileged backgrounds would likely experience the most damaging effects of the commodification of higher education. The majority of disadvantaged students will instead receive an education that is focused on developing a limited set of core competencies and a small elite of "self-programmable " workers who have mastered the art of learning and are occupationally mobile may emerge from the higher education system, according to Castells (2001), along with a sizable mass of "generic workers" who are interchangeable and disposable and unable to adjust to a volatile and changing labour market.

UNPACKING THE RELATIONSHIP: THE RELATIONAL PARADIGM OF GRADUATE EMPLOYABILITY, ELITISM, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The relational paradigm of graduate employability, elitism, and associated recommendations for higher education provided in the following sections, elucidate critical insights into fostering inclusivity and equity within educational and employment frameworks. Central to this paradigm is the recognition of the significance of relationships and networks in shaping graduate employability outcomes, as underscored by Lackovic (2019). This paradigm challenges the predominant focus on individual achievements and credentials, which often perpetuates exclusionary practices in employment, as noted by Telling (2020).

Recommendations stemming from this relational paradigm encompass a multifaceted approach aimed at mitigating elitism and promoting diversity and inclusion within higher education institutions. Firstly, enhancing outreach and access programs emerges as a pivotal strategy to broaden participation among underrepresented communities and individuals from diverse backgrounds. Through initiatives such as work readiness workshops, mentoring programs, and partnerships with external organisations, institutions can actively engage marginalised groups, thereby diversifying the applicant pool and addressing disparities in graduate employability.

Addressing social inequalities is another crucial aspect highlighted within the relational paradigm. Institutions are urged to acknowledge and mitigate the impact of elitism on perpetuating social disparities by ensuring equal access to opportunities, irrespective of one's background. This necessitates the expansion of financial aid and scholarship programs targeted at underrepresented groups to facilitate their academic success and professional advancement.

Moreover, the development of inclusive career services emerges as a key recommendation to support students from diverse backgrounds effectively. This entails equipping career advisors with training on diversity and inclusivity to provide comprehensive guidance and practical assistance in navigating the job market. Additionally, universities are encouraged to forge partnerships with organisations through graduate schemes and open applications to students of varied backgrounds, thereby broadening access to employment opportunities.

The relational paradigm also advocates for broadening the definition of employability beyond traditional markers of prestige to encompass a diverse range of competencies, including adaptability, interpersonal skills, and problem-solving abilities. This expanded understanding challenges narrow perceptions of employability perpetuated by elitism, which may exclude individuals possessing valuable skills and experiences.

Furthermore, fostering industry partnerships and experiential learning emerges as a critical strategy to equip students with soft skills essential for professional success. Collaboration with employers and industry professionals through internships, cooperative education programs, and industry-sponsored projects facilitates the acquisition of practical experience and enhances employability prospects.

The promotion of diversity and inclusion in the curriculum is highlighted as a pivotal avenue for higher education institutions to cultivate inclusive learning environments. By incorporating diverse perspectives and experiences into course content and fostering critical dialogue around issues of privilege and elitism, institutions can foster a more inclusive worldview among students.

Finally, cultivating a culture of inclusion within institutions is paramount to fostering a supportive and equitable learning environment. This entails organising awareness campaigns, providing diversity training for faculty and staff, creating safe spaces for marginalised communities, and facilitating dialogue on social justice issues to promote understanding and social responsibility.

In essence, the recommendations outlined within the relational paradigm underscore the imperative for higher education institutions to actively address elitism and foster inclusivity to ensure equitabe access to opportunities and promote positive social change. These recommendations are intricately aligned with the principles and objectives elucidated within the relational paradigm, emphasising the transformative potential of fostering inclusive practices within educational frameworks to cultivate a more equitable and socially just society.

CONCLUSION

This paper reviewed the relevant challenges of graduate employability and mapped the concept of elitism through the lens of positional conflict theory. According to the status hierarchy, one's relative employability is determined by where they fall in relation to other job seekers (Brown et al., 2003). Based on the synthesis of the literature in this paper, it is clearer

that achieving a high ranking in the job market requires simultaneously improving one's social, educational, and labour market positioning. Given the current state of the labour market and the rising stratification of higher education institutions, the challenge of defining the concept of graduate employability is topical and crucial. Congruently, the term relative employability, explored in the above sections, serves as a reminder that employability is ultimately a social and relational phenomenon rather than an individual one.

Areas for further research

There are numerous topics that require additional research within the context of graduate employability, and more specifically, relative employability. Currently, there is a paucity of knowledge about how positional rivalry operates in many national contexts, particularly, those that are not Western. It is important to evaluate the graduate labour market, which should be seen as a mechanism for balancing labour supply and demand and as a social setting where individuals' and organisations' actions are influenced and supported by larger societal structures, such as the higher education system. Critical sociological ideas can elucidate how specific graduates are positioned toward others in particular areas, educational institutions, and cultures.

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ORIGINAL REPORT

"It's Been a Long and Terrible Day": Doctoral Students' Experience of Stress and Coping

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ABSTRACT

Research has shown that graduate students experience a host of stressors as they navigate higher education. This study was a participant-generated visual method (PGVM) project with 14 doctoral students from one research university in the northeastern United States. The purpose of this study was to illuminate doctoral students' experiences as the world was progressing toward a post-pandemic reality. Data sources included visual image solicitation, a focus group interview, and individual memoing over one semester. Several themes emerged, including stressors related to working while in graduate school, finances, and social challenges. This study offers insights to graduate programs seeking to reduce student stress and support student success. It also offers support for the use of PGVMs to illustrate complex experiences and to connect participants in ways that could support graduate students coping with stress.

Keywords

Visual Methods, Stress, Doctoral Students, Coping, COVID-19, PGVM

INTRODUCTION

Graduate students experience pressure in numerous aspects of their lives, including academically, professionally, and in their families (Bekkouche et al., 2022). Thus, graduate students are at an elevated risk for mental health challenges compared to adults who are not in graduate school (Evans et al., 2018; Garcia-Williams et al., 2014). Yet, there are limited studies that delve deeply into the complex sources of stress and related coping strategies used by graduate students (Bekkouche et al., 2022; Garcia-Williams et al., 2014; Hazell et al., 2021; Lynch et al. 2020; Satinsky et al., 2021) and even fewer studies that have invited graduate students to use arts-based methods, such as storytelling, film making, photo elicitation, etc. (Nathan et al., 2023), to convey their experiences (Lynch et al., 2020). Using images or art is an important and scholarly way to honor participant meaning-making about stressors in educational environments (Lynch & Glass, 2020; Lynch et al., 2020; Suárez et al., 2021). This paper offers findings from one participant-generated visual methods (PGVM) project that invited 14 doctoral students the opportunity to share their stressors and coping strategies.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Graduate students are at an elevated risk for stressful educational experiences and related mental health challenges (Evans et al., 2018; Garcia-Williams et al., 2014). One meta-analysis found that almost 25% of graduate students reported

clinically significant depressive symptoms, and 17% reported clinically significant anxiety symptoms (Satinsky et al., 2021). Moreover, recent increases in deaths by suicide warrant special attention to graduate students' mental health as they are at higher risk of suicidality than the general population (Garcia-Williams et al., 2014; Hazell et al., 2021; Satinsky et al., 2021).

Bekkouche et al. (2022) identified four main systems that can lead to stress for graduate students. The first system, academic, creates stress from fear of disappointment, such as feeling trapped, isolated, and for international students, culture shock. The second, organizational, can increase or decrease the chronic stress of academic work depending on the availability of resources for students. The third system, lab and cohort, can generate stress when students feel out of place and have difficulty connecting with their peers. Lastly, the socioeconomic system can create stress through financial instability or the lack of employment post-graduation. Furthermore, many graduate students have multiple roles (e.g., parent, employee, caregiver) in addition to being a student (Alsandor & Trout, 2020; Bal et al., 2020) which can lead to time management challenges and sacrifice of other priorities for doctoral work or vice versa (Bal et al., 2020).

Numerous scholars (Chirikov et al., 2020; Hyun et al., 2006; Mallinckrodt & Leong, 1992) have also examined an array of specific topics and/or sub-populations related to graduate student stress, coping, and mental health. For instance, Hyun et al. (2006) observed that graduate students' self-reported mental health needs were significantly and negatively related to confidence about one's financial status, positive relationship with one's advisor, regular contact with one's friends, and being married. Hyun et al. (2006) also documented a positive association between symptoms of depression, the number of semesters in school, identifying as female, and using counseling services. Additionally, Mallinckrodt and Leong (1992) noted that female graduate students reported higher levels and more symptoms of stress than their male peers. Further, among graduate and professional students, mental health challenges are more prevalent among low-income and working-class students, Latinx students, American Indian or Alaska Native students, international students, and LGBTQ students (Chirikov et al., 2020). These four scholars draw attention to the nuances of stress, coping, and mental health among diverse subpopulations of students.

The COVID-19 pandemic exacerbated mental health challenges among the graduate student population (Chirikov et al., 2020). For instance, the prevalence of major depressive disorder among graduate and professional students was two times higher in 2020 compared to 2019 (Chirikov et al., 2020). During and after the COVID-19 pandemic, researchers have found that a multitude of negative feelings (e.g., fear, isolation, guilt, sadness, loss, exhaustion, stress) affected students' academic and social lives (Alsandor & Trout, 2020; LaRosa et al., 2022; Loza et al., 2021; Lynch et al., 2020; Sanderson et al., 2021). Finally, Zahneis (2020) found graduate students also expressed concerns about finishing their degrees on time during the pandemic.

Graduate students find ways to cope when they experience stress. For instance, they use a variety of coping strategies, such as changing plans, setting priorities, and seeking support from family and friends (Bal et al., 2020). These and other coping strategies, such as seeking support from advisors and cohort members, can reduce stress and its deleterious effects on students (Bekkouche et al., 2022; Charles et al., 2021; Posselt, 2021; Rigg et al., 2013). Effective coping strategies can counteract limited support at the institutional level (Bekkouche et al., 2022; Kiebler & Stewart, 2022; Loza et al., 2021), including, but not limited to, insufficient resources for academic success (Zahneis, 2020).

METHODOLOGY

This study used PGVM (Harper, 2002; Richard & Lahman, 2015) to document doctoral student experiences as the world was progressing toward a post-pandemic reality. PGVM is a qualitative methodology that allows researchers to partner with participants who collect, share and describe rich, arts-based visual data, not easily obtained by other methodologies. The inclusion of photographs or other images generates richness in participants' responses compared to words-only interviews, given that "the parts of the brain that process visual information are evolutionarily older than the parts that process verbal information" (Harper, 2002, p. 60). Visual methodologies can be subdivided into two categories depending on the source of the images: researcher-generated or participant-generated. The latter has gained momentum since researchers began questioning whether their selection of images matched what participants would choose. By taking photos or selecting images themselves, some researchers believe participants gain insight and empowerment through the research process (Richard & Lahman, 2015). Scholars have also shown how photos and other arts-based methods are especially powerful when used by participants to express intense, emotional experiences (Lynch & Glass, 2020; Lynch et al., 2020; Suárez, et al., 2021).

PGVM generally, and photo-elicitation in particular, possess many advantages (Pain, 2012; Richard & Lahman, 2015; Roger & Blomgren, 2019; Shaw, 2013; Van Auken et al.,2010). Photos can provide tangible stimuli that more effectively access informants' tacit and often unconscious representations, images, and metaphors. Photos produce different and richer information than other techniques, as participants may be able to articulate their feelings and experiences more easily, especially in studies where researchers and participants do not share similar cultures or languages (Shaw, 2013; Van Auken et al., 2010). Finally, images may help reduce power, class, and knowledge differences between researchers and participants since participants are placed in the leading role in the selection and sharing of images (Pain, 2012; Richard & Lahman, 2015;

Roger & Blomgren, 2019; Shaw, 2013; Van Auken et al., 2010).

Participants

Data were collected during a 13-week doctoral course on advanced qualitative research methods at one research university in the northeastern United States. As part of the course, the fourteen enrolled students were invited to participate in a variety of activities to learn about qualitative data collection, analysis, and writing. The instructor of the course valued hands-on learning, practiced scholarly mentoring of emerging scholars, and believed that research participants are co-constructors of knowledge (Jones et al., 2022). Therefore, the instructor invited students to be co-researchers in a PGVM project to be conducted during and after the course. All students chose to be co-researchers. Students also had the opportunity to decide what role, if any, they wanted to play after the course ended. All but one student (who was graduating) opted to continue with the project after the end of the academic semester. Data analysis and writing extended for 10 months beyond the academic term. To protect the identities of participant co-researchers, each student selected their own pseudonym for this manuscript. Table 1 depicts socio-demographic and academic characteristics of participants.

Procedure

For this PGVM project, data were collected from three sources: visual image solicitation, a focus group, and individual memos. The first method for gathering data was a photo/image solicitation. Doctoral students were given the following directions for the image solicitation.

> The purpose of the research project is to invite Ph.D. students to take photos (or share pre-existing images) that represent their lived realities of being doctoral students in 2022. Add your name to a Google Slide. Then paste 2-5 images on your slide that best capture your lived realities of being a graduate student. Please do not take photos of others (without consent) and/or blur their faces so that they remain anonymous. During class, each student will have time to describe their photos and tell us why they chose that particular image.

Each student followed the directions, inserting photos, memes, words, and other images into their slide. During class the following week, each student spent 5-7 minutes sharing their slide, discussing the rationale behind the selection of each image, and explaining how those choices illuminated their lived realities as doctoral students. This activity was recorded and transcribed for analysis.

The second source of data came from a 1.5 hr focus group in which participants discussed the following: patterns in the images and sharing activity, the PGVM process, and their experiences as participants. During the conversation, the participants and instructor sought to identify commonalities in participants' experiences. They also reflected on how they felt sharing with, and listening to peers who belonged to similar (or different) demographic groups, disciplines, and statuses (e.g., parents, full-time employees).

The third source of data was participant memos. Memos are a common form of data used by qualitative researchers to reflect on the research process and emerging analyses (Jones et al., 2014; Jones et al., 2022). Over the 13-week semester, participants used memos to reflect on all aspects of the PGVM project, including the collection process, data, meaning making, analysis, and general methodology. For this study, "memos" took the form of free-writing in individual Google Documents in response to prompts intended to guide this reflection process. Some prompts included: "Free write about your general reflections on the content and process of this learning activity." "What was it like to engage in this qualitative project as a participant?" "What did you learn?" and "What might others learn from our photos and reflections in this process?"

Data Analysis

To prepare data for analysis, student presentations, and the focus group discussion were audio-recorded and transcribed. Students had access to the transcripts to ensure any commentary ascribed to them was correct, but they were instructed not to alter the transcript otherwise. Thematic analysis was used to identify patterns in the data (Clarke & Braun, 2017; Saldaña, 2015). Using an inductive approach, each student created an initial coding frame. These initial coding frames were then discussed in small groups to consolidate them into four possible coding frames. Finally, all students discussed the four draft coding frames as a large group to consolidate them into a final study coding frame, a method that also served as an iterative form of team analysis and member checking (Jones et al., 2014). Seven codes and 24 sub-codes emerged from the data. Transcripts and memos were imported into Computer Assisted Text Markup and Analysis (CATMA, version 6.5), where co-researchers applied the codes from the finalized study coding frame. This manuscript presents the results from selected emergent categories, with a special emphasis on the main codes titled stressors and coping.

Several strategies were used to ensure the trustworthiness and credibility of the findings (Creswell & Poth, 2018; Jones et al., 2014), including triangulation with multiple sources (visual images and student sharing, focus group, memos), ongoing process consent, and member checking as a team of co-researchers. The participants and instructor engaged in weekly discussions about the process and products. These conversations included candid reflections on the complex relationships of students who are co-researchers and learners in a classroom setting. Moreover, since the team of co-researchers was co-analyzing the data as part of a class, there were frequent opportunities to develop analyses in real time with one another

and to engage in member checking. Finally, discrepant case analysis (Creswell & Poth, 2018) was used to honor the complexity of the findings and to ensure that conclusions reflected the complexity of doctoral student experiences.

FINDINGS

This paper presents data from selected emergent categories of stressors and coping. Graduate students shared images and discussed the challenges they faced during (and after) the COVID-19 pandemic and how they learned to adjust. The findings draw heavily from the verbal and written reflections of participants in the focus group discussion and memos. Selected images are included in this paper to illuminate the kinds of images shared by participants. However, many students included pre-existing images (e.g., online photos, memes) which are copyrighted and therefore could not be included in this article. Nonetheless, we believe the reflective prose about the images (even those not included here) helps document robust emergent themes around doctoral student stressors and coping strategies.

STRESSORS

Findings reveal that doctoral students experience a variety of stressors. As participants presented their images, they described experiencing an array of stressors as graduate students, which aligns with prior literature (Allen et al., 2020; Mousavi et al., 2018). Further, findings illuminate, via powerful images and prose, the interconnections among student identities (women, students of color, first-generation students), student roles (parents, partners, employees), and the expectations–implicit and explicit–that doctoral students should be focused on their studies and experts in their disciplines. Although the graduate student participants in this study were progressing academically and incredibly knowledgeable about their fields, they experienced a complicated mix of stressors related to their social locations, roles, and competing priorities. They reported feeling like life was a challenging juggling act. They also shared that they experienced imposter syndrome and guilt about not enjoying or appreciating the privilege of being a doctoral student.

Some stressors were related to uncertainty with graduate work, including experiencing impostor phenomenon, feeling as though someone is going to perceive them as being lazy, and feeling burned out. One student, Alia, remarked that, despite working hard, she felt uncomfortable resting or taking breaks. She was working on being okay with "just sitting and not doing anything because in my brain that processes me being lazy." This was met with agreement by others, including Joan who said: "As some persons already mentioned, feeling of imposter syndrome. There is a lot of change and evolution, but all of that growth also comes with just anxiety at times, in trying to just juggle everything." Other students throughout the focus group nodded along in agreement, which was unsurprising as imposter syndrome has been known to affect many graduate students (McGregor et al., 2008; Parkman, 2016).

Other stressors were more social in nature. Many of the students in the focus group had started their Ph.D. journey during the height of the COVID-19 pandemic in 2020 and had experienced a great deal of social isolation from their peers. One first-generation graduate
student, Sebastatin, described the exacerbated isolation that she felt as a first-generation immigrant student:

> Everything was just so new being first gen, being first-gen immigrant as well, as Alia said before. Many similar experiences of just being the first in a program and people not understanding, community not understanding, being the first of my friend group going to grad school. It's just a lot of firsts. And, not know[ing] who to share the experiences with, because I also didn't meet my cohort members until this year in person, which is wild to think about.

As noted by Sebastatin who did not meet her peers in person for more than two years, the COVID-19 pandemic fostered uncertainty and isolation for many students. For some, this stressor was compounded by juggling multiple roles, such as being a mother and doctoral student, in the same environment. This complex balancing act was encapsulated by Meg, who used an internet image (copyrighted) of a clown juggling while riding a unicycle as a metaphor to describe her experience raising her young son in a new country while starting her Ph.D. during the COVID-19 pandemic:

> So I think the unicycle is COVID. What COVID has brought to us, it makes things more difficult than before, because we don't want–because my son is not vaccinated–so we don't want him to go to daycare. And also because we are here with no family members, so we have to keep him at home and sign up for different classes for him. So that's my life for the past two years.

The experience of dealing with competing priorities and roles, such as being a mother and a doctoral student, was conveyed by several students. And while many students felt that they could lean on their families for support during their graduate school experience, other students shared that graduate school created stress in their family relationships. For instance, Clementine shared: "I guess the discussions of family members not getting it because I have experienced resentment from family members and this kind of not understanding of my journey I've been dealing with lately."

Another student reflected on the financial changes that she had to make for her family as a mother, wife, and doctoral student. As someone with multiple roles to fill, Naomi expressed guilt over ordering pizza (Figure 1) for dinner more often due to limited finances:

> One of the impacts of grad school in my life is that I have a lot less money than I did two years ago. And so we probably wouldn't have ordered Dominoes two years ago, but we order it now because I can order it from my computer during class and have it at the door for my kids. And it & it's also really inexpensive.

Figure 1

Photograph Taken by Naomi After Ordering Pizza For Her Family

Naomi's comment reflects the intersection of competing roles, time demands, and the newfound stressor of financial limitations that was brought on by attending graduate school. Earlier in the class, another student, Gloria, expressed financial stressors by showing a screenshot of a text message that she sent, which read, "Can't afford that," to illustrate her surprise at how much lower her income was due to graduate school. She elaborated as follows:

> Ever since I got in grad school, I have been constantly shocked about how broke I am and how I can't really afford to do things for me anymore that I used to. And, I worked all of undergrad, so I had extra money and I can't do that anymore.

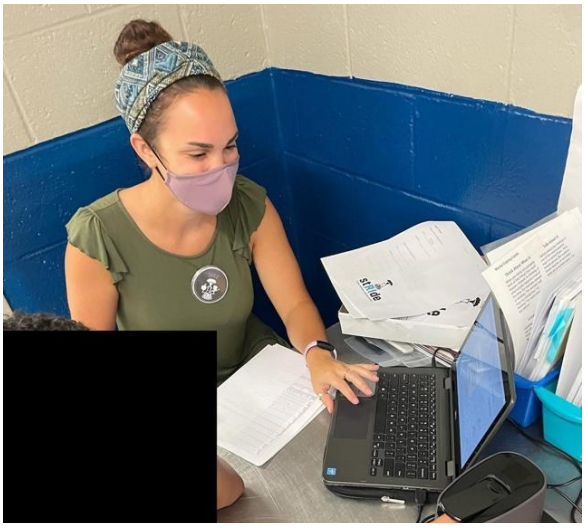
Students were not all immediately comfortable sharing their financial hardship in the focus group but memoed about their reflections later. In a research memo, Naomi mentioned her emotional response to Gloria's experience of not being able to afford what she used to. Naomi wrote: "And financial pressure, also can relate to—and I'm aware that she has opened the door for me to share more about the Dominoes boxes." Financial challenges were difficult to talk about, but Naomi and Gloria's comments resonated strongly with other co-researchers in the PGVM study.

Finally, students often described experiencing guilt over not always enjoying graduate school. This guilt perplexed students, as they felt stress and frustration with something that they believed should be considered a privilege. This paradoxical guilt affected Gloria so much that she explained how she felt the need to include a positive picture for her slide (Figure 2):

> So, starting off with the picture all the way to the left. This was a picture I added at the last minute because I felt like I was being pretty negative about my experiences in 2022 and as a PhD student overall. So I wanted to add in this picture because you can tell I am smiling through my mask.

Figure 2

Gloria Smiling Through Her Mask, Showing That There Have Been Good Moments Amidst The Stressful Moments



Students commiserated over this feeling of guilt, finding relief in learning that others grappled with it as well. For instance, Nelly said:

> So, one of the things that I thought was really interesting that a lot of us brought up was the privilege of being in grad school and the flip side of that. This kind of feeling guilty when we feel exhausted. I saw that come up a lot and it really resonated with me. I've said to my husband a number of times, like "I'm so grateful to be here, I'm so grateful that you are helping me with all of this, and I'm sorry that I'm not enjoying every minute of it." So, that was good to hear everyone else talk about too.

After detailing how graduate school was stressful and how it complicated their relationships, students found a sense of camaraderie, connection, and comfort by talking about their stress with each other.

COPING

In addition to describing the stressors represented in their photos, doctoral students also discussed the many ways they learned to cope with stress in their educational and personal lives. Interestingly, many of the methods of coping mirrored their stressors. For example, family could be a source of stress because students could feel pressure to fulfill multiple roles or because students' families did not understand their doctoral life. Yet, family was also described as a source of support for students. For instance, Nelly shared: "They could see that I was progressing, and they would encourage me and all of that. So even though there's no one here,
there's people behind me in this."

Family was not the only support system discussed. One student described the many networks of support they found and what those networks meant to them. Sebastatin explained:

> I have this circle. It's supposed to represent sister circle, and it represents my community, including my friends, my family, my girlfriend, and other supporters in the program. Without them, I don't know where I would be.

Peers were also described as a source of community and support by other students. One student spoke about the bond she shared with other students who started the graduate program simultaneously. Lyra stated, "We always persevere and kind of support each other through milestones and stuff, which has been very nice." Ultimately, students agreed that family and peer support was an important part of what made them persevere through the challenges of graduate school. Paige chronicled how family and friends kept them going: "But then you got this encouragement and support from your friends and family and, 'Okay, I'm trying again, I can do this.' So, I'm not sure where I am in this journey, but I still feel like the goal is far away."

One of the ways in which doctoral students used connection with others to cope during the COVID-19 pandemic was through virtual communities and interacting with friends and family online. Doctoral students relayed how they turned to online environments to combat the isolation during and after the pandemic and, for some, being on their own in a new country. For instance, Joan said: "I spend a lot of time on my phone, just trying to be connected to friends and family who are overseas." Joan also sought out online communities via academic Twitter to better understand research methods (See Figure 3).

In addition to online communities and virtual communication, another trend in how participants connected with others as a coping strategy involved the use of memes. Memes have been used to share relatable experiences with others (Marwick, 2013) and have become intertwined with everyday life as a part of expressing emotions and relating experiences. In this research, participants used memes for multiple purposes. Due to copyright issues, the memes provided by students cannot be provided. However, we have summarized the relevant text from

Figure 3

Screenshot Shared by Joan Illustrating How She Connects With Others Through Virtual Communities

the memes to illustrate the meaning-making processes described by the participants. Clara explained how she found both humor and comfort in one of the memes that she shared on her slide:

> I also find great comfort when I remind myself that I'm not the only person experiencing these feelings, which again, that can happen while also talking to my peers in my program. But, also finding solace in social media, via memes with this one being one of my recent favorites, which reads, "Getting a PhD so when I get something in the mail that I've purchased, I can say, 'Ah, just what the doctor ordered every single time until I die.'"

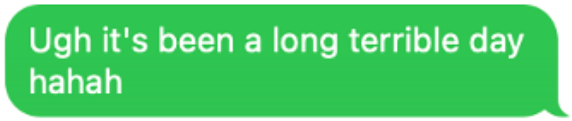
Another student reflected on how she uses memes as a way to bond with her peers. Lyra said: "One of my jokes is that memes are a way that I show my love, so if I text memes to someone that's a pretty big thing for me." She was not alone in this form of connecting with others. Many participants' slides used memes. During the focus group and in written research memos, most participants expressed how they found memes relatable and illuminating. As Barbie reflected, "Memes help capture an idea better than words."

Students discussed how humor, in general, was an integral part of how they coped with stress. While memes may not always be directly funny, participants were inclined to find them relatable and often humorous. Participants engaged in a kind of knowing laughter in other situations too, including when Clara

shared a text message (the titular quote of this paper, Figure 4): "It's been a long and terrible day." Despite not being an outright joke, the message of the text message was met by the students in the focus group with a smile or even laughter because they were able to relate to her experience and found comfort in her humor.

Figure 4

Text Message Sent by Clara Describing Her Day



Sebastatin highlighted the broader context of widespread social isolation when describing the importance of "just laughing and being able to feel connected in a time where a lot of people feel disconnected." Other participants in the focus group nodded and affirmed that sharing and laughter among a community of learners was an important coping strategy.

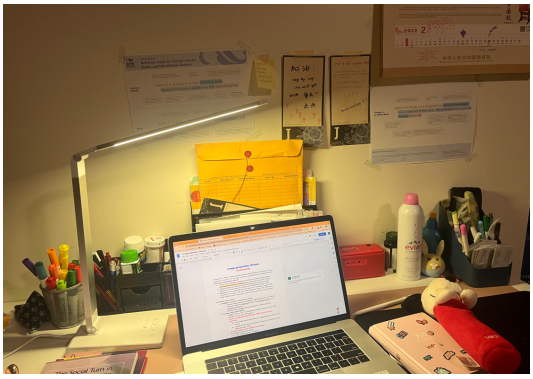
In addition to humor, students felt that self-compassion was an important aspect of coping with stress. Self-compassion is the tendency to treat oneself with respect, kindness, and patience (Allen & Leary, 2010). Clara described self-compassion as "empowering" and went on to talk about how she is working to "give [herself] the same compassion that I give to others in my personal and professional life." Other students echoed the need for self-compassion and shared how they were working on building self-compassion into their lives more. Clementine shared how a recent diagnosis changed how they approached challenges:

> I was recently diagnosed with ADHD. So, knitting has been kind of the embodiment of me accepting my own limitations that were exacerbated by coming back to grad school in the middle of a pandemic and realizing that there are things that I need to do that I now allow myself to do to cope. Whereas before, I'd argue with myself as to if it was rational or needed to actually have things like that. Now with the actual label, I'm able to just say, "Hey, my brain works a little differently, let's just work with it instead of fighting it."

Students also shared how they engaged in self-compassion by putting a lot of thought into how their workspaces were set up. During and after the pandemic, graduate students were often required (or encouraged) to work from home. Meg described how she wrote notes for herself and put them on the wall with encouraging messages (Figure 5) like "You got this" or "Write something every day."

Figure 5

Meg's Desk and the Wall Behind it, Decorated with Motivational Notes



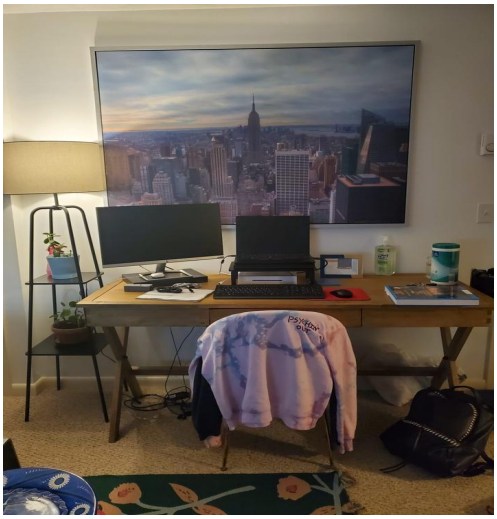
Another participant described her workspace setup (Figure 6) as "very calming, very supportive." Alia explained how the decorations in her workspace motivated her:

> Some of the pictures are from my travels from Cuba, from Thailand, some stuff from India. And then there's a picture of me and my partner and a picture of my grandparents. And then also a picture of my parents on their wedding day, feeding each other…So, it's just a daily reminder of how I should continue and just motivation for me.

Self-compassion was an important coping strategy that manifested in both self-talk and the intentional creation of affirmative workspaces.

Figure 6

Alia's Workspace, Decorated With Images That Make Her Think of Traveling and Her Family. Family Photos Have Been Omitted to Preserve Confidentiality



DISCUSSION

PGVMs allow researchers to obtain different and richer information than other techniques and to share power with participants (Pain, 2012; Richard & Lahman, 2015; Van Auken et al., 2010). Photographs and other visuals can be metaphors of meaning and representations of inherent meaning, as participants' visual choices and accompanying language serve as sites of common metaphorical understandings (Richard & Lahman, 2015). Moreover, participants in studies that involve PGVMs perceive methodological advantages. For instance, interacting with visual images allows for nonverbal communication on challenging topics, particularly around issues related to difficult life experiences (Roger & Blomgren, 2019). Our findings reflect these benefits. In particular, the use of visual images and metaphors encouraged multiple levels of reflection and critical thinking from co-researchers (Elliot et al., 2017). By pairing PGVM with a focus group (instead of, for instance, individual interviews), participants in this study provided content-rich data as new ideas, comments, or constructs were generated by other students. Through dialogue, students interacted with each other's visual contributions and the ideas they shared in discussion. As co-researchers engaged in the analytic process reviewing empirical data and memos of their peers, the process yielded robust learning, reflection, and continued dialog about emergent themes related to stressors and coping.

Current PGVM research on college students in general, as opposed to graduate students only, has focused on specific groups, such as first-year students (Kahu & Picton, 2022), international students (Elliot et al., 2017), and first-generation Latinx graduate students (Montero-Hernandez & Drouin, 2020). Only one study focused broadly on graduate students (Lynch et al., 2020). While prior studies include students in diverse academic fields, the study presented in this paper was enriched by its focus on doctoral students who were learning at an important moment in time (e.g., COVID-19 and post-pandemic realities). Focusing on a diverse cohort of graduate students in various disciplines and with different life roles (e.g., parental status, job status) allowed a multifaceted outlook on the doctoral experience that illuminated both commonalities and differences.

The findings of this study aligned with previous research on doctoral students' experiences of stressors and coping strategies both before and during the pandemic. For instance, participants experienced mental health issues and various pressures, such as anxiety, imposter syndrome, and feelings of guilt and isolation in their doctoral lives (Alsandor & Trout, 2020; Bekkouche et al., 2022; Evans et al., 2018; LaRosa et al., 2022; Loza et al., 2021). Moreover, many participants shared their experiences juggling different roles (Alsandor & Trout, 2020; Bal et al., 2020). Also, in line with prior studies (Chirikov & Soria, 2020; LaRosa et al., 2022; Nodine et al., 2021), participants noted that financial issues were also a challenge. To manage the stress, participants sought support from various members of their communities, including family, friends, peers, and mentors (Bal et al., 2020; Bekkouche et al., 2022; Charles et al., 2021; Posselt, 2021; Rigg et al., 2013).

This study also contributes new insights to current research, adding nuance and visual complexity, to the current understanding of the stressors and coping strategies of doctoral students. While previous research identified stressors individually, participants in this study reflected the intersecting nature of these stressors in their doctoral experience. To cope with feelings of isolation during the COVID-19 pandemic, participants turned to online communities and virtual communication to bond with peers, friends, and family. Humor was also an integral part of participants' coping strategies. For instance, memes were used by participants to share relatable experiences, express emotions, find comfort, and bond with peers. In addition, self- compassion was used to manage stress. Participants shared how they built self-compassion into their lives through positive thinking and the creation of affirmative workspaces to empower themselves. These PGVM findings constitute new and rich insights into doctoral students' experiences.

LIMITATIONS

As with any study, there were limitations. First, in this project, many students selected images from the internet for their slides. Due to copyright restrictions, we were unable to visually share all the images referenced in this paper. Nonetheless, we believe that our prose provides important information regarding the meaning-making surrounding the images. As one participant noted, the project was a "co-constructive meaning making process. The narratives about images are more important [than the images themselves]. We are finding our collaborative narrative [and] we are interested in everyone's subjective experience." A second limitation of this study is that the participants were students from a limited set of disciplines, namely education, health, and psychology. Although qualitative research is never generalizable, the themes identified in this paper could be transferable to doctoral students in other social and health science fields. It is unclear, however, if and how, the findings might accurately capture the nuanced lived realities of doctoral students in other fields, including STEM and the humanities.

RECOMMENDATIONS AND FUTURE RESEARCH DIRECTIONS

In alignment with the study purpose, the findings from this study point to pandemic and post-pandemic stressors and coping strategies. However, as noted in the discussion (and literature review), the findings also correlate with graduate student stressors that have consistently been documented by scholars for decades (c.f., Alsandor & Trout, 2020; Bal et al., 2020; Chirikov & Soria, 2020; LaRosa et al., 2022; Nodine et al., 2021). As a result, several recommendations were identified that are simultaneously post-pandemic specific and timeless.

Higher education leaders should develop strategies both for cohort building within graduate programs and for the introduction of graduate students into communities of practice within the student's area of study beyond the university. Graduate student cohorts provide a community with others experiencing similar challenges; they also facilitate relationships that could mitigate feelings of inadequacy and isolation. Faculty sponsorship within academic communities of practice could contribute to students' sense of confidence and membership as they develop their academic identities. With this two-pronged approach – programmatic cohort building and faculty sponsorship within the field – graduate programs can begin to address stressors related to feelings of inadequacy, outsider status, and isolation.

Higher education leaders should evaluate all strategies for supporting graduate students' mental health through the lens of students' diverse identities and life circumstances. This study illustrated the ways in which intersecting identities (e.g., international, first generation, disabled) and roles (e.g., parents, employees) shaped the experiences and stresses of graduate students. All policies should be examined for their unique impacts upon specific groups of students, including international students, students with disabilities, parenting students, and working students, as well as for their cultural responsiveness. This evaluation of policies will likely require collaboration across university departments in the delivery of services. In addition, higher education leaders should consider the ways in which the COVID-19 and post-COVID-19 contexts might shape graduate students' experiences (Nodine et al., 2022) and exacerbate their feelings of stress (Alsandor & Trout, 2020; Bal et al., 2020). Finally, higher education leaders should support graduate students' coping strategies (Lynch et al., 2020) by understanding the varied ways that students cope and offering additional student-specific coping strategies. Educators can recommend coping strategies documented in the literature and generate additional suggestions from students. As with this PGVM project, cultivating a community where students can give and receive support is one way to assist graduate students who are coping with stress.

This project offers insight into the need for further qualitative research with graduate students. This small study on one campus added nuance to insights from prior works about graduate student coping and stressors (Alsandor & Trout, 2020; Bal et al., 2020; Chirikov & Soria, 2020; LaRosa et al., 2022; Nodine et al., 2021). Future research should expand this work and engage doctoral students at a variety of campuses and at different points in time leading away from the COVID-19 pandemic. Additional research should include doctoral students from all disciplines, including STEM and the humanities, as those disciplines were absent from this project.

CONCLUSION

This study illuminated doctoral students' experiences through PGVM, finding extensive sources of stress (e.g., imposter syndrome, competing roles, financial hardship) and several strategies to minimize its impact on mental health (e.g., peer support, self-compassion, workspace setup). Based on these findings, we proposed recommendations for higher educators working with doctoral students to minimize stressors and empower doctoral students by supporting their coping strategies at the community level. We also point to our findings as evidence of the benefits of PGVM for co-researchers, especially when employed in conjunction with other strategies for collaborative research. This PGVM project contributed to student co-researchers' sense of connection and validation, making the project itself both a contribution to the scholarly literature as well as a coping strategy for graduate student stress.

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ORIGINAL REPORT

The Relationship Between Social Media Use Internet Use and Frequency of Pornography Habits

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this correlational study is to determine whether or not there is a relationship between the amount of time spent on the internet or social media sites and the frequency of pornography habits and if gender has an effect on the frequency of pornography habits. Participants were a convenience sample of 105 adults aged 18-24 from two universities in the Southeastern United States. Each participant completed a survey to determine time spent on internet sites, time spent on social media, and the frequency of pornography habits. An analysis of our results showed that there is not a significant relationship between internet use and frequency of pornography habits. Our results indicated no significant relationship between social media use and the frequency of pornography habits. Our results did suggest, however, that gender does have a significant effect on the frequency of pornography habits.

Keywords

Social Media and Internet, Gender, and Pornography

INTRODUCTION

Today, internet websites and social media applications are more accessible to adolescents and young adults than at any other point in history due to technological advances in the modern world. The variety of content available to access online is nearly limitless, creating opportunities for online users to access websites and applications containing sexually explicit material, such as pornography. In a month, pornographic material is accessed by 91.5% of men and 60.2% of women (Solano et al., 2020). Pornography, as defined by Merriam-Webster, is "material (such as books or photographs) that depicts erotic behavior and is intended to cause sexual excitement"(Merriam-Webster, n.d.). Pornography users are found among both men and women, but there are differences in how each gender perceives and accepts pornography. The use of pornography releases a chemical in the brain called dopamine, which has also been recognized in response to frequent social media use. Internet sites, social media, and pornography can each generate harmful effects on users' minds, their relationships, and their body image.

WOMEN'S ATTITUDES TOWARD PORNOGRAPHIC MATERIAL

Men and women consume pornographic materials with the intent of satisfying physical pleasure (Emmers-Sommer, 2018). Unlike men, however, women tend to use pornography to satisfy relational needs. They tend to engage in pornography with hopes that it will lead to a more fulfilling sexual life with

their partners. Albright (2008) suggested that women are more likely than men to communicate about sex online, while men are more likely than women to use the internet solely to seek out pornography. Furthermore, women are more perceptive than men of the negative impacts sex-seeking behaviors can generate, such as self-objectification and a decline in morality (Chadwick et al., 2018).

MEN'S ATTITUDES TOWARD PORNOGRAPHIC MATERIAL

According to the National Library of Medicine, "91.5% of men and 60.2% of women herein reported having consumed pornography in the past month" (Solano et al., p. 92). Men typically have more frequent interactions with pornography than women (Emmers-Sommer, 2018). Men tend to seek pornography for sexual pleasure with the intent of self-gratification rather than relational gratification (Albright, 2008). Pornographic habits in men raise their sexually objectifying habits and beliefs toward women (Emmers-Sommer, 2018). In addition, Mikorski (2000) found that men who use pornography are more likely than those who do not perform violent or unwanted sexual advances toward women. Therefore, there is a higher prevalence of pornography use and online sex-seeking behaviors among men, even when it results in harmful effects, such as sexual objectification of women.

EFFECTS OF PORNOGRAPHIC HABITS

Pornography affects the user's behavior and relationships. Adam (2019) suggests that pornography can be just as harmful as infidelity in a relationship. Men are more critical of their partner's body when they engage with pornography, leading their partners to suffer from poor self-esteem and low body positivity (Albright, 2008.) Any media that sexually objectifies can lead to body comparisons (Maheux et al., 2021). Since the rise of pornography, women have felt more inclined to change their bodies to look like the women in pornographic materials (Albright, 2008). The higher the pornography use, the more self-image declines. Pornography affects the body image of both the user and their partner (Maheux et al., 2021).

Pornography has a negative effect on morality (Bolu-Steve et al., 2022). Many users of pornography came across their initial viewing of pornography unintentionally and may have even felt repulsed or uncomfortable by the material. Exposure over time, however, leads to desensitization and, in many cases, addiction. Moral beliefs that pornography users once held are gradually dismantled, not only toward pornography but toward other areas of life, as well (Bolu-Steve et al., 2022). Pornography has the potential to extinguish self-regulation and the ability to make decisions that coincide with long-term best interests and are congruent with deep moral beliefs (Sirianni & Vishwanath, 2016).

EFFECTS OF SOCIAL MEDIA USE AND INTERNET USE

Social media is accessed very regularly by a majority of adolescents (Sirianni & Vishwanath, 2016). There are many effects of social media use. A recent rise in self-objectification among adolescent females can partly be attributed to high social media and internet use. Self-objectification is the belief that a person is an object rather than a human (Maheux et al., 2021). Likewise, body comparisons, common among frequent social media users, can contribute to declining body confidence (Maheux et al., 2021).

Addictive behaviors are frequent among adolescents and young adults who regularly access internet websites and social media applications. These users become reliant upon the validation and attention received through social media posting (Sirianni & Vishwanath, 2016). The need to meet these social interaction desires often propels adolescents to become avid media consumers. Social media interaction leads to a disconnect from society. Frequent internet access causes users to be entirely dependent on the interactions they gain from social media (Sirianni & Vishwanath, 2016).

DOPAMINE CHEMICALS IN THE BRAIN

The act of accessing social media applications and receiving validation from posted content creates significant amounts of dopamine in the brain (Bolu-Steve et al., 2022). Experiencing gratification in one form, such as receiving likes on a social media post, can transfer to wanting gratification in other forms (Bolu-Steve et al., 2022). The brain is altered once it begins creating more dopamine. Over time, the brain needs more dopamine in order for the same physiological response to occur. The dopamine release becomes a craving for the user, and the user may seek harmful ways to achieve more dopamine releases by more frequently accessing more of the element provided in the initial dopamine release or reward system (Bolu-Steve et al., 2022).

The reward system phenomenon is especially relevant among adolescents. Adolescents do not understand that what they consume has the potential to alter their brain chemistry. An alteration of brain chemistry leads to addiction, often for years following initial use (Bolu-Steve et al., 2022). The more an adolescent activates the brain's reward system with explicit materials, the more objectifying behaviors and aggressive sexual activity will occur (Bolu-Steve et al., 2022). The reward of dopamine also has the potential to override morality depending on what is important to the individual. In addition, overuse of pornography leads to neurophysiological changes, changes in behavior, and relationship problems (Alves et al., 2020).

PURPOSE OF STUDY

The purpose of the non-experimental study is to explore the relationship between internet use, social media use, and frequency of pornography habits. This study also aims to explore if gender affects the frequency of pornography habits.

HYPOTHESIS

It is hypothesized that there is a relationship between social media use and the frequency of pornography habits. It is also hypothesized that there is a relationship between internet use and the frequency of pornography habits. Finally, it is hypothesized that gender will affect the frequency of pornography habits.

METHOD

PARTICIPANTS

The participants in this study were a convenience sample of one hundred and five 18-24 year olds from two colleges in the Southeastern United States. Table 1 presents the demographic characteristics of the sample used for this study.

Table 1

Demographic Characteristics of Sample

	Female *n*=74 (70)		Male *n*=31 (29)		Total *n*=105 (100)
	White *n*(%)	Other *n*(%)	White *n*(%)	Other *n*(%)	Total *n*(%)
Freshman	11(79)	2(14)	1(7)	0(0)	14 (100)
Sophomore	15(71)	2(10)	3(14)	1(5)	21 (100)
Junior	7(44)	0(0)	8(50)	1(6)	16 (100)
Senior	8(53)	1(7)	6(40)	0(0)	15 (100)
Masters	16(80)	1(5)	2(10)	1(5)	20 (100)
Other	11(58)	0(0)	8(42)	0(0)	19 (100)

INSTRUMENTATION

The primary instruments used in this study were the Pornography, Social Media, and Internet Use Survey, which was comprised of the Compulsive Internet Use Scale (Downing et al., 2014) and the Pornography Use Scale (Szymanski & Stewart-Richardson, 2014). In addition, the survey included demographic items about each participant (age, gender, race, and school classification) and demographic items pertaining to social media use.

The Compulsive Internet Use Scale (Downing et al., 2014) has high reliability due to its internal consistency (Cronbach's Alpha = 0.92). The scale also has high convergent validity with boredom, sexual frustration, and time spent viewing internet sexually explicit media (Downing et al., 2014).

The Pornographic Use Scale (Szymanski & Stewart-Richardson, 2014) has a Cronbach's alpha score of .88 for the frequency of use subscale, while the problematic use subscale has an alpha of 0.91. Construct and discriminant validity are also high for this scale (Szymanski & Stewart-Richardson, 2014).

PROCEDURE

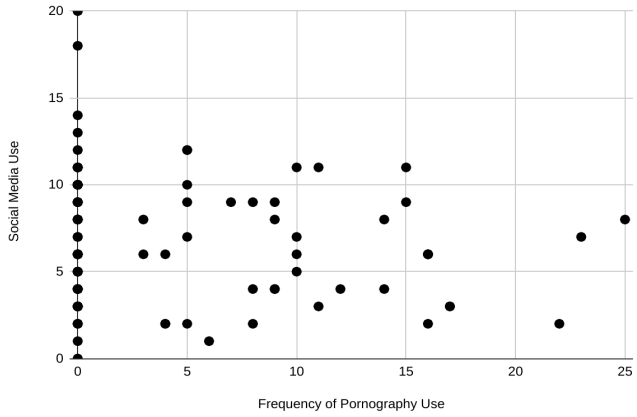
Once IRB approval was obtained for this nonexperimental study, the Pornography, Social Media, and Internet Use Survey was distributed by email to male and female undergraduate and graduate level students among two southeastern universities ranging from ages 18 to 24. These recipients were given a choice on whether to participate; therefore, the participants who completed the survey provided informed consent by choosing to participate. Once participants completed the survey, the data were scored by the researchers. Pearson Correlation tests were used to determine the relationship between time spent on social media, the frequency of pornography habits, and the relationship between time spent on internet sites and the frequency of pornography habits. An independent samples t-test was used to explore differences in the frequency of pornography habits between males and females. Each hypothesis was examined at an alpha level of 0.05.

RESULTS

Our data analysis revealed one statistically significant result and two that were not statistically significant. To test the first hypothesis, a Pearson Correlation test was conducted comparing the frequency of pornography habits and social media use (Figure 1). This analysis revealed no statistically significant relationship between the variables $r(103) = -.15$, $p>.05$; therefore, the null hypothesis was not rejected.

Figure 1

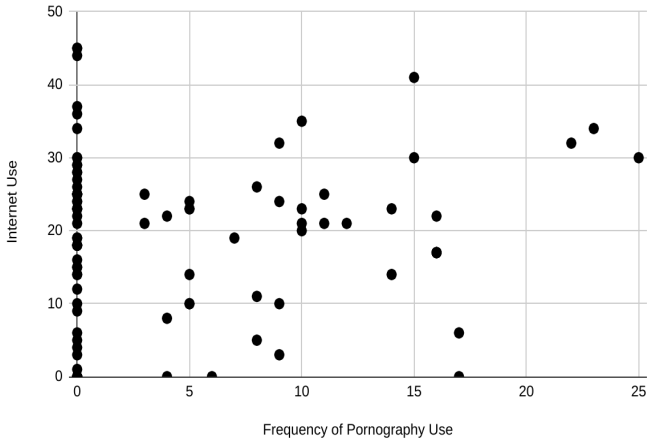
Social Media Use and Frequency of Pornography Habits



A Pearson Correlation test was also conducted to compare the frequency of pornography habits and internet use among participants (Figure 2). No statistically significant relationship was found $r(103) = .08$, $p > 0.05$; therefore, the null hypothesis was not rejected.

Figure 2

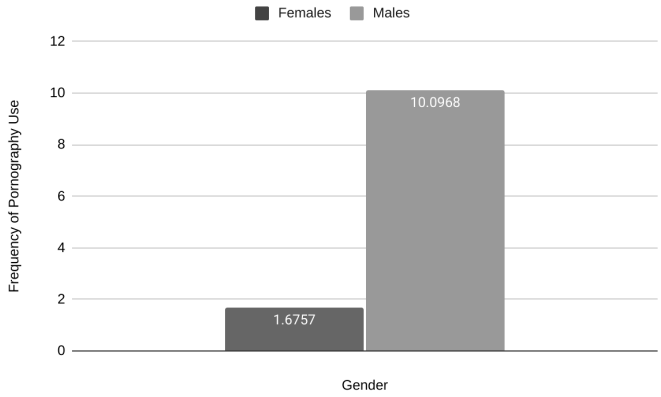
Internet Use and Frequency of Pornography Habits



Finally, an independent samples *t*-test was calculated to compare the frequency of pornography habits between males and females (Figure 3). This analysis showed a statistically significant difference between the groups, $t(103) = 7.88$, $p < .05$, and the null hypothesis was rejected, while the alternative hypothesis was supported.

Figure 3

Frequency of Pornography Habits by Gender



Overall, our data analysis revealed no pattern of relationship between the frequency of pornography habits and the use of either social media or the internet. However, the data analyses revealed that, on average, males reported a higher frequency of pornography habits compared to females.

DISCUSSION

FINDINGS

The study revealed no meaningful relationship between the frequency of pornography habits and social media use. Similarly, this study provided no evidence of a relationship between the frequency of pornography habits and internet use. Our findings appear to contrast with other findings in the literature. For example, Sirianni and Vishwanath (2016) found heavy social media use to have an addictive quality similar to that of pornography. Furthermore, the extant literature suggests strong connections between internet use, social media use, pornography habits, and the release of dopamine in the body (Bolu-Steve et al., 2022). Similarly, findings by Delmonico and Miller (2003) suggest a meaningful correlation between time spent online and pornography usage. The discrepancy between our findings and current literature may be due to our sample's relatively high proportion of female respondents. As noted by Albright (2008) and Solano et al. (2020), females are less likely than males to have a high frequency of pornography habits.

In this regard, our findings affirm the lopsidedness of the differences between males and females in pornographic habits. For example, women have been shown to be more perceptive than men of the negative impacts sex-seeking behaviors can generate (Chadwick et al., 2018). Likewise, over 91% of men have frequent interactions with pornographic content compared to just 60.2% of women (Emmers-Sommer, 2018; Solano et al., 2020).

LIMITATIONS

There are several limitations to our findings in this study. The small sample size and volunteer nature of the survey responses limit the generalizability of findings. The sample was selected from a single college campus with demographic characteristics that may not adequately represent the population of college students in the country. Furthermore, the self-report responses on the survey constitute an additional limitation. Despite anonymity, the respondents may not have provided truthful answers to such a sensitive topic as pornography. Finally, information about social media use in the survey was limited to Snapchat, Instagram, Facebook, and TikTok. Students also use other social media platforms like Twitter and YouTube. This restriction may also limit the generalizability of our results.

IMPLICATIONS

An important implication of this study is the affirmation of previous research showing that men report a higher propensity for pornography habits. Our results confirm that women also access pornographic materials online, albiet at a much lower frequency than men. These findings have implications for educational programs aimed at combating addiction to pornography, body dysmorphia, or sexual objectification. There tends to be an assumption that these are struggles that only affect men, and therefore, interventions are only needed for men. Our findings imply that these challenges also affect women and that it is important to consider support systems for this subpopulation.

FUTURE RESEARCH

Future research on the relationship between social media use and the frequency of pornography habits could include broadening the scope of social media applications in future studies. Further research could incorporate platforms not included in the current study, such as YouTube, Twitter, and Pinterest. Further research could also extend the investigation to participants from broader demographic backgrounds.

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ORIGINAL REPORT

A Geographical Lens on Rural Teacher Induction and Retention

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ABSTRACT

Induction is a critical phase for early career teachers (ECTs) because it is where they develop their sense of professional identity and often decide whether or not to stay in the profession. Substantial research has reported high rates of rural teacher retention during induction (e.g., Ingersoll & Strong, 2011), but few researchers have examined this pattern through a geographical lens. Rural education theorists Gruenewald (2003) and Reid et al. (2010) suggest that a geographical lens is a useful way to understand the complexities of place and space—particularly rural space. Rooted in their theories, the present study aimed to address the aforementioned research gap by asking, "What does existing literature say about the impact of rural geography on the experiences of teacher induction and retention among early or mid-career teachers?" Using a secondary analysis of primary research, the study found that the two factors with the most frequent impact on induction were small administrative networks and physical distance from amenity-dense areas, while the most significant factor impacting ECTs' desire to stay was if they were from the community. This dynamic is due to the influence of ECT background on administrative support, community acceptance, and community familiarity. The significant influence of ECT background suggests that the most impactful aspect of rural geography is not inherent to the natural environment, but rather socially constructed by those within the rural spaces. Implications of such findings for induction programming and further research are discussed.

Keywords

Early career teachers, Rural education, Teacher induction

INTRODUCTION

TEACHER INDUCTION AND RETENTION

In the past decades, there has been a growing amount of educational research on teacher induction, the first phase of the teaching career (e.g., Ingersoll & Strong, 2011; Kelchtermans, 2019; Langdon et al., 2014). Induction is the initiation of new teachers into communities of practice and is an important aspect of their career development (Ingersoll & Strong, 2011; Langdon et al., 2014). This transitionary stage includes elements such as mentoring programs, orientations, and socialization activities, all of which aim to support teachers' well-being and improve performance and retention (Feiman-Nemser, 2001; Ingersoll & Strong, 2011). Induction is a particular point of interest for research on early career teachers (ECTs), as it is where they develop their sense of professional identity and where many decide to leave the field (Ingersoll, 2003; Kelchtermans, 2019).

Recent research has focused on connections between teacher induction and retention (e.g., Ingersoll & Strong, 2011; Hulme & Wood, 2022). There are often more factors at play in turnover

than solely negative induction experiences, but low-quality induction is a factor that can motivate ECTs to seek external support (Ewing & Smith, 2003; Ingersoll & Strong, 2011; Burke et al., 2015). This phenomenon prompts a closer look at how elements of the induction phase can influence teachers' motivations to leave their job. Teacher turnover is a critical issue for education researchers because it can cause systemic educational problems like staffing shortages, low student achievement, and difficulty implementing curriculum (Guin, 2004; Ingersoll & Strong, 2011; Ronfeldt et al., 2013). Close examination of research on induction and retention may aid in understanding such issues and the methods required to effectively address them. This study thus builds on existing research on induction with a particular concern for retention among early and mid-career teachers.

RURAL EDUCATION RESEARCH

Among the growing body of research on induction and retention are studies that suggest geographical location is an influential factor in shaping teachers' experiences with these processes (e.g., Mafora, 2013; Roberts & Fuqua, 2021). Rural geographies are a particular focus of research in this field since factors unique to rural contexts can make induction processes like mentoring difficult and make it hard to retain staff (Berry et al., 2012; Mafora, 2013; Roberts & Fuqua, 2021). Such findings are crucial to understanding problems with low-quality induction and turnover in rural areas, but there has not been an in-depth look at research related to this topic since 1999 (Yarrow et al., 1999). Given the plethora of research in this field in the last two decades, it is due time for an updated study.

A new review of this topic is also important as scholars have recently noted problems and oversights in the field of rural education research. Notably, researchers are grappling with the difficulty of defining rural development and examining how it is defined by deficit or *metrocentric* norms (Azano et al., 2019; Dillon-Wallace, 2021; Green & Reid, 2021, p. 30; Roberts & Guenther, 2021). When research is conducted from a metrocentric perspective, it overlooks the specificities of rural environments or focuses only on the negative aspects of these environments (Green & Reid, 2021). New research proposes alternative ways to understand rurality in and of itself (e.g., Corbett, 2021; Dillon-Wallace, 2021; Green & Reid, 2021). Reviewing literature that considers rurality from such new perspectives is important for understanding contemporary connections between rural spaces and teacher induction and retention.

Grounded in Gruenewald's (2003) and McGregor's (2004) theories on space and place and framed by Reid et al. (2010)'s rural social space theory, the present study aims to better understand research on the connection between rural spaces and teacher induction. To achieve this, it asks: What does existing literature say about the impact of rural geography on the experience of teacher induction and retention among early or mid-career teachers?

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

A theoretical framework allows researchers to connect central concepts, ask specific research questions, and construct the goals and processes of the research methodology (Ravitch & Carl., 2021). The present study uses a framework of recent theories on place, space, and rurality to ground its review of relevant literature. In particular, it focuses on Gruenewald (2003)'s theory of place-based education, McGregor (2004)'s theories on network actors in schools, and Reid et al. (2010)'s model of rural social space. These theories are frequently cited by scholars in rural education who use a geographical lens, which prompts a critical focus on them for the present review.

PLACE AND SPACE

Place has long been of interest to researchers because, as Geertz (1996) notes, "No one lives in the world in general" (Geertz, 1996, p. 259). People's identities, opportunities, actions, and interactions are often tied to the places they are from and in (Gruenewald, 2003a, p. 622). According to Gruenewald, people are "place makers," meaning they socially construct place and invest it with meaning (Gruenewald, 2003a, p. 626). His view is one of many in a line of research on spatiality—the social production of space (e.g., Halfacree, 2006; Helfenbein & Buendía, 2017; Lefebvre, 1991; Massey, 1994). As geographer of space Massey (1994) posits, place is but a moment in dynamic networks of social relations and understandings, rather than a fixed entity (Massey, 1994, p. 5).

McGregor (2004) has drawn on new understandings of spatiality as space-time to advocate for a network view of educational contexts (McGregor, 2004, p. 367). McGregor focuses on relations between teachers, students, and material objects in schools to suggest that place is not a physical reality but one that is negotiated by a network of actors (McGregor, 2004). This approach is relevant to consider when investigating teacher induction and turnover in the current study, as induction is an interaction-filled process aimed to create a support network for ECTs. According to McGregor, if researchers view places and spaces as socially constructed and always changing, then places of work are ways of creating meaning out of "heterogeneous and dynamic spatio-temporal and material arrangements" (McGregor, 2004, p. 352). Viewing the workplaces where induction is occurring through McGregor's perspective can help researchers better understand how meaning-making occurs in those contexts.

While McGregor's ideas are relevant for examining the relations in a community of practice, taking a social constructivist view of place does not necessarily mean that places in and of themselves should not be considered significant subjects of inquiry. Gruenewald notes that even though places are socially constructed, they evolve and impact the place makers that are in them (Gruenewald, 2003a, p. 639). In other words, "places make us" (Gruenewald, 2003a, p. 621). This

cyclical constructive relationship necessitates a focus on place in education research, a field that has historically overlooked the topic in favor of reinforcing context-less institutional practices (Gruenewald, 2003a). A place-based approach to education that is aware of the complexities of where people live, is necessary to research real human experiences (Gruenewald, 2003b, p. 3). From this perspective, it follows that it is important to take a geographical lens to education research, a point echoed by the growing body of literature on rural education.

RURAL PLACE AND SPACE

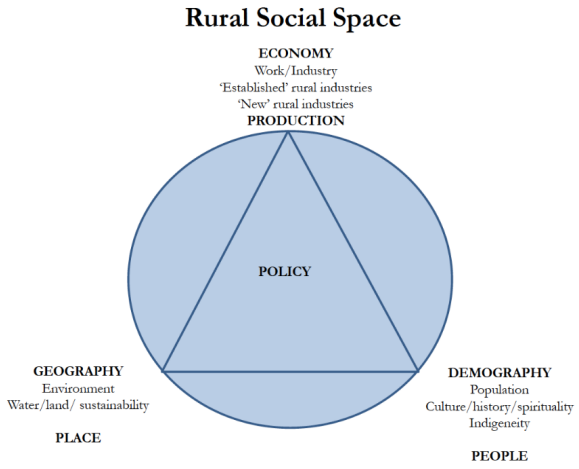
Researchers studying rurality and rural schools have recently applied Gruenewald's ideas and developed the term *place-attentiveness* to elevate the importance of place in the field (e.g., Reid et al., 2010; White & Downey, 2021; White & Reid, 2001). These scholars argue that close attention to the construction of place is important because it allows for the examination of social forces that simplify or marginalize our conception of rural settings (White & Downey, 2021). Thus, to take a critical approach toward research phenomena in rural contexts, a focus on the construction of place is key.

Rural education researchers not only suggest that acknowledging place is necessary, but that there is a need to be less judgmental a priori about the type of geographical location studied. For instance, Reid et al. (2010) problematize the deficit perspective historically used to name and discuss rural education. Rooted in Bourdieu's work on the power of naming, Reid et al. (2010) explain that discussing elements of rural education from metropolitan or negative lenses has classified rural spaces as "undesirable" in the public consciousness (p. 265). This language can also imply that those who work in city schools are somehow "better" than those who do not (Reid et al., 2010, p. 265). Research that pays particular attention to rural places from Reid. et al. (2010)'s lens is necessary to alter flawed public perceptions of the field.

To encourage a more authentic understanding of rural areas, Reid et al. (2010) developed the theoretical model of rural social space. The model presents a way of understanding rurality as the relationship between three connected factors: economy, geography, and demography (Reid et al., 2010, p. 269). Instead of viewing rural contexts as undesirable geographical entities, they encourage the understanding of rural social space as "the set of relationships, actions, and meanings that are produced in and through the daily practice of people in a particular place and time" (Reid et al., 2010, p. 269). This model allows researchers to understand rural places as more than just locations, but a set of "social-spatial and socio-temporal phenomena" situated within a network of policy (Reid et al., 2010, p. 269).

Figure 1

The Model of Rural Social Space



Note. Reprinted from Green, B., & Reid, J. (2021). Rural social space: A conceptual-analytical framework for rural (teacher) education and the rural human services. In P. Roberts & M. Fuqua (Eds.), *Ruraling education research: Connections between rurality and the disciplines of educational research*, 37. Reprinted with permission.

Overall, Gruenewald (2003)'s plea for place-based education justifies an inquiry into the geographical context of teaching. Furthermore, as rural education researchers show, understanding place as socially constructed does not mean that place is irrelevant, rather it necessitates a focus on rural places that pays particular attention to the dynamic social phenomena within them. The present review thus takes a geographical lens to the study of teacher induction and retention. It pays close attention to conceptions of rurality within research on teacher induction and how characteristics of rural social spaces are connected to experiences of induction and turnover.

METHODOLOGY

As a systematic literature review, the present study was a rigorous secondary analysis of primary research. In accordance with common systematic review processes, the research question and theoretical framework were developed first, followed by a search strategy, and then inclusion and exclusion criteria for selecting studies (Zawacki-Richter, 2020). The chosen articles were carefully read and analyzed through a narrative synthesis approach.

CRITERIA FOR SELECTION

The search for relevant literature occurred from November 2022 to February 2023. First, two books (Roberts & Fuqua, 2021; White & Downey, 2021) were read to frame an understanding of the field of rural education and identify relevant keywords. This led to the identification of search terms including "teacher induction," "teacher retention," "rural schools," "rural teachers," "rurality," and "early career teacher."

An initial manual search of Google Scholar was conducted with the above search terms. The findings suggested that the term "early career teacher" was too limiting, as research on the impact of rural geographies often focused on mid-career teachers as well. The following Boolean search was thus constructed: ("teacher induction") AND ("rural schools" OR "rural") AND ("retention" OR "turnover"). This search was used in ERIC and Scopus. Relevant sources from the Google Scholar manual search were also included in the final dataset. This search focused solely on peer-reviewed academic journal articles that were originally published in English in the last twenty-three years. Limiting the search with this criteria ensured the sources were reliable, relevant for the problem statement and research questions, and addressed recent approaches in the field that have not yet been reviewed. The following table articulates the precise criteria for inclusion and exclusion.

Table 1

Criteria For Inclusion and Exclusion

Inclusion	Exclusion
The research is empirical.	The research is not empirical.
The source is an academic peer-reviewed journal article.	The source is not in an academic peer-reviewed journal.
The article was published between 2000-2023.	The article was published before 2000.
The research uses pre-service teachers as participants.	The research uses pre-service teachers as participants.
The research focuses on teacher induction in rural contexts	The research is not focused on teacher induction in rural contexts.
The research uses a geographical lens to investigate teacher induction or retention in rural contexts.	The article is an evaluation of an intervention program rather than the impact of rural geographies.

IDENTIFICATION OF LITERATURE

Between the databases, a total of 267 relevant articles were found. 22 from Google Scholar, 144 from ERIC, and 101 from Scopus. Of these, 14 were found to be duplicates. Titles and abstracts of the remaining 253 articles were screened according to the inclusion and exclusion criteria above.

After the initial screening process, a total of 187 sources did not meet the inclusion criteria. The remaining 66 articles were read more closely to determine if they had relevant research questions, methodological approaches, and insights for this review. Studies were most often excluded for one of three reasons: focusing on the impact of an intervention program in a rural setting rather than the setting itself, not focusing enough on induction to provide insight to this study's research question, or not using a geographical lens to consider the impact of place. It also became evident that data on this topic is often collected from university students studying to be teachers rather than early or mid-career teachers. In the end, the selection resulted in 25 studies to be included in the analysis.

DATA ANALYSIS

Each study was closely read, and key information was written down. Afterwards, a spreadsheet was created to organize information from all the studies including the title, author, publication date, journal, region of focus, definition of "rural" if available, and main findings. To address the research question, main findings regarding the impact of rurality on induction were extracted from each study. While reading, inductively identified themes were noted, and similarities and differences among data were recorded. Studies in which defining elements of the rural had a negative impact and a positive impact were grouped together and analyzed respectively. Attention to retention in this process revealed that ECTs' connections with a rural community played the most significant role in shaping their desire to stay, regardless of induction quality. Three main factors were identified as the reason for this trend: administrative support, cultural similarities, and community connection. This study presents and analyzes findings in terms of those factors.

FINDINGS

A preliminary finding was that there is a limited focus on this subject in academic research. There is a substantial body of recent literature on factors impacting teacher induction and retention, but a large portion of it examines the influence of non-geographic factors like economic development, level of administrative support, and crises like Covid-19 (e.g., Fall & Billingsley, 2011; Redding et al., 2019; Simons et al., 2022) In the rare cases when a geographic lens is applied to this topic, it is often to settings that are defined as urban (e.g., Bleeker et al., 2012; Whipp & Geronime, 2017).

Research on specifically rural settings often focuses on the challenges school administrators like principals and superintendents face rather than teachers (e.g., Tran & Smith, 2020). The studies that do focus on teachers' experiences tend to interview pre-service teachers or prospective teachers, rather than early or mid-career teachers (e.g., Ai et al., 2022; Hudson et al., 2020). Also, many scholars appear interested in the impact of professional development programs in rural settings, and not the impact of the rural spaces themselves (e.g., Glover et al., 2016; Yang & Rao, 2021). These factors made it

challenging to find relevant literature for this study. However, the relatively small body of relevant studies provides multidimensional insights into the ways that rural space can impact teacher induction and turnover.

THE IMPACT OF RURAL ELEMENTS

Synthesis of the sources revealed that the elements of rural spaces most commonly found to have an impact on ECT induction were related to two main characteristics: small professional networks and distance from amenity-dense areas. These two elements of rural spaces were overwhelmingly characterized as having a negative impact on the induction phase, with phrases like "lack of" often used by authors and participants to stress what aspects of rural towns create stress, confusion, and frustration for new teachers (e.g., Harris, 2001, p. 23; Leech et al., 2022, p. 4; Nkambule, 2022, p. 5). However, a few authors discussed the ways ECTs adapted to challenging conditions and found potential positive outcomes of small professional networks. Regardless of the impact of these elements on induction quality though, this study's attention to retention reveals that ECT background played the most impactful role in whether ECTs desired to leave. The following subsections elaborate on these findings.

Small Professional Networks

The first element of rural space that authors found impacted ECT induction in rural schools was the small number of people working in the field of education. Many authors discussed how small populations in rural communities resulted in few educational professionals, such as administrators, mentor teachers, and colleagues that taught the same grade or subject (Burton & Johnson, 2010; Frahm & Cianca, 2021; Harris, 2001; Manwa et al., 2016; Mafora, 2013). In other words, the networks of educational professionals were frequently made up of a few people. The absence of mentors and colleagues who were familiar with the grade level or had the time and resources to support ECTs often resulted in feelings of stress and "professional isolation" for new teachers, and in many cases increased a desire to leave (Burton & Johnson, 2010, p. 382; Ekinci, 2020; Mafora, 2013, p. 236). As an interviewed principal from New York State noted, new teachers were in many ways "on an island" (Frahm & Cianca, 2021, p. 7).

The absence of guidance shaped the way that ECTs approached their teaching and impacted the nature of their professional relationships in mostly negative ways. For instance, Manwa et al. (2016) studied rural schools in Zimbabwe and found that were no mentors or staff to support ECTs. They reported that "trust was a key issue" among teachers, and ECTs had to cope with the lack of informed guidance by "copying other people's work or begging for advice" (p. 68). Similarly, Kartal et al. (2017) found that all of their teacher participants in Turkey "had problems with the school administration," as they didn't receive much information from them, and there was no one to get help or support from when encountering administrative problems (p. 35). On the other hand, a few studies noted that the absence of mentors or small professional networks resulted in teachers working to strengthen their relationships with one another (e.g., Frahm & Cianca, 2021; Gallo, 2020; Janzen & Cranston, 2015; Malloy & Allen, 2007). Gallo (2020), remarks:

> While it is common to think of teachers in rural areas of being professionally isolated from other teachers who teach similar grade levels or subject areas, the teachers in this study find other ways to support one another that don't focus on shared planning about specific classroom content. Supporting colleagues is a professional necessity to offset the difficulty of recruiting and retaining teachers in challenging teaching positions. Too often rural schools are painted in broad strokes as effortlessly close-knit because they have a smaller staff and fewer students. However, the participants in this study illustrate that the sense of community within the school is a result of a concentrated effort to support one another and prevent the frequent turnover that haunts so many rural schools (p. 8).

The above excerpt demonstrates how characteristics of rural spaces that can have negative impacts on induction may result in coping methods and practices that are positive for ECTs. However, while the effort to create strong peer relationships can potentially counteract the negative impact of small population size that drives some teachers to leave, this was not a common finding.

Isolation

The other element that many authors found played a role in the quality of the induction phase was the distance between rural communities and other populated areas with access to more amenities. Many authors used the term "isolation" to refer to the way this distance negatively impacted the induction phase for ECTs (Burton & Johnson, 2010, p. 380; Erawan, 2019, p. 118; Frahm & Cianca, 2021, p. 1; Gallo, 2020 p. 7; Hellsten et al., 2011, p. 12; Miller, 2020, p. 17; Walker-Gibbs, 2018, p. 309) Several scholars found that ECTs in rural schools felt isolated because they were far from their friends and family and could not easily visit them (Burton & Johnson, 2010; Frahm & Cianca, 2021; Hellsten et al., 2011). Teachers who lived far from family and friends often reported missing familial and social connections as a negative part of teaching where they teach, and often a reason they wanted to leave, while teachers who lived with or near family often reported this as a reason they wanted to stay. (Arinaitwe & Corbett, 2022, p. 26; Burleigh, 2016; Ekinci, 2020; Hellsten et al., 2011).

The distance from communities with more amenities also proved to be a challenge for ECTs. Many scholars reported that teachers found the long distance from amenities like robust healthcare, grocery shopping, and activities for children challenging, and often a key reason why they wanted to leave

their job (Janzen & Cranston, 2015; Kono, 2012; Kaden et al., 2016; Opoku et al., 2020). Also, in their study in Ghana, Opoku et al. (2020) noted that the need to travel long distances for access to vital services was a cause of teacher absenteeism in addition to a motivating factor for leaving (p. 203).

The extent to which distance from amenities caused dissatisfaction among teachers varied depending on the level of amenities within the community of focus. For instance, Kaden et al., (2016) found that lack of access to shopping and healthcare caused dissatisfaction, and there was only one health aid worker in the community they studied in Arctic Alaska (p. 142). On the other hand, Janzen & Cranston (2015) studied a Canadian community with more amenities and found that only a few teachers were bothered by the remote nature of their setting, typically because the town lacked extracurricular activities for children (p. 176). It is also worth noting that Janzen & Cranston (2015)'s study was the only one that mentioned the positive impact of natural elements of the rural community, like access to canoeing (p. 176). Since residents of the studied community had access to basic amenities like healthcare and grocery stores, and ones that make life easier, like an airport, they were able to enjoy activities in nature without sacrificing easy access to vital resources. The lack of focus on nature in other studies suggests that in order for natural elements to be a significant factor in retention, residents' basic needs must be met first. Unlike the way that professional isolation led to resilient coping strategies in some studies, no studies found that the challenge of accessing resources for social or physical well-being had positive outcomes.

The Role of ECT Background

The most significant finding from this study was that the factor that had the most impact on ECTs' desire to leave their positions in rural schools was whether or not they were from the rural community they taught in. Being from the community strengthened ECTs' relationships with colleagues, lowered their levels of personal isolation, and nearly ensured acceptance by and familiarity with the community. If ECTs were not from the town, the opposite occurred. For example, educational leaders from Arinaitwe & Corbett (2022)'s study in Uganda expressed a view commonly noted by participants in other studies:

> Albert [the headteacher] reported that school authorities preferred teachers seen as homegrown. This view was reported also by Elliot, a community leader at Gakenke High School: '*We feel, teachers from the locality should occupy first [sic] because the school is ours, we struggled for it. This issue is a challenge to teachers themselves who work far.'* Elliot indicates how the wider rural community expected the central government to preserve employment for teachers from the local district (p. 22).

This quote reflects the sentiment evident in several studies that school leaders and administrators in rural communities preferred to work with staff who were from the town, even when schools were hard to staff (Arinaitwe & Corbett, 2022; Ekinci, 2020; Gallo, 2020; Manwa et al., 2016; Sharplin, 2014). This preference had various influences, including a belief that local teachers would stay longer in the position, as opposed to outside graduates who preferred to work in urban locations (Arinaitwe & Corbett, 2022, p. 22). It also emerged from the idea that local teachers could culturally connect with the students better than teachers with a different cultural background, thus making their jobs easier (e.g., Arinaitwe & Corbett, 2022; Burton & Johnson, 2010; Kaden et al., 2016).

The hesitation to accept teachers from other communities shaped the ways locals viewed and treated ECTs. For instance, one American teacher who taught in the Midwestern community he grew up in was considered "returned" not "from" there because he had moved away for a significant period of time (Gallo, 2020, p. 6). Similarly, another American teacher interviewed by Burton & Johnson (2010) was from a rural community just like the one she began teaching in, but still felt "personal isolation" and distrust from the community because she lacked an intimate understanding of the "kinship networks" in that particular town (p. 382). In contrast, another ECT who was from the town she taught noted feeling "professional isolation" from the absence of teachers in the same grade but felt immediate acceptance from the town when she began teaching (Burton & Johnson, 2010, p. 381). In other words, the reasons for and impacts of their feelings of isolation were different because of their different connections to the town. Feeling not trusted by locals complicated the job for outsider ECTs in ways that local ECTs did not have to experience.

School administrators' distrust of outsiders also impacted how they supported ECTs in the induction phase. For instance, Sharplin (2014) studied ECTs in Australia who were teaching in rural communities that they were not from, and found that despite the presence of administrative support staff, teachers felt "professionally disconnected and without collegial support," which led to a lack of confidence and the feeling of "powerlessness among their colleagues" (p. 103). Similarly, Ekinci (2020) studied Turkish ECTs (who are required to move to a rural community to start their career) and found that they were not welcomed or supported by the staff at the school, which led to teachers feeling confused and frustrated. As one teacher said:

> ... You have just arrived at school, you are far from your family, a village school, a remote place, and the trouble is already big. If you are welcomed warmly, you can adopt more easily, but there is no warm welcome, nobody says what I should do; they do not ask "Have you found a house? Do you have any problems? How are you?"; in the first month, I was like in depression... (p. 372).

This teacher's experience demonstrates how locals' distrust of outsiders manifested in lack of communication with and expressed care for newcomers. Only one out of the eight teachers in the study reported being welcomed warmly by staff, and this teacher was the only one who developed a positive perception of the profession, suggesting that locals' expressions of trust play an impactful role in the induction phase (p. 372).

Feelings of personal isolation were often worsened by the distance that ECTs who were not from the community had to travel to visit family and friends. As aforementioned, many ECTs reported that traveling far distances to visit family had a negative impact on their induction process. For instance, one Canadian teacher reported how she would frequently cry when her family would leave after visiting (Hellsten et al., 2011, p. 14). The lack of connection to loved ones often exacerbated existing stresses, like the lack of trust from the community and the struggle to understand the community's cultural values, practices, and relationships (Burton & Johnson, 2010; Ekinci, 2020; Hellsten et al., 2011; Janzen & Cranston, 2015). In contrast, teachers who were from the community they taught in were often surrounded by their friends and family members and reported that their close proximity was one of the many reasons they had no desire to leave their positions (Arinaitwe & Corbett, 2022; Gallo, 2020; Leech et al., 2022). The following section analyzes the implications of these findings, particularly the role of ECT background, and considers what the findings suggest about the impact of rural spaces on induction and retention and the potential implications of induction programming.

DISCUSSION

This study aimed to understand how rural space impacts teacher induction. Synthesis of the sources reveals that the two factors related to rural space with the most frequent impact on teacher induction were small professional networks and physical distance from amenity-dense areas. The factor that played the most significant role in whether or not ECTs wanted to leave their positions was if they were from the community. Analysis suggests that the significant role of ECT background is due to its influence on three aspects of rural ECTs' lives: professional support, community acceptance, and community familiarity.

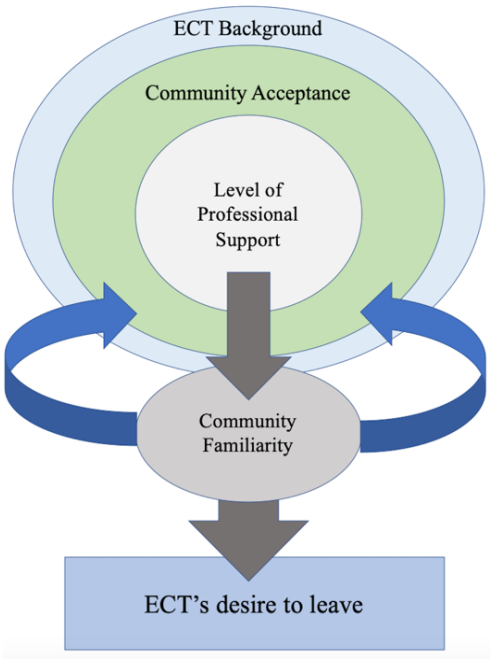
Professional Support

The review of the literature suggests that whether or not ECTs were from the community they began teaching in impacted the dynamic of their relationships with colleagues in the education sector. In other words, the nature of the relationships between rural educational actors and ECTs was shaped by ECT background (Ekinci, 2020; Frahm & Cianca, 2021; Janzen & Cranston, 2016; Kaden et al., 2016; Sharplin, 2014). This dynamic recalls McGregor (2004)'s theories, which posited that the meaning of educational space is constructed from relations among a network of actors in a school. The present study's findings prompt a closer look at such theories of the social construction of spatiality, as they suggest that these theories accurately represent the social dynamics of rural educational spaces.

The impact of ECT roots on the strength of professional relationships suggests that rural schools may benefit from induction programming that works to foster strong relationships between support staff and non-local ECTs. This focus (when occurring alongside efforts to promote community acceptance and familiarity) may enhance retention by proactively preventing problems with ECTs feeling not trusted or supported by local staff due to their background. Even in contexts in which professional networks were small and it was difficult to provide ECTs with mentoring, teachers who received welcoming greetings and questions about their lives reported a more positive experience and more of a desire to stay than teachers who did not (Ekinci, 2020; Frahm & Cianca, 2021; Kaden et al., 2016). Therefore, even in schools with few staff members, fostering a welcoming atmosphere in the induction process for teachers from outside the community could positively impact the confidence, capabilities, and desire to stay among ECTs.

Figure 2

The Impact of ECT Background



Community Acceptance

ECT background influenced the initial levels of trust and acceptance from the wider community. For example, less than half of the teachers Kaden et al. (2016) studied felt support from the community or integrated into the community, and less than half planned to stay in their positions (p. 137-139). In contrast, local ECTs felt immediate support from their communities, and they were more set on staying (Burton & Johnson, 2010; Gallo, 2020). This relationship between community acceptance and

teacher retention highlights the important role of ECT background in rural teacher induction.

Although initial feelings of distrust often fostered a desire to leave among outsider ECTs, the negative impacts of distrust were sometimes mitigated when ECTs felt they gained the community's acceptance (Burton & Johnson, 2010; Hellsten et al., 2011; Janzen & Cranston, 2011). As one non-local rural teacher recognized: "the people here have to be able to trust you," which "takes some time" (Janzen & Cranston, 2011, p. 176). The significant impact that trust from rural community members had on the experiences and feelings of rural ECTs validates Reid et al. (2010)'s theories on rural social space. Reid et al. (2010) posit that it is "not just the location and landmarks" that define a space but the "meanings" produced through the daily practices and interactions of people in a particular space and time (p. 269-270). This dynamic is precisely what was occurring in the reviewed research, which prompts scholars in this field to take a closer look at the impact of meaning-making among rural residents on rural teachers' experiences.

The emphasis in these studies on the importance of feeling accepted by the community suggests that actors involved in the induction process should work on developing and expressing the community's trust and welcoming attitudes to ECTs from outside of the community. While other observed factors such as distance from amenities and family might still motivate ECTs from elsewhere to leave, the role of community acceptance in positive induction experiences suggests that the impact of locals expressing trust in ECTs should not be overlooked. This focus (when occurring alongside an effort to familiarize outsider ECTs with the cultural values and practices of their new community) may have the potential to enhance retention.

Community Familiarity

Community familiarity also played a critical role in whether or not ECTs wanted to stay in their positions. This was in large part because understanding the community made it easier for teachers to connect with students on a cultural level (Burton & Johnson, 2010; Kaden et al., 2016; Kartal et al., 2017). For example, a local ECT in the study by Burton & Johnson (2010) felt "instantly" connected with her students because of her history in the town and understanding of community connections (p. 382). Being familiar with the community had a cyclical relationship with community acceptance. If ECTs felt that they were trusted and accepted by the community, they had more open communication with locals, and it was therefore easier for them to familiarize themselves with the community (e.g., Burton & Johnson, 2010; Gallo, 2020). In turn, if they had intimate knowledge of the community locals were more likely to trust them, which was why ECTs who were from the community had an easier time garnering acceptance (e.g., Burton & Johnson, 2010; Gallo, 2020). In contrast, if they did not feel trusted or welcome, they struggled to foster open communication and found it difficult to familiarize themselves with community practices and values. For example, a teacher in Kartal et al. (2017) reported confusion at her students playing a violent game and contacted parents about it, only to learn that it was a normal, accepted practice in the community (p. 35).
The way ECTs across studies emphasized the benefits of cultural familiarity suggests that induction programs for non-local ECTs may benefit from focusing on cultural adaption and integration. This would pre-emptively combat ECTs' common feelings of isolation that result from feeling like an unwelcome or distrusted outsider who does not understand local values. If residents of rural communities express more openness and initial trust to ECTs from other places, the ECTs may feel more confident and will become more familiar with the community. Their increased familiarity could in turn create more trust in the eyes of the community and as a result, a desire to stay.

CONCLUSION: THE SIGNIFICANCE OF CONSTRUCTED MEANING

Drawing on the studies of Gruenewald (2003) and Reid et al. (2010) the present study applied a geographical lens to the topic of teacher induction, investigating how rural spaces impact the induction experience of early-career teachers (ECTs). Given historically documented high rates of turnover among ECTs, the study paid particular attention to retention among the reviewed studies. This study found that small professional networks and geographic distance from amenity-dense areas have a substantial impact on the quality of induction, while whether or not ECTs were from the community has the most noteworthy impact on the desire to leave.

There is an evident tension in the content and implications of the reviewed studies. Even though the definitions and discussions about the "rural" in the frameworks of many articles suggest an influence of deficit perspectives on rurality, the findings regarding the significance of ECTs' backgrounds recall Reid et al. (2010)'s model of rural social space. Across multiple geographical regions, the element of the "rural" that had the most significant impact on ECTs' desire to leave was not related to what these spaces did or did not physically have. The decisions had to do with the meaning assigned to being from the rural community created by the people who were from it. This echoes Reid et al. (2010)'s conception of rural social space as "the set of relationships, actions, and meanings that are produced in and through the daily practice of people in a particular place and time" (p. 269). Residents of rural communities viewed local teachers as trustworthy based on their pre-existing relationship to the community, and outsider teachers as initially not trustworthy. This value assigned to being from the community infiltrated all aspects of the induction experiences for ECTs, particularly their relationships with professional networks, locals, and their ability to familiarize themselves with the community. The teachers who wanted to stay were almost always the ones who were from the town they taught in. This suggests that the most significant element of rural geographies is not a geographical element at all, but a socially constructed element assigned to a particular geographical space, valued by the people within it.

This study has implications for researchers, policymakers, and other educational actors in rural education. First of all, the found impact of a socially constructed characteristic of rural space on teachers' plans to stay in their jobs supports the theories of scholars like Reid et al. (2010), who advocate for an understanding of the social construction of rural space. The finding on ECT background also suggests that rural schools struggling to retain teachers should consider working on helping ECTs from outside the community better understand local cultural practices. Helping outsiders adapt to local traditions, values, and social practices (like the normalization of the violent game in Kartal et al., 2017) may help enhance teachers' familiarity with the community. Local staff efforts to familiarize non-local ECTs with the community may also suggest to the ECTs that they are truly wanted there, which, as the quoted teacher from Ekinci (2020) noted, could help in supporting emotional stability at the start of a teaching job, and as a result increase ECTs' desire to stay.

There were a few noteworthy limitations to this study. The primary limitation was the small body of relevant literature on the topic. Although a mix of manual and Boolean searches was utilized to extract as much relevant literature as possible, the keyword search may have limited how much literature was found. In addition, the inclusion and exclusion criteria could have limited it as well, such as the decision to only include literature from 2000 on. Future research could build on this finding by focusing on the impact of ECT background and how it potentially varies based on factors like geographical location or level of economic development. Future research may also benefit from investigating if findings are similar among rural teachers in a digital setting.

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