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ISSUE INTRODUCTIONS

SUMMER SPECIAL ISSUE: INTERNATIONAL AND COMPARATIVE IMPACT of COVID-19 on INSTITUTIONS OF EDUCATION

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JCIHE EMPIRICAL ARTICLES

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Introduction to JCIHE Special Issue 14(3): Part A

International and Comparative Impact of COVID-19 on Institutions of Education

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Dear Readers -

In the Introduction to the JCIHE Winter Special Issue 2020, when the world was at the height of crisis, I wrote that the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic were unforgiving, that the human toll was staggering, and that the long-term effects will be felt for years to come. Two years later, JCIHE is honored to host this Summer Special Issue 14(3A) that examines what has happened, two years later. *International and Comparative Impact of COVID-19 on Institutions of Education*, edited by Sowmya Ghosh and Linsay A. DeMartino have compiled a range of articles with authors from around the world to show the timeliness of this topic. The widespread interest of authors to publish in this issue resulted in the creation of two parts that are published separately. The articles in both of these issues reflect the immediate and longer-term effects of COVID-19 on higher education using a comparative and global perspective.

In addition to the articles in the Special Issue, issue, 14(3A) also includes four empirical articles written by Roger Anderson, Ricardo Pinto Mario Covele, Patrício V. Langa, & Patrick Swanzy, and Solomon Zewolde. These articles explore international issues in England, Mozambique, and the United States.

The Special Issue Part 1 includes articles exploring the effect of COVID on higher education in nine countries: Australia, China, Indonesia, Italy, New Zealand, South Korea, Turkey, United States, and Vietnam. For two years, COVID-19 decimated international education mobility programs impacting in-coming and out-going students, faculty, and research collaboration. Yet, the shift to virtual teaching was devastating for students without quality internet access. Inconsistent and limited access to higher education clearly showed the fractured social class and racial divisions among students. It also had a noted impact on higher education in general. The social and economic inequities already inherent in higher education pre-COVID, expanded the differential experiences for students with and without

privilege during COVID and today. The articles in this Special Issue discuss the aftermath of the rapid changes that institutions made to curricula, educational programs, research collaborations, and modes of delivery.

Yet, like other disasters, countries around the world have unique ways of addressing the multilayered and evolving complexities of COVID-19. During the height of the pandemic, those in higher education were given opportunities to rethink the direction they wanted for new curricula and pedagogy, new marketing and outreach strategies, new forms of collaboration, and new ways in which to support in-coming and out-going students. The articles in the *Special Issue 14(3A)* explore reimagined ways in which higher education can be stronger and be more responsive to their communities. Two broad themes show examples of rejuvenation and change.

Institutional Impact and Programmatic Change to Remote Learning

COVID-19 impacted several areas of higher education including institutional and programmatic changes made to learning and outreach. Trout & Yildirim explores how faculty lack of preparation and well-being impacted remote education. Chance, Farwell & Hessmiller examine the experiences that multinational women graduate students had in dealing with changing delivery methods. Finally, Fischer and Whatley explore the repercussions of the pandemic, including reallocation of institutional resources.
Actors' Experiences: Faculty, Student, Recruiters

Faculty, students, and recruiters had difficult and often extreme experiences in accessing and maintaining their higher education. Pascale, Ehrlich, & Hicks-Roof compare the experiences of women faculty with children in United States and Australia and how the pandemic challenged their existing coping mechanisms. Tang & Flint show how Chinese international doctoral students studying in the U.S. needed to interact with the social-political-institutional environment, but how those experiences impacted their academic experiences as well. Tony Lee and Yanjie (Ruby) Cheng explore the experiences of Chinese recruiters with a focus on their job stress and sense of job security. Rian R. Djita, Bich Thi Ngoc Tran, Nguyet Thi Minh Nguyen, & Budi Wibawanta compare Indonesian and Vietnamese student perceptions on the impacts of the COVID-19 Pandemic. Finally, Sowmya Ghosh and Linsay A. DeMartino examine the ways in which members from universities in the U.S., New Zealand, Italy, South Korea and China engaged in activities to respond to the pandemic.

Articles

The Following Articles are included in this Issue:

Inci Yilmazli Trout *University of the Incarnate Word, U.S.A* and **Fatih Yildirim *Erzurum*** *Technical University, Turkey.* Teaching experiences of faculty members in Turkey during the COVID-19 pandemic: A Photovoice study

This article explores faculty teaching experiences at two Turkish universities during the pandemic. Faculty taught remotely during the pandemic. Three areas were of importance to the faculty: Faculty well-being, lack of preparation, and wrestling with remote education. The findings show how higher education institutions can improve remote education practices and provide support to foster student learning, particularly if institutions decide to continue with online education permanently or offer hybrid education options.

Yabin Tang *University of Georgia, United States* and Maureen. **A. Flint** *University of Georgia, United States.* Buffering or Perpetuating: The perceived role of academic institutions in Chinese international doctoral students' double pandemics experiences in the United States.

This article explores the perceived role of academic institutions in responding to Chinese international doctoral students (CIDS)' double pandemic experiences. The articles show the interlocking relations regarding how individual academic experiences interacted with the social-political-institutional environment during this time of crisis. The discussions highlight the systemic influences on their experiences. The theoretical and practical implications were included in order to inform systemic interventions.

Amanda B. Pascale *University of North Florida, United States*, **Suzanne Ehrlich**, *University of North Florida, United States,* and **Kristen K. Hicks-Roof** *University of North Florida, United States.* The Impact of COVID-19 Pandemic on MotherScholars: A Comparative Case Study of United States and Australian Higher Education Women Faculty Role Strain

This article focuses on the experiences of women faculty with children (i.e., MotherScholars) in the United States and Australia. The article identifies common themes based on roles and responsibilities that emerged as a result of the pandemic-caused shift to remote academic demands. Three primary themes emerged including a) accumulative burdens, (b) rationalization, and (c) gendered expectations. Findings show that for these MotherScholars the circumstances of the pandemic rendered many coping mechanisms previously utilized to manage role strain obsolete, which contributed to increased role strain from the conflict between the role systems for mother and scholar.

Nuchelle L. Chance *Missouri Western State University, USA,* **Tricia M. Farwell** *Middle Tennessee State University, USA,* and **Joanne Hessmiller** *North Carolina A&T State University, USA* Exploring Scholarly Productivity, Supports, and Challenges of Multinational Women Graduate Students During a Global Pandemic.

This article explores the tensions that multinational women graduate students experienced due to the change in delivery methods caused by the pandemic. Focus is also on how these students felt about their changing roles and lived experiences. The authors recommend that institutions focus on providing equitable resources for graduate students, help to develop a support network, both in-person and online, provide resources to maintain a healthy work-life balance, and provide outlets to reduce the stress involved in graduate study.

Heidi Fischer *Old Dominion University, USA* and **Melissa Whatley** *School for International Training, USA.* Pandemic Repercussions: The Future of International Education at US Community Colleges

This article explores the short- and long-term repercussions from the pandemic for community colleges. Findings show that due to the pandemic, community college international education programs faced a reallocation of institutional resources, both financial and otherwise, which shapes the educational opportunities available to students and informs the institutional habitus of the U.S. community college. This study's findings have implications in the areas of international student recruitment, limits to higher education access, and impacts on local and regional communities.

Tony Lee *Texas A&M University-Commerce, USA* and **Yanjie (Ruby) Cheng** *Texas A&M University-Commerce, USA.* International Recruitment: China Recruiters' Experience during COVID-19 Pandemic

This article explores the experiences of recruiters from China during the pandemic, with attention paid to their job stress and sense of job security. The study found that recruiters from China experienced different stressors during the pandemic regardless of their working location. The participants recognized the importance of communication and seeking institutional support to help overcome their stress during the pandemic. The participants suggested several new norms for future recruitment, such as using the hybrid

recruitment model, promoting university collaboration, initiating joint programs between the U.S. and Chinese institutions, and hiring domestic recruiters. Implications for practice are discussed.

Rian R. Djita *(University of Arkansas, USA),* **Bich Thi Ngoc Tran** *(University of Arkansas, USA),* **Nguyet Thi Minh Nguyen** *(Hanoi National University of Education, Vietnam)* & **Budi Wibawanta** *(Universitas Pelita Harapan, Indonesia).* The Impacts of The COVID-19 Pandemic On First-Generation, Low-Income And Rural Students In Indonesia And Vietnam: A Cross-Cultural Comparative Study

This article compares COVID-19 differential effects on Indonesia and Vietnam. Data from n=2600 university students from both countries shows differences in wellbeing, financial hardships, access to technology, and educational satisfaction. Data showed statistically significant differences between both countries and within-country comparison, both countries showed that low-income students were less likely to access technology than their counterparts, and low-income students were more likely to experience financial distress. Indonesian first-gen students also showed a similar trend. e students in Indonesia for their education during the pandemic. Implications for policy recommendations are shared.

Sowmya Ghosh *University of Arizona, USA,* and **Linsay A. DeMartino** *Illinois State University, USA.* Global Universities' Leadership during COVID-19: Synergistic Knowledge Production to Mitigate an Endemic Crisis.

This article examines the ways in which members from universities in the U.S., New Zealand, Italy, South Korea and China engaged in activities to respond to the pandemic. In analyzing COVID-19 related content via university websites, findings reveal that response to the pandemic varied by university stratification, specifically by size and research capacity. We identified three distinct lenses by which university members position their leadership and research on COVID-19. Universities from China currently utilize a post-pandemic approach. Whereas universities in the U.S., Italy, New Zealand and South Korea approach their COVID-19 research activities using an evolving-pandemic anticipatory lens and focus on Synergistic Knowledge Production (SKP) on current and future-pandemics by engaging in a range of collaborative and interdisciplinary research activities with members of regional universities. Findings also provide policy implications for university-led response to global health challenges.

JCIHE Empirical Articles

In addition to the Special Issue, Vol 14, Issue 3A, 2022 includes four empirical articles that are part of the regular submissions to JCIHE.

Masha Krsmanovic, *The University of Southern Mississippi, (USA)* When Experts Become Novices: A Mixed-Methods Exploration of International Scholars' Experiences at a US University

This article explores the experiences of international scholars in the United States who are part of short-term or exchange programs. The study shows that exchange scholars were most satisfied with work conditions and their research experience, but least satisfied with professional development opportunities and cultural exchange. Further, participants' research experience was significantly correlated with their cultural exchange, while their professional development was significantly correlated with work conditions and support.

Roger Anderson *Central State University, USA.* Pre-Service International Teaching Assistant's (ITA's) investments in their ITA Training Course: A Multiple Case Study

This article examines the International Teaching Assistants'(ITA) training classes prior to becoming an instructor. Participants experienced the same course very differently, impacted most prominently by their

ITA educators' teaching approach, their exposure to teaching role models, and their home department structures. Recognizing the incredible diversity ITA's represent, pedagogical implications suggest an "intense exposure experience" or teaching-training focused pedagogy be implemented -instead of test-centric pedagogies, situating ITA's learning within un-simulated spaces with real undergraduates.

Ricardo Pinto Mario Covele, *University of the Western Cape, South Africa & Eduardo Mondlane University, Mozambique* **Patrício V. Langa** *University of the Western Cape, South Africa* and **Patrick Swanzy** *Kwame Nkrumah University of Science and Technology, Dept. of Teacher Education, Zambia.* English language: the subtle force behind the demise of Mozambican higher education academic's aspirations.

This article examines the validity of the statement that Lusophone universities to a certain degree are deprived access to American and European scholarships in the 21st century. The study focuses on the English language barriers Mozambican lecturers face pursuing international scholarships. The discussions of the study were guided by two dominant themes: language coloniality and academic oppression (Lack of accessibility).

Solomon Zewolde *School of Education and Communities, University of East London, U.K.* 'Race' and Academic Performance in International Higher Education: Black Africans in the U.K.

This study explores how "race" shapes academic performance and achievement for black African international students (BAIS) in U.K. higher education. Factors identified, inter alia, include racism and discrimination, and the analysis challenges the narrative of assessment as neutral and objective technology that rewards merit, and lifts the voices of BAIS which are normally silent in the literature about international student experience. 'Race' and ethnicity jeopardize perception of BAIS's academic ability and judgment of their assessed work.

Journal of Comparative and International Higher Education

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JCIHE is dependent on the volunteer efforts of many scholars in the field of comparative and international higher education. I want to give special thanks to the JCIHE Peer Reviewers for the Part A of the Summer Special Issue:

Shabeer Hussain Amirali, Renee Bowling, Santiago Castiello-Gutiérrez, Ngoc Lan Thi Dang, Dr. (anonymous), Maureen Flint, Mardene, Laura Metcalfe, Leping Mou, Quyen, Jungyeol Park, Rosalyn, Nicholas R. Stroup, Manca Sustarsic, Johnny C. Woods, Jr.

I also want to sincerely thank the editors of this special issue, Sowmya Ghosh and Linsay A. DeMartino whose insight and perseverance helped to bring this issue to fruition.

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JCIHE a known journal in the field. I especially want to thank the extraordinary efforts of Managing Editor, Prashanti Chennamsetti, and the Production Editor team: Yovana S. Veerasamy (Lead editor), Hannah (Minghui) Hou, and Marissa Lally. It is their dedication that helps keep the standards and integrity of the journal.

Editor-in-Chief,
Rosalind Latiner Raby
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Scholarly Review

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Special Issue on the International and Comparative Impact of COVID-19 on Institutions of Education

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INTRODUCTION

Since late 2019, the spread of the deadly COVID-19 pandemic has stymied all spheres of our world, particularly world education systems. Decreased and shifting patterns in international student mobility, interrupted learning, school closures, staff shortages, and loss of instructional time only begins to scratch the surface of the numerous challenges experienced during the pandemic (Mok, Xiong, Ke, & Cheung, 2021; Kuhfeld, Soland, Lewis & Mortan, 2022). Globally, the virus has taken the lives of more than 6.2 million people (WHO, 2022). Today, countries around the world are still experiencing new surges in COVID-19 cases with new variants threatening an endemic health crisis. At present, China's zero COVID-19 policy has meant that 327.9 million people in the nation are affected by the lockdown (Cheng, 2022). Since its onset, people all over the world have grappled with severe health and economic setbacks, supply-chain woes, job loss, education disruptions and rising costs. As a result of these compounded challenges, the field of higher education has experienced several setbacks. The National Student Clearinghouse Research Center records a decline in undergraduate enrollment across every institution sector (2022). This decline is larger in Hispanic, Black and Native American populations. This finding is particularly worrisome as it is projected to widen the racial earnings gap (Zerbino, 2021).

Furthermore, despite funding supports from the American Rescue Plan, universities are operating on tighter budgets (Ossola, 2021).

The swift rollout of vaccines to protect against severe COVID-19 has also highlighted global health disparities. The World Health Organization (WHO) emphasizes that vaccine equity is the solution to ending the pandemic, however, poor allocation by countries and companies that control the global supply of vaccines has meant that only 15.9% of people from low income countries have received at least one dose of the vaccine (WHO, 2022; Ritchie et al., 2022) . The disproportional distribution despite ample supply of vaccines has prolonged the road to pandemic recovery. As we enter the endemic phase of the COVID-19 with ports and borders around the world opening for travel, epidemiologists and other scientists warn against complacency and the spread of the false narrative that viruses eventually become more benign. They urge that in fact governments, policymakers and public-health systems need to monitor the viral evolution of COVID-19 as it enters the endemic stage to become more widespread and potentially even more virulent.

Given the multilayered and evolving complexity of COVID-19, the ***Journal of Comparative and International Higher Education*** (JCIHE) presents a two part special issue covering a wide range of challenges faced by education leaders, students, faculty and staff since the pandemic. The overarching goal of this special issue is to document the compounded problems faced thus far and potential solutions generated during COVID-19 from a comparative and global perspective. We believe that the key takeaways from this issue will serve to inform more robust and inclusive policy articulation to mitigate current and future COVID-19 related challenges that also builds a more resilient global higher education landscape.

In Part I of this special issue, we proudly present a diverse group of global scholars who provide research that examines COVID-19 related data from Turkey, Indonesia, Vietnam, Australia, New Zealand, Italy, South Korea, China and the United States. Inci Yilmazli Trout and Fatih Yildirim's "Teaching experiences of faculty members in Turkey during the Covid-19 pandemic: A Photovoice study," explores the experiences of higher education faculty teaching remotely in two Turkish universities. Rian R. Djita, Bich Thi Ngoc Tran, Nguyet Thi Minh Nguyen, and Budi Wibawanta's "The Impacts of The COVID-19 Pandemic On First-Generation, Low-Income And Rural Students In Indonesia And Vietnam: A Cross-Cultural Comparative Study," investigates students' wellbeing, financial hardships, access to technology, and educational satisfaction across a selection of Indonesian and Vietnamese universities. Nuchelle L. Chance, Tricia M. Farwell, and Joanne Hessmiller's "Exploring Scholarly Productivity, Supports, and Challenges of Multinational, Women Graduate Students During a Global Pandemic," documents the challenges experienced by women graduate students as they transitioned to online/remote learning and how they navigated their shifting roles and responsibilities. Amanda B. Pascale, Suzanne Ehrlich, and Kristen K. Hicks-Roof's "The Impact of COVID-19 Pandemic on MotherScholars: A Comparative Case Study of United States and Australian Higher Education Women Faculty Role Strain," uses an interpretive comparative case study design to examine the experiences of MotherScholars - women faculty with children, in the United States and Australia. Sowmya Ghosh and Linsay DeMartino's "Global Universities' Leadership during COVID-19: Synergistic Knowledge Production to Mitigate an Endemic Crisis" provides a comparative lens to demonstrate the strategies used by world university leaders and researchers to generate new knowledge to help mitigate and respond in times of crisis. Tony Lee and Yanjie Cheng's "International Recruitment: China Recruiters' Experience during COVID-19 Pandemic" qualitatively documents the complexities of recruiting students and potential new norms and stressors faced by international recruiters. Yabin Tang

and Maureen A. Flint's "Buffering or Perpetuating: The perceived role of academic institutions in Chinese international doctoral students' double pandemics experiences in the United States" examine the social-political-institutional spheres to study the the dual pandemic impact experienced by Chinese doctoral students wherein they navigate a world with ongoing and exacerbated discriminations against Asians as well as the pandemic. And Heidi Fischer and Melissa Whatley's "Pandemic Repercussions: The Future of International Education at US Community Colleges" highlights the financial toll the pandemic has had on community college international education programs and what that indicates for future international student recruitment.

While COVID-19 has revealed the volatility of global markets and the fragility of our world, it has also shed light on global resilience in times of crisis. While latest reports show that international student enrollment in the U.S. has stabilized, experts warn that issues of access will persist particularly given that financial aid for international students is largely limited (Moody, 2021). The collection of articles in this issue examine the critical issues that students, faculty and staff within international higher education experience as a result of the pandemic years. In doing so, the authors highlight the social and economic inequalities and inequities in education and the compounded challenges that people around the world have experienced since the pandemic. We thank the many contributors for making this special issue possible. We are humbled to note that this issue has received the highest number of submissions in the history of the journal. We look forward to presenting part II of this special issue later this year.

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Empirical Article

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Teaching experiences of faculty members in Turkey during the COVID-19 pandemic: A Photovoice study

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ABSTRACT

The global COVID-19 pandemic has significantly affected many areas of life including higher education. Educational practices were disrupted, and higher education institutions had to move from in-person to remote teaching quickly to continue education. This transition brought along challenges not only for students but also for faculty. Currently there is limited research on faculty teaching experiences during the pandemic. Using the photovoice method, we explored the experiences of higher education faculty in two Turkish universities when teaching remotely during the pandemic. We identified three areas that were important and influenced faculty member practices: Faculty well-being, lack of preparation, and wrestling with remote education. Our findings grounded in faculty experiences provide insights and areas for higher education institutions to improve remote education practices and provide support to foster student learning, particularly if institutions decide to continue with online education permanently or offer hybrid education options.

Keywords: COVID-19 pandemic, faculty experiences, higher education, photovoice, remote teaching

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INTRODUCTION

The global COVID-19 pandemic has significantly affected many areas of life including higher education (HE). Lockdowns around the world caused disruptions in educational practices and forced institutions to find solutions to continue education by transitioning to alternative modalities of teaching and learning. The transition from in-person to remote teaching had to happen rapidly. However, this

transition brought along challenges not only for students but also for faculty. Faculty members had to re-design and/or adapt their courses to remote teaching quickly during an emergency with little to no support from their institutions which created stress and pressure (Hickling et al., 2021).

A survey conducted by UNESCO on higher education institutions in 57 countries focused on the impact of the pandemic on issues including remote teaching practices, platforms, assessments, and student support showed that the pressure on academic staff increased in 40 countries, that there was a need for training faculty in online and distance learning in 52 countries, and there was a need for guidelines, tools, and learning materials for online teaching in 47 countries. These findings highlight the importance of understanding the complex needs of staff, administrators, students, and faculty during this shift to emergency remote teaching so that effective instruction and support can be provided (Johnson et al., 2020). However, at the time of writing this article most studies published since the beginning of the pandemic focused on the experiences (Gonzalez et al., 2022; Karadag & Yucel, 2020; Sen et al. 2020) and well-being of students during the transition to remote teaching (Aker & Midik, 2020; Katz et al., 2021; Sever & Özdemir, 2020; Yilmazli Trout et al., 2020; Wilczewski et al., 2021) while studies focusing on faculty experiences were limited (Krugiełka et al., 2021; McDaniel et al., 2021; Meaghar, 2020).

With the implementation of remote teaching using digital platforms and tools during the pandemic, institutions started to consider options such as offering hybrid courses or continuing education online after the pandemic. However, in making such decisions, it would be beneficial for higher education administrators to consider the experiences of faculty members in teaching online during the pandemic so that necessary adjustments can be made, and support can be provided for successful teaching processes. By taking this premise as our starting point, with this study we aim to contribute to the international higher education field by providing insights on how teaching experiences of faculty members were impacted, what practices can be kept, and what practices can be left behind as the process of going back to 'normal' after the pandemic starts.

Using the photovoice method, the purpose of this study is to explore and better understand the experiences of higher education faculty in two public universities in Turkey as they navigated remote teaching practices during the pandemic. Photovoice is a visual participatory research method providing space for participants to share their experiences or address issues that affect them through the use of photos and narratives with the purpose of raising awareness or to effect change in their communities (Wang & Burris, 1997).

LITERATURE REVIEW

Emergency Remote Teaching during COVID-19

With the emergence of the COVID-19 pandemic globally, countries went into a lockdown state which necessitated a transition from in-person to remote education to minimize disruptions. The rapid nature of the transition, adjusting content and course designs to an online mode of delivery without preparation and in a short time led to the introduction of the term 'emergency remote teaching' (Hodges et al., 2020). Although the delivery modes are the same, it is important to note the difference between online and emergency remote teaching. Online teaching is more than the mode of delivery of instruction as its planning and implementation are grounded in theory and practice specific to the field (Bozkurt et al., 2020; Hickling et al., 2021). Courses are intentionally designed to be delivered completely online with the use of pedagogical strategies in instruction, student engagement, and assessment in a virtual learning environment (Johnson et al., 2020). Emergency remote teaching, on the other hand, refers to a temporary shift of instructional delivery to alternative modes in response to a crisis in which learners are physically separated from their learning environments, peers, and instructors (Bozkurt et al., 2020; Hodges et al., 2020). As the COVID-19 pandemic required a quick shift from in-person to online instruction temporarily, educational practices within this context should be considered as emergency remote teaching (ERT), and not online teaching.

Faculty Experiences

The move to remote teaching in the face of an emergency affected faculty members significantly. Navigating the new spaces while trying to adjust to the restrictions imposed due to the pandemic, converting course materials into digital and engaging online materials in a short time, and seeking alternative ways to implement their teaching practices with almost no support added more stress and created more work for them, particularly those with no previous experience in online teaching (Crawford et al., 2020; Doyumagac et al., 2021; Hodges et al, 2020; McDaniel et al., 2020; Walsh et al. 2021). Additional challenges included students not having access to technology, faculty members experiencing difficulties in adapting to the new mode of delivery and managing online classes while trying to ensure active participation and engagement of students in class and achieve learning outcomes (Karadag et al., 2021).

One of the early studies on faculty member experiences during the transition by Meagher (2020) discussed challenges around getting familiar with online platforms used for teaching and teaching materials, making classes interactive through using different methods, and adjusting exams and assignment loads. The author also concluded that the main factor underlying these challenges was not having background and experience in teaching online. In another study, Johnson et al. (2020) surveyed 897 higher education faculty and administrators representing 672 institutions from 47 states in the U.S. during the COVID-19 pandemic. In this comprehensive study, the researchers explored faculty experience with online learning, the type of new teaching methods and tools they used, if they had adjusted their curriculum, and what kind of support they needed. The results showed that 49% of the faculty did not have online teaching experience and that only 8% of the institutions received external support during the transition to distance education. Fifty-six percent of faculty used new teaching methods in the online format and 93% made changes in their teaching practices. Additionally, 53% of faculty needed support for working from home while 58% needed support on teaching online.

Similarly, another study by Walsh et al. (2021) conducted with 113 faculty in the USA showed that 66.67% of faculty had no experience with online teaching while 41% of faculty hadn't received formal training in online teaching. According to a report published by the European Association of Distance Teaching Universities in 2020 that surveyed higher education institutions in 60 countries, the overall perception was that there was a lack of innovative instructional approaches stimulating learner autonomy, motivation, and engagement. This was largely due to instructors' lack of familiarity or experience with distance and online learning prior to the pandemic (European Commission, 2020).

Another report published in Norway by Langford and Damşa (2020) surveying 172 academicians revealed that only 30% had previous experience with online teaching which constituted a part of the challenges they experienced in transitioning to remote teaching. Similarly, Krugiełka et al. (2021) explored the experiences of academicians in Poland during the pandemic in terms of productivity while working remotely, quality of professional life, and mental well-being. The authors revealed that academicians' perceptions of self-productivity were low, and they had difficulty in adjusting to remote work, this impacted their mental well-being negatively. This evidence highlights the need to gauging the readiness of staff and students, and to provide support accordingly when implementing new changes (Pokhrel et al., 2021).

A study conducted by Md Noh (2021) explored the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on academicians who worked remotely from a socio-psychological perspective. They found that the academicians had a moderate level of perceived stress. They also identified the factors that contributed to the stress levels of academicians: social isolation, distraction, poor time management, lack of focus, and challenges with learning new technology. Sen et al. (2020) explored the perspectives of students and academicians in a Turkish university on distance education during the pandemic. Among the challenges in distance education, they identified as part of academicians' experiences were lack of socialization between students and faculty members, technical challenges due to connection issues, and lack of student interaction in class. Additionally, academicians shared that providing equipment and infrastructure

needed for remote teaching as well as intentional planning would prevent compromise in the quality of education.

Although the literature examining the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on higher education faculty is increasing, a majority of the available literature use quantitative approaches identifying areas that impacted teaching and learning experiences during the pandemic. However, there are limited studies using qualitative and participatory approaches exploring faculty members' experiences to better understand the nature of those experiences and to provide insights which could inform ways to approach the improvement efforts in teaching practices by higher education institutions.

Parent Faculty Member Experiences

During the transition to ERT and trying to maintain a work-life balance, academic parents were pressured more with the expanded childcare and/or homeschooling. Although the parenting responsibility of fathers increased during the pandemic, the parenting responsibilities of women compared to men were greater which impacted their productivity and performance as they had less time for their academic, research, and teaching responsibilities (Deryugina et al., 2021; Lantsoght et al., 2021). The challenges experienced by women in academia are well-documented (Fetterolf & Rudman, 2014; Ward & Wolf Wendel, 2004). Skinner et al. (2021) surveyed 3,210 faculty members in the U.S. revealing that both women and caregivers struggled more with managing their time between family, household, and academic responsibilities which affected their well-being negatively. Similarly, Parlak et al (2020) conducted a qualitative study with 21 women in academia working from home and concluded that the gender inequalities were deepened with the pandemic and the productivity of women in academia were impacted negatively.

Context

Turkey has a centralized education system and educational processes in higher education are regulated and managed by the Council of Higher Education (CoHE), including setting university budgets, institutional enrollment and admission caps, and core curriculum guidelines. The centralized system allowed for decision-making and implementation processes to be performed rapidly during the pandemic to prevent interruption in education. However, this top-down approach did not allow instructors to make adjustments in the curricula which created challenges. Following the Scientific Committee's guidelines, first CoHE suspended HE for a few weeks to plan how to proceed with educational practices during the pandemic, and then announced the transition to remote education (Bozkurt et al., 2020). Although remote education has been part of the Turkish HE system for a while, it is not widely used in every university. Of the 209 universities, 123 universities had a Distance Education Center and these universities transitioned to remote education by using their own infrastructures (Dikmen et al., 2020) during the pandemic. For universities without infrastructure for remote education, CoHE decided to provide support through other universities that have infrastructure and/or capacity to provide remote education. However, there were challenges in transitioning to emergency remote teaching.

Approaches taken by universities around the world varied depending on their governance. A report focusing on the impact of the pandemic on higher education throughout the world presented examples from different countries on how universities responded to the pandemic (Salmi, 2020). For example, a university in Argentina postponed classes and rearranged the academic calendar rather than shifting to distant education. The Malaysian Ministry of Education suspended online education and on-campus activities. In Bangladesh, transitioning to online education was delayed in public universities while private universities shifted to online education. In Brazil, the lack of guidance from the government left university presidents with the responsibility of making the decision individually on how to adjust their educational practices during the pandemic.

RESEARCH METHOD

The purpose of this participatory action research study is to explore the experiences of higher education faculty in Turkey during the COVID-19 pandemic using the photovoice method. In this section,

we present an overview of the participants in this study, the research design and how data was collected and analyzed.

Participants

Prior to the start of the research process, IRB approval from the second author's institution was obtained. The participants of the study consisted of 34 faculty members who teach undergraduate and graduate level courses in various departments of two public universities in the eastern region of Turkey. In recruiting participants, we used convenience sampling to invite faculty to participate in the study via email explaining the purpose and the process of the study. Once the initial recruitment was completed with a total of 10 faculty members from both universities, we recruited more participants using a snowball sampling and recruited 24 more participants from both universities.

Research Design and Method

The study is designed as a participatory process using a constructivist approach. By taking a relative position, constructivism assumes multiple and equally valid realities that are socially constructed through the interactions between people and contexts in the research process (Guba et al., 1994). The participatory nature of a study allows participants to engage in generating and sense-making of the data collectively (Abma et al., 2018).

The method employed in this study is photovoice, a participatory action research method, that aims to foster critical consciousness among participants, create an opportunity for participants to document their lived experiences through photography in relation to issues that affect them, and influence change or create social action by reaching decision makers (Wang & Burris, 1994). This method is used widely in the fields of public health (Switzer et al., 2021); social work (Christensen et al., 2020; Christensen et al., 2021), and education (Yilmazli Trout et al., 2019, 2021; Wass et al., 2020).

The photovoice process includes four steps which can be modified based on the context and setting. The first step following participant recruitment involves hosting an information session in which the researchers explain the method, ethical concerns, and provide instructions on the process. During the next step, the researchers provide guiding prompts for participants to respond by taking photographs. For the photography phase, participants use their own cameras or if they don't have access to cameras, the researcher(s) provide cameras to participants. Following the photography, participants come together for a focus group session facilitated by the researcher(s) to share their photographs, discuss what the photographs represent, and unpack the meanings behind those photographs.

Due to the pandemic, this study was conducted virtually which necessitated the use of digital tools in data generation and analysis phases to facilitate the process (Kent et al., 2021). An overview of our process is presented in Figure 1. The process started with a one-hour long virtual information/training session on the photovoice method where we described the theoretical background of the method, the process, and ethical considerations in taking the photographs. The sessions were held using the video conference option on the learning management system used at the second author's institution. At the end of the session, we asked participants to document their teaching experiences in ERT during the COVID-19 pandemic through photography. After the session, a WhatsApp group was created for each university group to have one channel of communication throughout the process. We preferred communicating through group text as the consensus of the group was that it would be more effective and efficient.

Figure 1

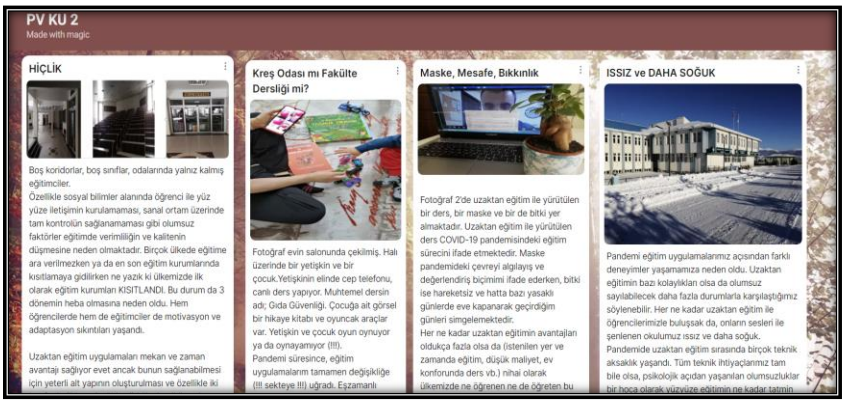
An Overview of the Photovoice Process

Data Generation

Considering their schedules, the participants collectively decided that a ten-day timeframe would work best to complete the data generation phase which involved taking photographs, providing a caption and a narrative for each photograph, and uploading them to a shared folder on cloud data-base that we created for them. After the data generation phase was completed, we prepared for the focus group sessions by organizing the photographs, captions, and narratives using Padlet, which is a cloud-based software used mostly for educational purposes that allows for real-time collaboration between multiple users. For each university, one Padlet board was created to facilitate the focus group sessions. The Padlet format allowed us to display the participant photographs online all at once. We created one Padlet post for each photograph as the structure of a Padlet post provides space for title (caption), text (narrative), and a visual (photograph). In Figure 2 we present a snapshot of our Padlet board prepared for and used in one of the focus sessions as an example. Displaying photographs using Padlet prevented interruptions in the flow of discussion by allowing one facilitator to share their screen and scroll through the Padlet as participants talked about their photos. Another advantage of Padlet is the comment function on posts which allowed participants to comment on each other's photographs during discussions.

Figure 2

Snapshot of a Padlet Created for One University Group



The focus groups started with discussing how the participants experienced the photovoice process thus far. All participants shared that they enjoyed the process, and that they found the method interesting. Some participants showed interest in implementing the photovoice method in their studies or integrating it into their curriculum as a pedagogical tool. At the end of the focus group, the final round of conversations involved how to implement this approach in specific fields and potential challenges that surfaces and ways to overcome those challenges. After discussing their experiences in engaging the process, we showed the Padlet board created for them with their visuals and narratives.

We gave participants some time to review the photographs and make notes of their insights regarding what they saw and read on Padlet. Then, we asked each participant to present their photographs. In presenting, participants explained the reasons behind taking their photos and described their experiences and provided examples. Participants took turns sharing their insights and/or reflections. Opening space for reflections enriched the discussions and allowed participants to exchange ideas with each other.

Data Analysis

The data analysis started in the focus group session with participants. After each participant presented their photograph, we facilitated a discussion on participants' reflections, thoughts, and opinions of what they saw and heard. Then, we asked them to analyze the photographs using the **SHOWED** method (Wang & Burris, 1997) in which each letter refers to the following questions: (1) What do you **S**ee here?; (2) What is really **H**appening here?; (3) How does this relate to **O**ur lives?; (4) **W**hy does this problem exist?; and (5) How could this image **E**ducate others? Since the photovoice process is mostly dialogic, we recorded all our sessions so that we could go back to the recordings and review when needed during the analysis phase.

As the conversations around the photographs and the meanings they represent unfolded, we asked participants to think about the key ideas or themes emerging in the conversations. They identified 3 key themes: (1) feeling isolated, (2) lack of preparation, and (3) challenges in remote education. Following the group level initial analysis, we – the authors – continued thematic analysis of participant narratives and focus group transcript with a deductive approach by using the themes we identified in the session (Braun et al., 2006). Although we used a deductive approach, we remained open to emerging categories and themes that were not identified initially. This allowed us to refine and create new categories where necessary. We first reviewed the data to become familiar and completed initial coding individually. Then,

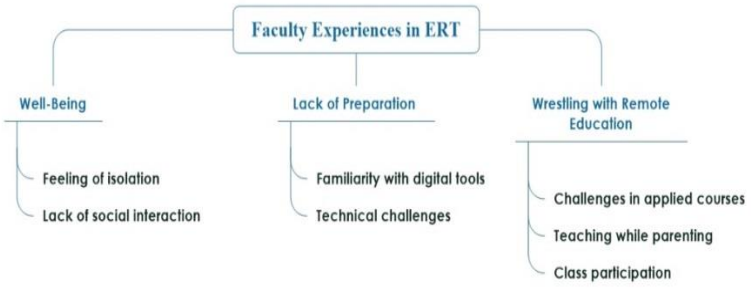
we compared our codes to refine and reach consensus before identifying the categories and themes. This approach allowed us to identify sub-categories for the themes and establish credibility in the analysis. The analyses yielded three themes: (1) faculty well-being, (2) lack of preparation, and (3) wrestling with remote education. The photovoice process including the analyses were conducted in Turkish. Once the analyses were completed, the first author translated the data from Turkish to English as she is fluent in both languages and is currently a Ph.D. candidate in an Education program in the U.S.

RESULTS

In this section, we present the findings from our participatory data analysis process in the focus group session that are supported by the findings of further analysis (Figure 3). In presenting the findings, we used pseudonyms to ensure anonymity.

Figure 3

Overview of themes and sub-themes



Faculty Well-Being

During the focus group sessions, faculty members discussed how they were affected by the changes implemented both in general and in their teaching practices. Some participants provided a more personal and emotional perspective while others were less personal and more objective.

Feeling of Isolation

Empty buildings, classrooms, and hallways were photographed by many faculty members to reflect the feeling of isolation and loneliness they felt. İhsan, for example, provided a photo showing the empty hallways of a building to express his mood at the beginning of the pandemic: "Joyful classes and nervous exam days which we are used to in our school were replaced with quietness. Our hallways are empty, and our building is surrounded by quietness. This impacted my mood negatively in the beginning of the pandemic." Serhat is another faculty member who shared similar feelings as Ihsan. His narrative is also personal and emotive:

> The remote educational practices during the pandemic caused me to feel isolated from my environment, distant from social life, and trapped at home. Additionally, I found myself going from one room to another for work, perceiving other people as a threat for my health, and living the same day every day at home like a potted plant.

Figure 4

Photo by Serhat Titled "Mask, Distance, Tiredness"

In his photograph (Figure 4), Serhat captures the feeling of being trapped by positioning himself on the screen and reflects the new reality experienced by everyone during the pandemic. Although it seems like there is still connection between instructors, students, colleagues and more, they are divided. Virtual connection does not replace the quality of in-person connections and leads people to feel isolated and lonely which impacts their well-being. Tarık's photograph (Figure 5) of an empty classroom is a visualization of 'feeling lonely or distanced.' He reveals similar feelings as other participants, yet in a more objective and factual way he gave an example from teaching practices, drawing attention to how the changes lead to decreased motivation among faculty members.

Figure 5

Photo by Tarık Titled "Teaching to An Empty Class"

Although the implementation of remote teaching was somewhat a solution for students, it was not the same for faculty members. When teaching, the instructor gauges whether students comprehend the content delivered or not through the look in students' eyes. An instructor's motivation increases with the looks students have when they comprehend the content. However,

> this was not the case in remote education. Instructors felt lonely as they taught. They were lonely and unhappy like they were teaching to an empty class (Tarık).

The narratives and photographs of faculty members point out the significant impact that remote teaching practices had on them. The emotions and experiences they shared reveal that the nature of their practices mostly depend on in-person engagements and the lack of this aspect negatively affected their well-being.

Lack of Social Interaction

The virtual environment of courses limited and impacted the nature of social interactions as many faculty members discussed. Serhat, in his photographed titled 'Void' (Figure 6) depicted these feelings and highlighted the negative impacts:

> Empty hallways and classrooms, and instructors who are alone in their offices... Not being able to interact with students in person, particularly in social sciences, is one of the factors that decreased motivation and the quality of the education.

Here, Serhat draws attention to the importance of social interactions in teaching practices not only in classroom settings but also outside the classrooms. His depiction of instructors as 'alone in their offices' implies the informal engagements between students and faculty, and among faculty members. The spaces Serhat photographed include a classroom which relates to the class setting while the hallway and cafeteria reflect the busiest areas on campus indicating the places where social interactions outside the classroom take place.

Figure 6

Photo by Serhat Titled "Void"

Tarık photographed the building where he teaches (Figure 7) and revealed the negative emotions he experienced:

> Although we get together with our students virtually, our school is deserted and colder without them. With the negative psychological effects encountered, we – as faculty members- understood better how in-person education is more satisfactory.

Through this photograph, Tarık communicates how he is distanced from his students and colleagues which contribute to the feeling of loneliness.

Figure 7

Photo by Tarık Titled "Deserted and cold"

Lack of Preparation

The conversations among faculty members revealed similar concerns around becoming familiar with and navigating the learning management systems for effective and efficient use in course content delivery. These concerns stemmed from the faculty members' different levels of experiences with the learning management systems. This was one of the areas that required preparation which faculty members did not have, but they were able to address this issue by making individual efforts.

The second area which required preparation was infrastructure which was addressed in the photos and narratives of the participants. Some faculty members revealed that they preferred to be on campus to have access to stable connection, and to use the equipment available in classrooms. Onur, who teaches an applied culinary arts course, draws attention to the disruptions that occurred during class in his photograph titled 'commitment to teaching' (Figure 8):

> As an academician who was making every effort to be helpful to students during the pandemic, having technical challenges such as losing video was a disruption to the class. Not being able to continue class due to technical challenges was saddening."

The reason for the infrastructure issues was that the internet services were being provided through one carrier because of the location. Thus, the services were limited to the capacity of the carrier. In his photograph, (Figure 8) he provides a peek at behind-the-scenes efforts to show how he tried to overcome the technical challenges by making efforts on his own:

> First, I purchased a Wi-Fi replicator as shown in the photograph. Then, I thought it was not enough, and purchased a second Wi-Fi replicator. However, the video image was still not clear, and I ended up purchasing a third Wi-Fi replicator to improve the internet quality. (Onur)

Figure 8

Photo by Onur Titled "Commitment to Teaching"

Like Onur's comments and photograph, Haluk provided a photograph (Figure 9) drawing attention to the set-up he had to prepare to teach. He shared that, "while sharing screens was efficient in teaching how to use statistical software, this was not the case for teaching the theoretical aspects of the content." In explaining this photograph, Haluk said that he would prefer to be in the classroom to teach theoretical content in person with a set-up using the equipment of the department. He added in his narrative that "the effectiveness of virtual classes could be improved by providing physical equipment (camera, tablet, etc.) to faculty members."

Figure 9

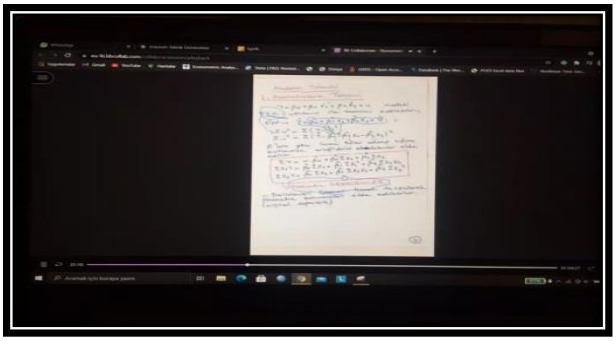
Photo by Haluk

Another problem that emerged because of technical problems was related to the increased workload of faculty members. İlker, who is an assistant professor in the econometry department, provided an example from his experiences when teaching content particularly that involved mathematical equations. He shared that the whiteboard feature of the learning management system did not function properly, and thus, to overcome this obstacle, he prepared handwritten notes to use when teaching (Figure

10). This situation caused extra work and time with no additional compensation. Similarly, Gürol shared that the course material and exam preparation in remote teaching increased his workload significantly.

Figure 10

Photo by İlker



As shared in participant photographs and narratives, technical difficulties and not having access to equipment that would enhance the teaching experience indicate the lack of preparation in moving in-person education to remote. Faculty members had to find a way on their own to deliver courses without interruption. The support system that was in place in the institutions was limited to basic training and technical support regarding the learning management systems they adopted.

Wrestling with (Emergency) Remote Education

Our third finding is related to the experiences that faculty members had in their remote teaching practices which included three sub-categories that are: (1) challenges in applied courses, (2) teaching while parenting, and (3) participation/interaction. Faculty members were of the shared opinion that the negative impact of remote teaching was felt more in the applied courses which affected the quality of education.

Challenges in Applied Courses

Some of the challenges were unique to certain courses such as applied courses. Faculty members shared that they felt the distance in teaching and the negative impact on the effectiveness and quality of the courses they taught. For example, Tolga, a professor in engineering, shared a photograph of his lab coat hanging in the closet in his office (Figure 11). He wrote: “My lab coat that I wear to classes was not worn since the pandemic started. It’s collecting dust in the closet”.

Figure 11

Photo by Tolga Titled “Collecting Dust”

Tolga's photograph draws attention to the disruption experienced in fields such as life sciences, which include applied courses, that require special equipment and materials as well as a lab environment. Thus, during the ERT processes, students lacked the practical experience they needed as part of the curricula.

Figure 12

Photo by Erdem Titled "(Un)Applied Courses"

Erdem, a professor in the culinary arts department, shared a series of photographs (Figure 12) with the caption of "(Un)Applied Courses." He drew attention to the challenges of remote teaching, particularly in applied courses, which result in students not getting the best education. He wrote in his narrative:

> The three photographs at the bottom are images from the food styling techniques course before the pandemic while the three photographs at the top are images showing the attempts to teach the same course in front of the camera. As an academician, I felt sad that applied courses can't be taught online under these conditions and even if taught, it will not be sufficient which will result in students not benefiting from the course. In my opinion, the 3 semesters we spent in front of the screen is a loss in terms of practice. (Erdem)

Tolga and Erdem addressed a major issue faced by many faculty members teaching applied courses in various fields. While in Erdem's case, the issue could be resolved somewhat, it was not the case for Tolga. A similar example was provided by Ebru from the field of sports sciences in which she shared that the practical components of her courses were ceased: "It would not be fair to the students to teach theory only in a course that has an applied component". Teaching applied courses remotely without any prior preparation or support was a challenge for professors. They found themselves in a difficult

position in figuring out how they could deliver the content in the best way possible without compromising content or quality.

The experience of faculty members in remote education during the pandemic was not only negative. Faculty identified some positive aspects related to assessment of student work and reduced workload for faculty members in some cases. For example, Yılmaz, who teaches the course 'professional English' shared that his biggest challenge prior to distance education was that students would refuse to do presentations. He explains :

> Most of his students would accept to get a zero on the presentation rather than presenting in front of their classmates. However, with the use of virtual platforms for class during the pandemic, their assignment was to record a video of their presentation and upload it to the learning management system. To my surprise, most of the students were not hesitant to record themselves doing a presentation in English. Thus, I was able to implement a performance-based assessment with online education. (Yılmaz)

Student familiarity with using social media and other digital tools helped reduced their hesitation of presenting in front of their peers in-person. The online nature of the assignments resonated with students allowing them to overcome their hesitation to present in front of their peers. This could also be attributed to the fact that the videos they uploaded to the system would only be seen by the instructor, not their peers. As a result of this new experience, Yilmaz shared that he considers using the online assignment as an option to engage students more when in-person education resumes.

Teaching While Parenting: Role Duality

Given that most of the participant are parents, the lockdown requirement coupled with transitioning to ERT blurred the lines between their roles as parents and faculty and challenged them to navigate the role duality in a balanced way which was not always possible. Children stayed at home because schools were closed and having a babysitter was not an option due to the lockdown which increased the responsibilities of faculty members as parents. Sevim, an assistant professor shared a photo illustrating the challenge of conflicting roles at home (Figure 13). In her description of the photo, she wrote:

> The photo was taken in the living room. An adult and a child are on the carpet. The adult has a cellphone in her hand, teaching. A picture book and toys are pictured. The parent and the child are playing or not playing!! During the pandemic, my teaching practices have been affected significantly. Synchronous teaching, spending time and doing (or not being able to do) activities with a three-year-old constitute a challenge for me while this can be considered as an advantage for my child. (Sevim)

Figure 13

Photo by Sevim Titled "Kindergarten or University Class?"

Erdem, another faculty member with two children, pictured the challenges he had while teaching (Figure 14). In his photograph, he illustrates how he had to share his desk/office with his children which became a new playground for them. Having to entertain and care for his children interrupted his academic responsibilities at times.

Figure 14

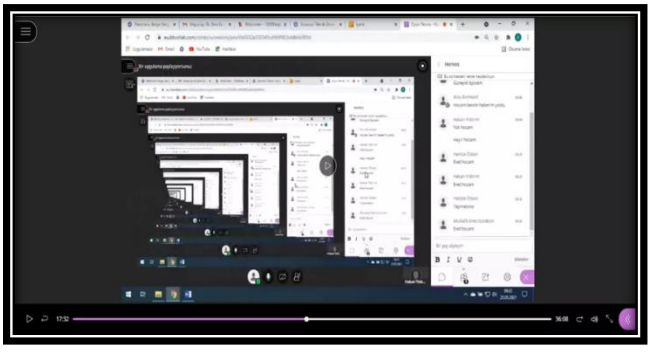
Photo by Erdem Titled "Children's Playground"

Participation/Interaction

Faculty members revealed that class attendance and participation were another problem they encountered in remote teaching. Issues such as not having access to (stable) internet connections, having limited data plans on phones, and sharing the devices with other members of the family were among the factors contributing to low class attendance of students during remote education.

Figure 15

Photo by Gürol Titled "Demotivation"



Gürol addressed how his motivation decreased in classes due to low attendance and the decreased participation of students in class (Figure 15). His photograph shows his screen during a class time with a

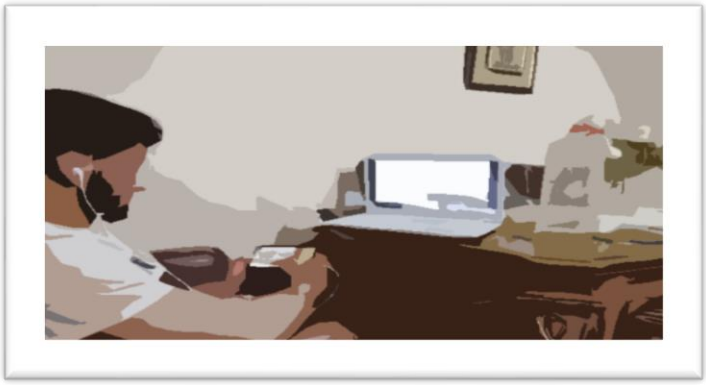
few students without their videos on. With the videos being off and students not interacting much, Gürol found it challenging to gauge how the class went. All these factors demotivated him.

Additionally, faculty members had shared that they thrive in interacting with students in class and the level of participation is an indicator of a successful class. However, this was not the case for remote classes. Sema, in her photograph (Figure 16), illustrated the lack of participation by students. In this photograph, a student joining a class from his home is depicted. Sema described:

> He is virtually present; however, he has his headphones on and is playing a game on his phone while 'attending class.' We, as professors, assume that the students are listening to the professor carefully, but we know the reality that they are not engaged and yet we continue teaching…

Figure 16

Photo by Sema Titled "Pretending"



This photo (Figure 16) represents a shared challenge by professors from both universities. As professors could not require students to turn their cameras on, they did not have a chance to know whether the students were present and paying attention in class. Lack of student participation and interaction caused a decrease in the motivation of faculty members. Sevim is another participant who discussed how challenging it was to motivate students and keep them engaged in class. She felt disappointed because she couldn't keep students actively engaged in class. As stated by one of the participants, Burak,

> "neither instructors nor students were prepared for remote education as it is more appropriate for individuals with high self-management and self-discipline levels, who can manage learning strategies well, who are enthusiastic about learning, and who have high self-motivation."

This insight coupled with the other professors' photographs and narratives may provide additional insight into students' lack of attendance and participation in classes.

DISCUSSION

In this section, we discuss our findings within the current relevant literature. The impact of the COVID-19 pandemic occurred at multiple levels from societal to individual including in many areas of life. These unprecedented times, and the measures taken, caused disruptions including in higher education. To prevent or minimize the negative effects of the pandemic, educational practices shifted towards remote teaching leaving faculty with a huge undertaking on short notice. The sudden shift in working and teaching environments and modes, lack of social interaction, and isolation left individuals struggling to maintain a balance between work and family responsibilities. Together this created

emotional distress. The negative impact of the pandemic on faculty well-being is reported in several studies (Johnson et al., 2020; Sacco et al., 2021).

While the visible factors affecting well-being include lack of social contact and feeling of isolation, other factors that are less visible but as affective are reported as concerns about the change in mode of course delivery, infrastructure-related problems, feeling unprepared for remote teaching, lack of interaction, and pedagogical concerns (Altinpulluk, 2021; Bonsangue et al., 2021; Doyumagac et al., 2021; Valsaraj et al., 2021). The increase in faculty workload is another factor that we identified contributing to their diminished well-being. Preparation and delivery of online courses takes an extensive amount of time (Chiasson et al, 2015; De Gagne et al., 2009). Research shows that during the COVID-19 pandemic, increased workload for faculty was one of the major challenges related to remote education (Day et al., 2021; McDaniel et al., 2021; Sacco et al., 2021; Sen et al., 2021). Lack of experience and training, familiarity with online tools, and infrastructure can be regarded as contributing factors to the increased workload. Research on faculty experiences shows varying levels of experience with online teaching with majority having minimal or no experience (Johnson et al., 2020; Karadag et al., 2021; Ralph, 2020; Valsaraj et al., 2021). Lack of experience with remote teaching also affects the quality of education.

Research shows that students' satisfactory experiences during ERT were related to instructors' familiarity and competency with using various digital platforms and tools efficiently to support student learning (Almendingen et al., 2021). Another study conducted with European countries reported that innovative instructional approaches that stimulate learner autonomy, motivation, and engagement were lacking in the European Member States. Facing time constraints, many faculty members mostly "just replaced face to face teaching and learning with synchronous online classes" (EADTU Report, 2020, p.3) which contributed to a decline in the quality of education. According to the report, educators were unsatisfied with high-speed and stable internet connections at home, training and guidance in adapting class materials and pedagogies to remote teaching, and support from institutions. All these factors contribute to the shared opinion that the COVID-19 pandemic negatively impacted education in varying degrees in developed and developing countries which brings the issues of equity and quality of access to the fore.

Faculty members had to navigate the new virtual spaces on their own to find better ways to continue to connect with students and to offer them a good education without having to compromise the quality. As the transition to ERT happened rapidly, faculty members did not have enough time or support to prepare learning materials for virtual learning. The support they received from their institutions was limited to technical support regarding the learning management system they adopted. While the faculty members were committed to providing the best education they could despite the challenges, the lack of attendance and/or participation by students in classes added to the challenges they already had and decreased their motivation to teach. Karadag et al. (2021) found that universities' remote teaching capacities were low and insufficient due to insufficient human resources, hardware and software structures and capacities, content production capacities, exam infrastructures, and budgets. Durak et al. (2020) conducted a study on the remote teaching capacities of universities in Turkey with participants from 33 universities and found that only 6 universities had the infrastructure and capacity to offer courses synchronously in remote teaching.

Another challenge that increased stress for parent faculty members, particularly women, was undertaking full-time childcare while working from home. Parent faculty members either had to take turns with their spouses in caring for their children so that they could continue teaching, or as in Sevim's case, had to do both at the same time. Similarly, a study by Parlak et al. (2021) explored the experiences of Turkish female academicians during the COVID-19 pandemic and found that female academics struggled attending to household responsibilities, caring for children, and professional responsibilities which led to exhaustion and feelings of inadequacy.

Sen et al (2020), in their study exploring the views of academics on education during the COVID-19 pandemic, found that academicians thought that while distance education has multiple benefits, it also has disadvantages such as lack of interaction and efficiency. Academicians stated that distance education

brings challenges particularly in applied courses which require more time to prepare, and various delivery tools and the productivity is decreased. Additionally, they were able to dedicate less time to their academic practices as most of their time was taken up by trying to fix technical issues or problems that emerged due to distance education. While navigating these challenges, faculty members felt a decrease in their motivation, which is similar to what we identified in this study.

One of the major concerns that faculty members had, particularly in applied courses, was that students did not get the practical experience they were supposed to have according to the curriculum. As there were no arrangements for students to get the practical experience, this lack would impact students in their future careers when they graduate. The concern for their students and the success of their teaching through virtual means impacted faculty members' well-being negatively which then impacted their motivation for teaching. This indicates the importance of considering each course separately when making decisions related to online teaching. Johnson (2020) discusses the importance of planning for transitioning to online education for effective education and support during crises by taking into consideration the needs of employees, administrators, students, and instructors.

Our study is limited to two public universities in the eastern part of Turkey, thus limiting the transferability of findings and some of the recommendations to these institutions only. Considering the differences between private and public universities, the experiences of faculty members should be considered within a public university context. Additionally, our study involves the experiences of faculty in the eastern part of Turkey. Based on regional differences, the experiences of faculty from other regions may have different aspects to consider.

IMPLICATIONS AND CONCLUSION

The results of this study indicate that a big part of the challenges that faculty members experienced were related to the disruption of their teaching practices and its effects on their well-being. Faculty members were expected to continue teaching despite the restrictions, challenges, and the stress that came with the global COVID-19 pandemic, and yet limited support – whether technical, practical, or emotional – was provided for them. They struggled to navigate the unknown spaces of a new 'normal' and conditions by themselves. This information is valuable for institutions to improve their current support mechanisms, particularly in underserved areas, and to take into consideration when making decisions on transitioning to hybrid or online teaching permanently.

Another important aspect to consider when making decisions on online education is the nature of the course. Particularly in courses with practical components such as laboratory sciences or sports sciences, online teaching may not be as effective as in-person education and would rob students of technical skills that they need to learn in person. Each course should be evaluated differently when it comes to remote education. As discussed in the findings, while there were similar challenges experienced, in some cases there were different challenges that were specific to the course. Thus, when making a decision on moving to remote education completely, each course should be considered on its own and faculty members teaching those courses should be consulted. Institutions' infrastructure and students' access to the internet are two major areas that need to be considered in such decisions. Additionally, faculty members should be provided training on online instruction and digital tools in addition to the learning management systems that institutions use, and how to adjust their curriculum and course requirements to online teaching.

Higher education institutions transitioned to remote teaching and the transition was considered successful by university leaders. While most HE institutions provided training and technical support, some universities faced problems in delivering content remotely in terms of technology and tools (Farnell et al., 2021). Although this study focused on faculty experiences from two higher education institutions in Turkey, the findings obtained are not limited to Turkey only. Similar issues were identified in other countries (EADTU Report, 2020; Salmi, 2021). Considering the cultural, social, and economic differences between countries, a bottom-up approach rather than a top-down approach would be more effective in addressing these issues. However, bottom-up approaches can be challenging to implement depending on the context. Kezar (2012) discusses the convergence of two approached from the bottom-up

and makes the distinction between participation encouraged by top-down leaders where staff is brought in for 'advice' and decision-making partnership by giving staff ownership. Our study contributes to the international higher education field and literature by sharing faculty experiences of remote teaching as a first step for a bottom-up approach in addressing issues.

As Bozkurt et al. (2020) discussed, when everything goes back to normal, what students will remember from the pandemic will not be what they learned, but how they felt or how they were supported. This holds true for the faculty members as well. Given the challenges they faced and how they had to navigate those challenges with little to no support, it is important to learn how faculty could be supported better so that they can aid students in their learning through remote or distance education. Therefore, learning from faculty members' experiences is vital, particularly if higher education institutions are to decide on continuing the remote or hybrid education from now on. Based on the findings of the study, support and training on remote education for faculty members should be provided so that faculty can design and deliver their courses using appropriate pedagogies to increase student engagement and quality of instruction. Additionally, technological infrastructure should be improved to prevent disruptions. Faculty responsibilities and performance expectations can be reduced in unprecedented times to accommodate their needs. Lastly, faculty members can be involved in decision-making processes regarding adopting distance education practices post-pandemic so that quality of instruction and learning can be maintained. These are some of the initial considerations that can be implemented to support faculty and maintain quality of education.

This paper contributes to the body of knowledge in the field by increasing faculty member voices on their experiences and needs which affect their teaching practices. The participatory approach allowed for faculty members to share their experiences with each other and exchange ideas on ways to overcome some of the challenges they faced. Additionally, participating in this process provided them with a new method they can implement in their teaching and research practices. At the end of the photovoice process, faculty members asked questions about how they could use this approach in their fields, what challenges may emerge, and how those can be navigated.

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Buffering or Perpetuating: The Perceived Role of Academic Institutions in Chinese International Doctoral Students' Double Pandemics Experiences in the United States

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ABSTRACT

This study adopted a systemic perspective to examine the perceived role of academic institutions in responding to Chinese international doctoral students (CIDS) double pandemic experiences. A hermeneutic phenomenological approach was utilized to guide the research process. The results showed the interlocking relations regarding how individual academic experiences interacted with the social-political-institutional environment during this time of crisis. The discussions highlight the systemic influences on CIDS` experiences. The theoretical and practical implications were included in order to inform systemic interventions.

Keywords: anti-Asian racism, Chinese international doctoral students, perceived institutional role, social-political environment

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INTRODUCTION

The COVID-19 pandemic has been perceived as a double pandemic among certain groups due to exacerbated discriminations against Asians (Starks, 2021) and non-citizens (Addo, 2020). In other words, certain groups have weathered both the challenges caused by the viral pandemic and have also experienced a pandemic of discrimination magnified by COVID-19.

This paper is part of a study investigating Chinese international doctoral students' (CIDS) lived experiences in the U.S. Specifically, our analysis in this paper focuses on how Chinese international

doctoral students have encountered a double pandemic: navigating academic adaptations caused by the COVID-19 pandemic and at the same time negotiating a social-political pandemic. We take a systemic perspective to examine how individual academic experiences interact with the social-political-institutional environment during this crisis. Furthermore, we pay special attention to the perceived role academic institutions play in CIDS experiences of a double pandemic. This focus on systems and institutions guides our implications for institutions to better serve CIDS, as well as how to better respond to the adverse social-political environment to facilitate an equitable, supportive, and inclusive environment in higher education settings.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Since the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic in 2020, people of Asian descent living in the US have carried the additional burden of feeling unsafe due to racist rhetoric and events that have occurred since the initial outbreak of the pandemic, on top of the fear of infection with COVID-19 (Lee & Walters, 2021). International students have also carried the additional burden of navigating policies instituted in the wake of the pandemic (Wong & Barnes, 2020) and restricted access to resources (Firang, 2020), which have a direct impact on their studies (Alaklabi et al., 2021). The following literature review will explore graduate students' academic experiences, the adverse social-political background during the COVID-19 pandemic, and the academic institutions response during COVID-19.

Graduate Students' Academic Experiences during COVID-19

Research regarding graduate student's academic experiences during COVID-19 has focused on the individual level experiences of how COVID-19 has impacted their work. Studies have explored how students have handled or experienced abrupt lab shutdowns (Suart et al., 2021), reduced opportunities to exchange research work and build research networks (Wang & Delaquil, 2020), the distinctive shift of research design or data collection (Barroga & Matanguihan, 2020), and scientific misconduct from producing quick results under time constraints (Dinis-Oliveira, 2020). Other studies have explored what COVID-19 has produced in terms of opportunities for graduate students: increased funding towards COVID-19 related research, more time to produce and develop research and grants due to more flexible schedules from working online (Omary et al., 2020), and positive experiences with online learning (Agarwal & Kaushik, 2020). In addition, studies have noted that the shift to virtual learning and communication during the pandemic has increased opportunities to recruit participants who used to be hard-to-reach (Archer-Kuhn et al., 2021; Dodds & Hess, 2021; Noonan & Simmons, 2021; Saberi, 2020).

The Social-Political Background during COVID-19

While students have experienced academic adaptations during the pandemic, Asian international graduate students have experienced an additional social-political pandemic during COVID-19. From the early days of the pandemic, Asians around the world were blamed for carrying and spreading the COVID-19 virus. This has produced a pervasive culture of anti-Asian racism globally from verbal insults (e.g., being told 'Go back to where you came from!') to hate crimes against Asians especially Chinese (Stop AAPI Hate Reporting Center, 2020). For example, in the US alone, anti-Asian hate crimes increased 164% across 16 of America's largest cities and counties in the first quarter of 2021 (CSHE, 2021). Globally, hate crimes against Asians have increased 532% in four cities of Canada in 2020 (CSHE, 2021). In the UK police data indicated a rise of 300% in anti-Asian hate crimes in the first quarter of 2020 (Clements, 2021). Importantly, these percentages are more than numbers—they mark violence against actual people. The COVID-19 pandemic has exacerbated long-existing patterns of racial discrimination against Asians, especially towards the Chinese (Cohn, 2012).

Looking to U.S. higher education specifically, the discourse surrounding several immigration policies threatened disruption for international students and particularly Chinese students throughout the 2020 academic year. For example, U.S. Homeland Security issued a policy banning international students who were enrolling in schools or programs that were fully online from entering the U.S. (ICE, 2020). A presidential proclamation (PP 10043, 2020) specifically targeted Chinese graduate students and researchers' from obtaining visas due to their ties (real or perceived) to Chinese military schools (Anderson, 2021a; ICE, 2020; Wong & Barnes, 2020). There was also a tightening of the H-1B visa, as

well as threats to cancel the Optional Practical Training (OPT) permit under the Trump Administration (Anderson, 2020, 2021b; NAFSA, n.d.). In all, regardless of the implementation of these policies, they have produced a discourse of fear and anxiety surrounding immigration, travel, and visa acquisition that has specifically and particularly affected Chinese international students. In what follows we explore the role of the academic institution during COVID-19 in shaping CIDS experience.

Academic Institutions' Response During COVID-19

Academic institutions shape international students' experience in a variety of ways. Previous research has demonstrated that when a university views international students as "carriers of diversity" to fulfill the diversity and multicultural needs on campus (Buckner et al., 2021, p. 37), to booster funding (Buckner, 2019; George & Mwangi, 2013), or to enhance the diplomatic relationship between the U.S. and other nations (Lee & Rice 2007), those perspectives can perpetuate systemic oppressions towards international students (Buckner et al., 2021; Yao et al., 2019). Other research has demonstrated how academic institutions can provide resources for international students through the counseling center, writing center, and international center (Banjong, 2015), or through holding follow-ups after international student orientations as ways to promote a sense of belonging on campus (Jean-Francois, 2017; Rodríguez et al., 2019).

When the COVID-19 pandemic started, many academic institutions shifted delivery of services online to accommodate social distancing policies, provided training and support for faculties and students in online teaching and learning (Adedoyin & Soykan, 2020; Pokhrel & Chhetri, 2021), and allocated emergency funds to students in need (U.S. Department of Education, 2020). Despite the unique position of Asian international students during COVID-19, there has been limited research regarding how academic institutions responded to the adverse social-political environment faced by many Asian international students. Investigating the role of the academic institutions is crucial because the institution can work as a buffer to reduce the negative social-political influence, (e.g. through sending a clear anti-racist message and developing anti-racist systems (Jiang, 2020) or perpetuate historic and systemic institutional oppression, (e.g. through providing no practical or emotional support for students who struggled to come back to the host country after returning home for various reasons (Xu & Tran, 2021).

THE STUDY

As addressed in the literature review, Chinese international graduate students may experience a 'double pandemic' — dealing with both the challenges of adapting academically during the COVID-19 pandemic and the adverse social-political pandemic. To date, there has been one study which explored how Chinese international doctoral students navigated the disrupted study trajectory during COVID-19 (Xu & Tran, 2021). However, this study focused mainly on how individuals successfully identified and used multiple resources to overcome academic challenges (Xu & Tran, 2021). Therefore, the current study took a systemic perspective and used a social-political-institutional lens to examine how individual academic experiences interacted with the social-political-institutional environment during this crisis. Specifically, we ask: 1) What are the experiences of CIDS in the US during the pandemic? 2) How did CIDS perceive academic institution's response to their experiences? 3) What are CIDS experiences of immigration policies and anti-Asian racism during the pandemic in the US?

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Two frameworks guided the study: the ecological model and critical race theory (CRT). The purpose of using an ecological model is to take a systemic perspective to investigate how individual academic experiences interacted with the institutional-social-political environment during this time. Critical race theory offers an interpretation of CIDS unique experiences within the exacerbated anti-Asian racism context to center the voice of this marginalized group. Further, CRT takes a critical approach to the ecological model, offering a lens to analyze how race and racism function through individual and at systemic levels.

Researchers have repeatedly pointed out institutional, cultural, and other systemic contributions to international students' individual experiences (Elliot et al., 2016; Yao et al., 2019; Zhang, 2018). The ecological model consists of five basic systems—microsystem, mesosystem, exosystem, macrosystem, and chronosystem (Bronfenbrenner, 1979, 1995, 2005). In this study, the microsystem refers to the academic challenges and opportunities. The mesosystem refers to the perceived role of the academic institutions in responding to the double pandemics. The exosystem and macrosystem indicate the social-political background: pervasive anti-Asian racism and disturbing immigration policies. Finally, the chronosystem alludes to the COVID-19 pandemic that this study was situated in, and the history of discourse surrounding people of Asian descent in the U.S.

Critical race theory is a multiple-dimensional theory with several core tenets, including the permanence of racism, White supremacy, interest convergence, and intersectionality (Delgado & Stefancic, 2001). Yao et al. (2019) used CRT to analyze articles from 1996 to 2016 regarding international students' marginalized experiences in the US in higher education and highlighted the systemic influence in perpetuating their negative experience in four themes: permanence and centrality of race and racism, Whiteness as property and White supremacy, intersectionality, and meritocracy and interest convergence. This review has opened the door for future researchers to interrogate the systemic nature of international students' oppressed experiences through CRT and focuses on academic institutional influence. Therefore, building on Yao et al.`s (2019) work which addressed the utility and necessity of applying CRT to international students' marginalized experiences, the current research investigates first CIDS experiences of double pandemics, and then takes a closer look at the perceived academic institutions' response to the social-political environment.

RESEARCH METHOD

A hermeneutic phenomenological approach guided the current research, including conceptualization, data collection, analysis, and results representation. According to van Manen (1990), a hermeneutic phenomenological approach is "the description of the experiential meanings we live as we live them" (p. 11) and emphasizes the interpretation of the phenomenon. This approach fits the current study, which intended to explore the lived experiences (e.g., thoughts, feelings, and behaviors) of international Chinese doctoral students' living in the U.S. during the COVID-19 pandemic, and their interpretations of the role of their academic institutions in their experiences.

Recruitment Procedure and Sample

Approved by The University of Georgia Institutional Review Board (IRB), the inclusion criteria for participants included (a) identifying as a Chinese citizen; (b) currently enrolled in a doctoral program in the US; (c) having completed at least one year of coursework; (d) being single or partnered but without children since being a student parent has unique challenges during the doctoral journey (e.g., Springer et al., 2009). Participants were recruited via multiple approaches including direct email invitations, snowball sampling, and posts on Facebook from the researcher's account. Potential participants were asked to complete a 5-minute online survey to assess their eligibility for the study. Fifty-two people completed the online survey, and twenty-six met the inclusion criteria for this study. In the end, eighteen participants from five public universities agreed to participate in the study, and eight participants came back for the focus-group interview (see Table 1 in Appendix I). All five of the institutions are predominately white public institutions, and all are in the Eastern U.S. One of the institutions (University #5) has a satellite campus in China. At four of the five institutions in the sample, Chinese students make up the majority of the international student body except University #4, where China is second to India in international student demographics. To be clear, the sample was not purposefully selected from White-dominated universities; it happened by chance.

Data Collection

Participants engaged in an hour to an hour and a half long in-depth Zoom interview with the first author. Every participant provided informed consent before the interview. A follow-up focus group

interview was conducted for member-checking six months after the individual interviews to improve the trustworthiness of the findings. Based on the participant's preference, the individual interviews were conducted either in English or in Mandarin, and Mandarin was used in the focus group interview. Participants received a $5 eGift card for participating in the individual interview and a second $5 eGift Card for participating in the follow-up focus group interview as compensation for participating in this study.

The first and second authors created semi-structured interview questions to explore CIDS's perceived challenges and barriers during COVID-19. Questions were designed to explore their academic and life experiences at the individual level, the perceived institutional level, and the perceived social-political level. The first author conducted two pilot interviews with two different Chinese international doctoral students who were not among the 18 participants. A sample interview protocol in English is included in Appendix II.

Data Analysis

Data analysis followed van Manen's (2016) hermeneutic phenomenological framework to "isolate semantic statements" (p. 92) and was conducted primarily by the first author. First, using a holistic approach, each transcript was attended to "as a whole" to grasp the "fundamental meaning" of the text (van Manen, 2016, p. 93). Second, phrases or sentences that seemed particularly salient regarding CIDS' experiences during COVID-19 were selected. Third, each transcript was read line by line to mark the meaningful units, and finally, essential and incidental themes were distinguished (van Manen, 2016). Then, the importance of the initial themes was considered to cluster them into higher-level themes that were essential to the phenomenon. For Mandarin transcripts, Mandarin was used to generate initial themes and codes in first-round coding. Then, themes were translated into English to discuss findings with the second author to refine codes and themes. Afterward, English was used for the second-round coding and further analysis. For the English transcripts, English was used throughout the coding process.

Trustworthiness

Lincoln and Guba (1985) suggest that trustworthiness is significant when evaluating a qualitative study and involves credibility, dependability, confirmability, and transferability. Credibility refers to the confidence in the "truth" of the findings. In order to improve the credibility, participants were invited to return for a follow-up focus group interview, which enabled the participants to correct and co-create the interpretation. To improve dependability, or the extent to which the findings could be repeated, the first and second authors met regularly to discuss study design and analysis. Throughout the research, the first author wrote reflexive memos and debriefed findings with the second author to establish confirmability or the extent to which the findings of a study are shaped by the respondents. Throughout the analysis, we use hermeneutic "thick description," to offer transferability and provide the context related to the experiences shared by participants and thus offer connections to other contexts (Freeman, 2014). In addition, the discussion provides implications for transferability grounded in the findings for broader higher education policy and practice.

Positionality

The first author positions herself as an insider to the target population of this study as she is a current Chinese international doctoral student in the U.S. during COVID-19. She is aware that her insider perspective had both strengths (i.e., having the basic knowledge about what to ask the participants and being less invasive to the studied context (Bridges, 2001) and limitations (i.e., her personal experiences may interfere in the research process in the current study (Drake, 2010; Kanuha, 2000). Apart from thinking critically, she wondered how her shared identity might have shaped stories that were shared with her, as well as what might have been assumed or left out.

The second author is an outsider to the target population as a white faculty member who is a U.S. citizen. She studies questions of equity and justice in higher education as a qualitative methodologist, and her role in the research included assisting in study design and methodology. Throughout the research she

remained aware of the power dynamics she brought to the study and talked often with the first author about her role as a contributing author.

RESULTS

Findings from the analysis are broken into two broad categories: (1) academic adaptation and perceived institutional responses, and (2) perceived institutional responses to the social-political environment. The participants' response frequencies were collapsed into the following categories: few (1–3 participants), some (4–8), many (9–12), most (13–17), and all (18 participants). These frequencies are utilized to give the audience a clear picture of the range of shared experiences to avoid suggesting generalizability. Thinking within our theoretical framework, we also point to how these categories are located in/between ecological systems. We bridge these ecological systems further in our discussion.

Microsystem and Mesosystem:

Academic Adaptation and Perceived Institutional Responses

Chinese international doctoral students (CIDS) described a range of adaptations and institutional responses during the COVID-19 pandemic that moved between the microsystem and mesosystem. It is important to note that many of these academic experiences are unique to doctoral students, but not necessarily unique to CIDS. As we will explore further, it is considering these experiences in relation to and in conversation with the perceived institutional responses to the socio-political climate that we see a fuller and more complex picture of CIDS experience. The themes we explore include (1) microsystem: academic challenges and opportunities. (2) mesosystem: perceived care and support from major professors or committee and/or from the academic institution.

Microsystem: Experiences of Academic Challenges and Opportunities

Bronfenbrenner's (1979, 1995, 2005) model describes the microsystem as the individuals and groups directly surrounding students, as well as the roles that an individual holds. During the pandemic, students' microsystems were often in relationship and response to the chronosystem produced by the pandemic.

Many students described research challenges specific to the pandemic. Some participants struggled with whether to switch to COVID-19 related topics or not. Some participants mentioned the challenges, such as data collection, prolonged IRB process, prolonged publication process in some journals, and the disappointments regarding conference cancellation. For example, one participant struggled with data collection, but one of her committee members suggested that she contact a "volunteer science" online platform to collect data that was free to everyone during COVID-19.

With regard to a sudden shutdown of a lab in crisis, seven participants were regularly involved in lab work. Four out of seven expressed how lockdown disrupted their lab's normal functions, and in turn, influenced their research process. For some majors, a sudden lab lockdown could lead to the delay or entire disruption of the research process. Another participant pointed out that lab protocols during the initial stages of the lockdown were ambiguous. For example,

> Only *essential* experiments are allowed to conduct during the lockdown. But what experiments are *essential* is vague, so several of my experiments were put off as they were considered not essential.

Some students also held roles within their institution other than researchers. For example, seven of the 18 participants worked as TAs during the pandemic, and all reported increased stress related to this position. Two of the seven were independent instructors (i.e., taught a course independently of a professor) who expressed intense stress in teaching online during COVID-19. The TAs' stress centered around overwork to accommodate online teaching and what one participant described as "email bombs" from other students. Specifically, this participant noted that, "the numbers of emails increased drastically when I was teaching an experiment class online during COVID-19 compared to the time when I taught

the same class in-person before COVID-19." Additionally, two participants noted that they felt TAs were an ignored population when it came to resources and support systems. One participant remarked:

> How can I take care of my students if I cannot take care of myself? We have two roles, double stress, but I feel the focus was on undergrads only… So, I think our graduate students also need more support and care.

In terms of research opportunities, some participants mentioned the positive influence on the research process: the boosted new research topics inspired by COVID-19, the ability to collect data across the country online, quick publication processes for COVID-19 related research, funding for COVID-19 related topics, and finally the increased accessibility of academic resources (e.g., some databases were rarely accessed before the pandemic).

These experiences of challenges and opportunities in students' microsystem with individuals and within the roles they held can be further explored through examining their mesosystems – or what Bronfenbrenner (1979, 1995, 2005) described as the relationships among a student's microsystems.

Mesosystem: Perceived Care and Support

In our analysis, the mesosystem was constituted through interactions between students' academic experiences and the academic institution. During the pandemic, this took the form of support and acknowledgement of the effects of the pandemic, often facilitated by major advisors or committee members. For example, one participant described her advisor's emotional support:

> I remember at the beginning of the lockdown, we were scared, but our advisor called each of us regularly to check in with us. He told us if we felt stressed or something, he was there for us to talk to. It feels good, you know, it feels like I was cared for.

Other participants mentioned financial or research support from advisors, such as one participant who stated, "My advisor sent me a $100 check and always asked me how my family were doing. I felt touched very deeply." Another described an advisor who rewrote their grant to ensure graduate student support, and reflected:

> My major professor, she can apply for delaying the project. However, if she applied for the delay, our graduate students couldn't get any assistantships…She decided to face a challenge and change the protocol, change the whole research plan. And now we are doing this research smoothly. So, I'm really grateful to her.

Another relationship comprising the mesosystem was the perceived support from the institution. For example, many participants mentioned assistance received from their departments or university. A few participants received university emergency funds, while others received health packages from their institution including masks, thermometers, or sanitizer. Moving our analysis to the exosystem and macrosystem makes possible a consideration of the double pandemics, the role of the larger socio-political environment and the perceived institutional policies and responses.

Exosystem and Macrosystem:

Adverse Social-Political Environment

As the Chinese international doctoral students in our study described navigating their microsystem and mesosystems of challenges and support, they were also influenced by their exo- and macrosystems. Bronfenbrenner (1979, 1995, 2005) described the exosystem as connections between events or communities not directly involving the individual and the macrosystem as the overall culture or context. The themes we explore in this section include (1) Exosystem: Navigating disturbing immigration policies; (2) Macrosystem: the anti-Asian racism discourse.

Exosystem: Navigating Disturbing Immigration Policies

During the pandemic, the exosystem was composed by the direct and indirect influence of a series of policies issued in 2020 at the federal level in the US related to international students or Chinese

international students specifically. Many students referenced these policies, and the most frequently mentioned policy, was the policy which sought to bar foreign students from online study (ICE, 2020). None of the participants were directly impacted by this policy since it was rescinded several days later. However, some participants addressed the anxiety for the future this policy created. For example, one student noted that,

> This policy can disrupt even destroy my whole career plan and I cannot say anything… I have the constant anxiety and worry. It feels like I am the lucky fish who wasn't caught by the fishnet this time. But as long as there will be another, and another new policy targeting the international students, I won't escape the fishnet next time.

Some participants, especially the four participants in their final year, were especially worried about their visa due to the tightening H-1B visa by the Trump administration. For example, one participant shared her confusion regarding those changing immigration policies,

> The policies are constantly changing. I feel confused. Are you welcoming international students or not? if you don't, you can say it. If you do welcome, what's the point of setting barriers after they come here?

Macrosystem: Anti-Asian Discourse

All participants mentioned they noticed the anti-Chinese/anti-Asian comments in the media, as well as the increasing number of hate incidents across the U.S. These incidents composed a macrosystem of a culture of anti-Asian sentiment and racism toward Chinese people. The majority of participants felt anger and helplessness about being blamed for the virus after Trump labeled COVID-19 the "Chinese virus." As one participant described, "I feel angry, I feel I was attacked collectively from different social media platforms." A few participants fought back on social media. For example, one participant said that,

> I was so upset to read those anti-Chinese comments on media that I couldn't sleep. No matter how late it was, I got up and fought back. Then, one day I realized, if they chose to believe what they believe no matter right or wrong, there's no way for me to change their opinions. So, I dropped.

Two participants had experiences of direct racism. One shared in an individual interview that she was asked, "where are you from?" in a shopping mall and in a restaurant. She shared,

> Those experiences made me feel scared of being asked where I come from. It's a normal question but like a bomb question now… I also feel if I cough or sneeze in public, I would be assumed to have COVID-19 instead of flu because I come from China.

All eight participants in the focus group indicated that the attitudes towards anti-Asian racism seemed to change in a progressive way after the highly publicized aftermath of a shooting in Atlanta that was motivated by anti-Asian sentiments (McDonnell Nieto del Rio & Sandoval, 2021), especially as universities started taking an active role in fighting against it. However, some participants pointed out the anti-Asian discrimination was still there. For example, one student who held clinical hours as part of their doctoral work shared,

> The client told the agency that they wanted to switch to another therapist when they just saw my name is an Asian name. I haven't met the client yet. This never happened to me before. This happened after Atlanta shooting.

Some participants expressed the - the fear of living in the US, "I feel my basic safety has been threatened. I live my everyday life in fear." One participant indicated a deprived independence and freedom,

> I'm afraid of going out by myself because I am scared, but I know I don't have to be scared if I go out with my boyfriend (White American male) … I feel I'm no longer an independent person anymore. For my safety, I have to depend on someone. This is basically wrong!

Return to Mesosystem:

Perceived Institutional Responses to the Negative Social-Political Environment

Returning to the mesosystem considering the adverse socio-political context of the exo and macrosystems, we conclude our analysis by exploring students' perceived institutional responses to the negative social-political environment.

Some participants stated that they perceived support from their department and university. These included the department and the university showing their care for international students via correspondence and communication. For instance, a participant said "I felt like a comfort when I received the emails to check in with international students from the International Center, the school president, and the Dean."

It also included universities taking actions to stop anti-Asian racism. A participant gave an example of her department:

> Our department, the Chair, the Dean and all faculties initiated a long Zoom meeting with international students to ask about our needs, what support we need. And our department also organized a seminar to discuss racism against racial minority occurred in the last year. That was good.

Many participants expressed the perceived ignorance from the department and university. The ignorance focused on two aspects: lack of compassion and care for Chinese international students' or international students' situations during the pandemic, and institutional ignorance towards anti-Asian racism. In terms of lacking compassion, some participants mentioned the lack of communication from their departments or university's surrounding the disturbing and racist immigration policies. As one participant said,

> We know they (i.e., the department and university) may not have the power to change the policy, but we hope they could send emails to show they are concerned about us.

The perceived institutional ignorance towards anti-Asian racism was mainly related to "no-response" or brush-off behaviors from institutions. Some participants indicated that they never received any statements from their department and/or university to condemn the hateful rhetoric "Chinese virus" or to express solidarity with the Asian community. One participant described the encounter with their department chair:

> I went to the department chair to raise his attention. I told him the attacks and discrimination against Chinese students are serious on campus. Well, he asked me if I experienced any attacks. Then, he asked me to let him know if something more happen. I felt helpless and angry because no actions are taken to stop the racism or attacks, and it seems no one cares about thousands of Chinese international students' situations on campus, and how they are handing those discrimination. No one cares.

Another participant attempted to raise the university's attention but got brushed off.

> When we saw a group of students on campus holding a sign to call the COVID-19 "Chinese Virus," we think it's a serious issue. So, several of us reached out to a university office to raise their attention and asked them to condemn this hateful rhetoric. Unfortunately, they responded us officially and said that they cannot control people's right of free speech.

Later, that participant noted that after being brushed off several times, the office contacted another office to issue a statement. However, the statement letter was only sent to international students. Three participants hesitantly and delicately mentioned BLM (Black Lives Matter) and expressed that they felt "anti-Asian racism seems acceptable." For example,

> When BLM event occurred, the college, department, students' associations were all standing up to declare they allied with black and African American community. That was great, but when the country`s president was call COVID-19 as "Chinese virus," I think this was really terrible. But no one in our department stood up to condemn this or to protect Asian students. I feel somehow, black students were important. I know I shouldn't compare, and it's not even a

> problem of comparison. But at least there should be a support for us, you know, especially the majority of the internationals in our department are Chinese.

There was a notable change of department and university's attitudes and response towards anti-Asian racism after the March 2021 Atlanta shooting (McDonnell Nieto del Rio & Sandoval, 2021). This result was added after the member checking focus group in June 2021. All eight participants addressed that they received emails condemning anti-Asian racism from multiple school offices. They all believed "this is progress;" however, they also questioned how truly the department and university validated Asians' racialized experiences and allied with the Asian community. For example, two participants compared the BLM rally and anti-Asian racism rally, "half of the department joined the BLM rally. However, not many faculties or students join the anti-Asian racism rally." Finally, a participant summarized and echoed by all others,

> The Biden administration condemned the anti-Asian racism. The department and the university issued statements, showed more compassions to Asian students than before. Those are progress, but hard to know how they really think, is that because it is a politically right thing to do? Well, it's still a long way to go.

DISCUSSION AND IMPLICATIONS

The current study uncovered the interlocking relations regarding how individual academic experiences interacted with the social-political-institutional environment during the COVID-19 pandemic. Below, we highlight the perceived role of academic institutions in responding to the adverse social-political-institutional environment, and to the doctoral students' unique academic experiences via the ecological model and the CRT framework. The discussions and implications will be situated within exting literature.

Systemic Perspectives of CIDS Experiences via Ecological Model and CRT Frameworks

Informed by the ecological model (Bronfenbrenner, 1979, 1995, 2005), the current study showed the interlocking relations among the CIDS academic adaption during the COVID-19 (the microsystem), the adverse social-political environment that they were embedded in (the exosystem and macrosystem), and the perceived role of academic settings in responding to both pandemics (mesosystem). Importantly, we found that although many students experienced support in their mesosystem from major advisors and committee members for navigating academic challenges, they were ignored or brushed off by the institution in regard to their experiences as Chinese international students. From a systemic perspective, we argue that these roles – that of a doctoral student and that of a Chinese international, cannot be separated, and indeed must be considered together to more fully support CIDS. In other words, an academic institution is perceived as either a buffer or perpetuator depending on whether the institution can validate *both* CIDS' identities (that of a doctoral student and a Chinese international student).

Examining these contrasting experiences of buffering and frustration within the ecological model with CRT highlights the paradox of anti-Asian racism that CIDS have experienced: the pervasiveness of anti-Asian racism exacerbated by the COVID-19 pandemic and the perceived institutional invisibility towards anti-Asian racism. The current results expanded Critical Race Theory in two aspects: adding empirical evidence supporting the pervasiveness of racism and interest convergence serving as a possible explanation of the paradox.

Critical Race Theory (Delgado & Stefancic, 2001; Ladson Billings & Tate,1995) emphasizes the pervasiveness of racism to the culture of the U.S. All participants noted anti-Chinese or anti-Asian comments and the frequent use of "Chinese Virus" referring to COVID-19 in the media. This "othering" experience supported CIDS marginalization experiences of neo-racism: discrimination based on one's culture and national order (Barker, 1981; Lee & Rice, 2007; Spears, 1999). This rhetoric is not confined to the U.S. as several other countries' leaders including the U.K, Germany, France, Italy, Spain, and Greece have "latched onto the COVID-19 crisis to advance anti-immigrant, white supremacist, ultra-nationalist, anti-Semitic, and xenophobic conspiracy theories that demonize refugees, foreigners, prominent individuals and political leaders" (Human Rights Watch, 2020).

Another tenet of CRT, interest convergence, states that the needs or desires of a marginalized group will only be met or responded to when they further that of the white or dominant group (Bell, 1980). Interest convergence may help explain the paradox of anti-Asian racism that CIDS experienced: at the same time as CIDS experienced heightened levels of racist rhetoric, they also experienced invisibility at their institutions. They described not receiving statements from the academic institution to condemn anti-Asian rhetoric on campus, getting brushed off when bringing up their racialized experiences on campus, and feeling that "anti-Asian racism seems acceptable" compared to the perceived institutional response to BLM movement. This is especially notable given that at four out of five universities represented in our study, most of the international students are from China. However, as noted in our sample, all five of the universities in our sample are predominately white institutions. As Bourke (2016) noted, "what is predominant at PWIs is not simply the number of white students versus the number of students of color but embedded institutional practices that are based in whiteness" (p. 17). Institutions only responded to CIDS needs as Chinese international students (as noted by students in our focus group) when it was in their interest – namely after a highly publicized mass shooting drew national attention to the violence against Asians. It is also important to think about this moment in light of the macrosystem of 2020-2021, when BLM protests pushed for change and corporations, institutions, and communities released statements following pressure from activists and protestors that 'silence is violence' and 'silence is complicity'. After a year of silence about the rhetoric of anti-Asian hate on their campuses, responding to the mass shooting in Atlanta worked for many institutions as a "non-performative statement" that simultaneously acknowledged the existence of anti-Asian racism while situating it elsewhere, outside the boundaries of the institutions (Ahmed, 2012, p. 117). This simultaneous acknowledgement and separation then, "became a matter of generating a positive white identity that makes the white subject feel good. The declaration of such an identity [of antiracism/of rejection of Asian Hate] sustains the narcissism of whiteness" while at the same time making the institution feel as though it had 'done' something" (Ahmed, 2012, p. 170).

We return to the ecological model (Bronfenbrenner, 1979, 1995, 2005) to discuss implications and offer suggestions. The institution can take actions at the mesosystem to buffer the adverse social-political influence at the exosystem and macrosystem. One clear action is to communicate a clear and formal anti-racist message. Commitments to stop Asian hate can happen at many levels – from faculty syllabus, lab expectations, residential hall community norms, and first year orientation programs, as well as from the president's office. Although we critique these messages when they function as non-performative statements, our study also demonstrates the consequence of ignoring the pervasive anti-Asian racism. As the students in our study noted, not making any statement also makes the implication that "anti-Asian racism seems acceptable," which can, in turn, lead to increasing racialized incidents on campus and reinforce systemic oppression. Thus, statements need to be combined with grounded community actions to disrupt and dismantle anti-Asian racism.

Another implication is to look outside the institution for supportive and inclusive policies. For example, the Biden administration signed the COVID-19 Hate Crimes Act aiming to stop the rising anti-Asian hate crimes (Vazquez, 2021). Additionally, the United Nations

> pushed governments to 'act now to strengthen the immunity of our societies against the virus of hate' and Asia Advisory Director John Sifton at HRW [Human Rights Watch] suggested that 'governments should act to expand public outreach, promote tolerance, and counter hate speech while aggressively investigating and prosecuting hate crimes. (Lee & Johnstone, 2021, p. 229)

These suggestions can also be taken up at an institutional level.

Intervening in the microsystem through a series of workshops to raise all faculty, students, and staff awareness of anti-Asian racism in the US is also a crucial step. These interventions in the microsystem could produce changes in the culture—the macrosystem. Another significant response is to validate Asian students' racialized experiences when they happen, and better support students' activism for equity and inclusion (e.g., Hoffman & Mitchell, 2016). Meanwhile, institutions should pay attention to the influence of disturbing immigration policies that target specific groups of international students. For example, Harvard University and the Massachusetts Institute of Technology condemned the policy and

sued the U.S. government in federal court, which led to the rescinding of the policy barring international students from attending online classes (Treisman, , 2020). Additionally, it could be helpful to set up a need-based scholarship or fellowship specifically for international students as they are excluded from many federal financial relief programs due to their international status (IRS, 2020). Although several participants received emergency funds, they were not exclusively for international students.

Finally, university offices and student organizations need to be modified and updated to better meet international students' needs. For example, the International Center is usually the only agency officially responding to international students. Due to its heavy workloads, having a liaison or a committee specifically devoted to supporting international student needs in each department or within colleges may help with communication (Nguyen, 2013). Moreover, we see value in having an international students' union, as well as organizations that exclusively focus on race and ethnicity on campus. These kinds of specific organizations can provide specialized support, such as walking international students through the reporting process when they encounter racial discrimination (EHRC, 2019). In all, there are a myriad of ways to help rather than perceive international students as part of the diversity pie chart, or expect them to conform to the institution. Instead, academic institution can better focus on the lived experiences of international students to adjust and intervene in the systems and culture (Lee & Rice, 2007; Yao et al., 2019).

Unique Doctoral Students' Academic Adaptation and the Implications

The current study highlighted doctoral students' unique academic challenges and perceived support during the COVID-19 pandemic. Those challenges include research challenges (e.g., whether and how to grab emerging opportunities, the disruptive effect due to sudden lab shutdown), and feeling overburdened by fulfilling roles as both a TA and as a graduate student. Meanwhile, the perceived support emphasized the advisors' double roles: as an academic coach (e.g., helping modify data collection plans) and an emotional support (e.g., providing regular check-ins). Although some of these findings are not unique to CIDS, they highlight the unique academic experiences of doctoral students and expand the literature, which has focused heavily on undergraduates' online learning efficiency during the pandemic.

Therefore, our implications focus specifically on assisting academic institutions to better support doctoral students in crisis. First, although participants shared that advisor and committee members were helpful in their process, it is unrealistic to put all the responsibilities on one's advisors because advisors were/are also going through a pandemic (Byrom, 2020). This is especially true for junior faculty who are facing career challenges due to COVID-19 (Levine et al., 2021). Thus, we argue that this time of crisis requires institutional support for advisors to better support their advisees. Second, the chaos caused by the sudden lab shutdown may imply the significance of having a clear lab protocol ahead of time to guide all involving parties through a crisis (Suart et al., 2021). Even an updated message of "we are working on it" could primarily reduce the initial panic and chaos (Coyne et al., 2020).

Finally, the institution should not only provide teaching training for TAs but show compassion for TAs as well. Correspondingly, research regarding TAs' experiences need to be expanded from focusing on improving their teaching skills only with the purpose of promoting undergraduates learning experiences (e.g., Winstone & Moore, 2016) to caring for TA's unique challenges as playing double roles. Supporting TAs more explicitly also has direct implications for international students who work as TAs who are often simultaneously navigating a new language and culture at the same time as they are learning to teach and manage a classroom (Collins et al., 2021).

The current study is limited in three ways. First, we investigated the perceived institutional responses from the CIDS' perspectives, not directly from the institution's perspective. Specifically, we noted how institutional responses, when they did occur, often functioned as "non-performative statements" (Ahmed, 2012) that simultaneously acknowledged the existence of racism while not requiring change or culpability from the institution. Thus, an examination of the gaps between what is said and what is done, the institutional view and the student's view, could spark a dialogue to inform concrete changes to the culture of the institution. This research might also take up or explore what happened in the wake of these statements, how *did* departments and universities engage in fighting against racism in the

wake of COVID-19? How *have* departments and universities continued to act on their stated commitments to Asian life? Second, the current sample was from the U.S. only, thus we are careful not to generalize the results to other non-U.S. samples. Finally, participants in our study fought back against racist comments on the internet, brought up the racialized incidents to their institution, and pushed the university office to release statements condemning anti-Asian racism. A further study of Asian students' activism may offer important insights, as well as implications for institutional policy and procedures.

CONCLUSION

This study explored the perceived role of academic institutions in responding to Chinese international doctoral students' experiences of double pandemics. To be clear we do not imply that all the Chinese international students have experienced racism or marginalization or want to discourage Chinese students from studying in the U.S. (Lee & Rice, 2007). Our focus is on encouraging academic institutions to be part of the solution to fight long-standing anti-Asian racism and actively work to acknowledge and take responsibility for perpetuating oppression and marginalization (Lee & Rice, 2007).

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Appendix I

Demographics

	Focus group	Current major Art / Science[1]	Gender	University	Where gained bachelor's degree	Where gained master's degree	Yeas of staying in the US	Years at doctoral training
1	attended	S	woman	1	China	US	5^+ years	3rd and above
2	attended	A	man	2	China	China	3~4 years	final year
3	attended	A	woman	1	China	US	5^+ years	3rd and above
4	attended	A	man	4	China	no master's degree	3~4 years	3rd and above
5	attended	A	woman	1	China	no master's degree	1~2 years	2nd year
6	attended	A	man	3	China	US	5^+ years	3rd and above
7	attended	S	woman	2	China	no master's degree	3~4 years	3rd and above
8	attended	A	woman	4	China	US	3~4 years	2nd year
9	no	A	woman	5	US	no master's degree	5^+ years	2nd year
10	no	A	woman	2	China	US	5^+ years	final year
11	no	S	woman	1	China	China	1~2 years	2nd year
12	no	S	man	1	China	US	5^+ years	3rd and above
13	no	A	woman	1	China	US	5^+ years	final year
14	no	S	woman	1	China	US	5^+ years	2nd year
15	no	S	woman	1	China	China	3~4 years	final year
16	no	A	woman	1	China	US	3~4 years	2nd year
17	no	A	woman	1	US	US	5^+ years	3rd and above
18	no	S	woman	1	China	elsewhere	3~4 years	3rd and above

[1] *Here, we group majors broadly into Art (this includes doctoral degrees in liberal arts and humanities, such as, Education, Social Sciences, etc.) and Science (this includes physical and natural sciences, such as Chemistry, Physics, etc.)*

Appendix II

Sample interview protocol

1) As a Chinese international student receiving doctoral training during this pandemic in the US. What are the challenges/difficulties in your life
   academically and non-academically? The key point is, what makes it a challenge to you?
2) During this pandemic, have you experienced racial discrimination (i.e., people treat you differently just because you are Chinese or Asian)?
   If yes, could you describe the experience? How did you handle it? From your perspective, how did your department or university handle it?
3) At the sociopolitical level, how may the immigration policies, travel ban, and the political climate between China and the US influence those
   Challenges you mentioned and how you handled them? From your perspective, how did your department or university handle it?

Empirical Article

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The Impact of COVID-19 Pandemic on MotherScholars: A Comparative Case Study of United States and Australian Higher Education Women Faculty Role Strain

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ABSTRACT

This study examines the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on the experiences of women faculty with children in the United States and Australia as they contend with the blended roles and responsibilities of being a mother and an academic (i.e., MotherScholars). Using interpretive comparative case study design, the researchers interviewed MotherScholars to identify common themes based on roles and responsibilities that emerged as a result of the pandemic-caused shift to remote academic demands. Three primary themes emerged: (a) accumulative burdens, (b) rationalization, and (c) gendered expectations. These themes were explored through the lens of Goode's (1960) role strain theory to examine the experiences of both groups of MotherScholars. For these MotherScholars the circumstances of the pandemic rendered obsolete many coping mechanisms previously utilized to manage role strain, which contributed to increased role strain from the conflict between the role systems for mother and scholar. While the pandemic affected everyone, this research adds insight into how cultural contexts and norms can mitigate or exacerbate challenging circumstances.

Keywords: Australia, academic, case study, MotherScholars, role strain theory, pandemic, United States

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INTRODUCTION

The sudden move to remote work as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic created a significant shift for most, if not all, academics (Marinoni et al., 2020). This shift impacted families around the world, including those in academia (McDermott, 2020). As a result of the pandemic-initiated changes, many women faculty members in higher education with children at home to care for (i.e., MotherScholars) found themselves juggling parenting and professional duties in an unprecedented time (Arntz et al., 2020; Breuning et al., 2021). The term "MotherScholars", coined by Matias (2011), identifies the blended roles and responsibilities of being a mother and an academic. While the term MotherScholars can describe any individual who identifies as an academic, in much of the literature on the topic, present study included, the 'scholar' in the term MotherScholars refers to a faculty member. Pandemic studies on the MotherScholars experience have highlighted ample instances of stress and anxiety as academic women with children experience difficulties achieving work/life balance (Armenti, 2004; Ward & Wolf-Wendel, 2004, 2012). For many MotherScholars, balancing work and family hinges on the ability to maintain predictable schedules and employ various coping mechanisms to manage their roles and responsibilities, and disruptions can cause a domino effect, affecting several aspects of a Mother Scholar's life (Sallee & Pascale, 2012; Ward & Wolf-Wendel, 2012). This study examines how MotherScholars experienced and navigated the pandemic. In particular, we consider how differing cultural contexts in the United States and Australia influenced the coping strategies employed by our female faculty participants to manage role strain caused by competing and overly demanding roles (Mother and Scholar).

LITERATURE REVIEW

The literature grounding this study is conceptually organized into two main areas, (a) studies on academic women with children and the pandemic, and (b) literature on culture and context of American institutions of higher education as compared to Australian institutions of higher education. Rounding out the literature review is a discussion of the theoretical perspectives guiding this study.

Academic Women with Children and the Pandemic

Here we review literature related to academic women with children and the pandemic that is inclusive of authors a number of countries such as the United States, Australia, Italy, Norway, and Turkey. Women in academia, globally, have been shown to be less likely to achieve permanent faculty positions and hold high ranking positions as compared to their male counterparts (Australian Government Department of Education, Skills, and Employment, 2018; Kelly, 2019; Weisshaar, 2017). In the United States, while nearly half of all faculty positions in higher education are held by women, women are largely underrepresented in higher academic ranks (National Center for Education Statistics, 2018).

Within the home, women tend to assume the responsibility of primary caregiver and often take greater responsibility for housework (Couch et al., 2022; Nakhaie, 2009). For women in the academy, the gendered division of labor in the household (e.g., childcare, housework) has been shown to contribute to gendered differences in promotion opportunities (Mason et al., 2013). Academic women with children at home are 35% less likely to have a tenure-line position compared to their male peers in the same family situation (Kelly, 2019).

Pre-pandemic, a body of research pointed out that balancing faculty job responsibilities along with family responsibilities was of major concern for women in academia (e.g., Evans & Grant, 2008; Sallee & Pascale, 2012; Ward & Wolf-Wendel, 2012). The circumstances of the pandemic the sudden pivot to remote teaching in 2020 impeded the scholarship productivity of many faculty members (Ramlo, 2021; Shillington et al., 2020), and the challenges faced by MotherScholars were exacerbated. For many MotherScholars, the pandemic changed priorities; their research agendas stagnated as they devoted more time to online teaching (Minello et al., 2021). During the pandemic, division of care remained strongly gendered and unbalanced, with women carrying significantly more of the burden (Cannito & Scavarda, 2020). Emerging literature on the topic of the pandemic and higher education consistently points to children as one of the greatest contributors to the detrimental impact of the pandemic on faculty workload and productivity (Yildirim & Eslen Ziya, 2021). Women faculty with dependent children aged 0-11 years

showed the greatest loss in time dedicated to research, up to a 40% decline in output (Myers et al., 2020). The impact of the pandemic on academic professionals precipitated a collision between the academic and parenting worlds by eliminating any distinction or separation between work and home spaces (Hicks-Roof, 2020). Taken together, the research reviewed here underscores the conclusion that MotherScholars have been disproportionately affected by the pandemic (Minello et al., 2021; Myers et al., 2020). Time limitations, a reduction in research productivity, and changes in family care responsibilities have culminated in a fear of the future for MotherScholars. What was originally thought to be the temporary circumstances of the pandemic seeped forward, and the lasting effects of delayed opportunities and time lost are evidenced in the present day, an unsettling casualty of the pandemic.

Australian versus American Academic Life

In situating the context of this research, we point out some observations regarding Australian and American perspectives. First, though the pandemic was global, the United States and Australian governments reacted to the COVID-19 pandemic with very different responses and degrees of lockdown. Although both Australia and the United States are dual-earner work cultures, we acknowledge that gender roles in relation to paid work, housework, and childcare loads played out very differently in the United States and Australia, with a lessened effect on Australian mothers (Ruppanner et al., 2021).

U.S. and Australian government COVID-19 policies had very different downstream implications. Australia immediately went into complete lockdown in March of 2020 whereas many states within the US never fully locked down. For many American MotherScholars, the indecisive and inconsistent responses to the pandemic about lockdown translated to mixed messaging and confusion over how and where (home or work) to focus time and energy (Hermann et al., 2021). In contrast, data from Australia highlighted how the immediate and complete lockdown approach and extended policies supporting work from home and returning to school had positive downstream effects on parents (Herbert et al., 2020; Perper, 2020).

In this study, we examine the ways in which Australian versus U.S. MotherScholars' pandemic experience compared. We explore how cultural context regarding support of women and emphasis on gender equity affected MotherScholars' experiences. While the pandemic affected everyone, this research adds insight into how cultural contexts and norms can mitigate or exacerbate challenging circumstances. Specifically, we explore how our participants managed role strain, and the ways in which their institutions supported (or failed to support) them during the pandemic.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

This research is guided by the theoretical perspectives of psychologist William Goode's (1960) theory of role strain. Though Goode's theory is over 40 years old, it remains relevant and has been used to understand individuals' pandemic responses (e.g., Quah, 2020). Further, role strain theory is based on basic human responses to stress (or strain) and is therefore applicable across context and culture. In essence, Goode contended that people possess many roles, that each of the roles comes with its own set of role demands, and that a person's overall role system is over-demanding. As a result, Goode theorized that people experience role strain, which prompts them to develop strategies and coping mechanisms needed to navigate situations when demands on time and resources from different roles are in conflict. Goode identified four such coping mechanisms. The first, *compartmentalization,* occurs when individuals intentionally separate the demands and responsibilities of each role, giving designated time and energy to one set of role demands at a time, for example, a faculty member who chooses to set up certain hours of the day to be dedicated to family or work only. The second, *Delegation* is another strategy in which individuals intentionally give away some of the demands of a role to another individual to attempt to alleviate role strain. For example, childcare or housekeeping may be delegated to help manage home responsibilities, or some research or teaching may be designated to a graduate assistant. A third is *elimination of role relationships.* In this third process, an individual might choose to limit exposure to another person or responsibility to cut down on the associated demands. For instance, a faculty member who is over-burdened may opt to remove themselves from a committee to free up some time for other responsibilities. *Extension* occurs when an individual expands their roles strategically to mitigate role

strain stemming from another role set. For example, consider a faculty member who assumes an administrative position. Taking on this new role may increase demands in one capacity, but also may be perceived to lessen demands on teaching or research productivity that would be present for a full-time, in-unit faculty member. We relied on Goode's theoretical perspectives to guide us in our conceptualization and interpretation of how MotherScholars in the U.S. and Australia negotiated and navigated the pandemic, a situation in which routine life was dismantled, and previously established coping strategies were no longer viable options for managing multiple competing roles.

RESEARCHER`S POSITION

As this study examines MotherScholars experiences during the pandemic comparing faculty in the U.S. and Australia, it is important that we share our positionality to the research. All three members of the research team are full-time faculty members and also mothers. Our personal experiences navigating the COVID-19 pandemic as MotherScholars on the tenure track served as the impetus for this research. Two of the three researchers previously lived in Australia, but now live in the United States, giving them familiarity with a context comparable to the U.S. with regard to family-friendly and work/life balance policies, regulations, expectations, and culture. We acknowledge that our values, beliefs, and backgrounds, and particularly our own recent experiences managing competing roles as mothers and scholars, play a role in our understanding and interpretation of our findings (Popper, 1963). However, we contend that our co-constructive approach (i.e., understanding that knowledge is co-constructed by interactions and meaning making of the participants and authors) together with measures to establish credibility and trustworthiness, help us describe as accurately as possible, how MotherScholars in differing institutions and socio-cultural contexts (the U.S. and Australia) negotiated instances of competing role demands.

RESEARCH METHOD

This qualitative inquiry utilized a comparative interpretive case study approach (Merriam, 1998). Merriam described the purpose of an interpretive case study as "to develop conceptual categories, or to illustrate, support, or challenge theoretical assumptions" (p. 197). Interpretive case study places emphasis on social constructs and the roles individuals play within their social contexts; thus, we consider interpretive case study to appropriately align our methodological perspectives and methods. We relied heavily on Goode's (1960) theoretical assumptions in our conceptualization and sense-making of our data.

Case Study Comparison Site Selection

To best understand how MotherScholars from differing socio-cultural contexts experienced and navigated the pandemic, we purposefully selected two nations for comparison that were similar in certain aspects (e.g., dual-earner work cultures, similar higher education institutional structures), but also had relevant and noticeable differences. For instance, Australia tends to have more equitable gender balance norms regarding home and family responsibilities as compared to the U.S. (Budig et al., 2016; Craig & Mullan, 2010; Sayer, et al., 2009). The U.S. and Australia have different academic promotion models. Whereas the U.S. operates on a time-bound three-level rank system, with tenure generally accompanying the second level rank of associate professor, Australian faculty have a five-level system with no time to promotion constraints. While most faculty jobs are considered permanent in Australia, tenure as it exists in the U.S. does not exist in Australia. The Australian Level A is most equivalent to the U.S. postdoctoral fellow; Level B is most similar to the American assistant professor rank, Level C the American associate professor rank, Level D the rank of full professor, and Level E a distinguished or endowed professor equivalent. Regarding the pandemic, the U.S. and Australia differed in their responses. Generally speaking, the U.S. reacted more slowly as compared to Australia, which quickly went to lockdown, despite a much smaller spread of COVID-19 cases.

Participant Selection

We utilized purposeful sampling (Patton, 2002) to identify participants for our study. After obtaining IRB permission from the authors' home institution, participants were recruited through faculty listservs that reached faculty in the U.S. and Australia. The listserv advertisement directed any interested individuals who met the criteria for the study to contact one of the study authors. The study authors then followed up with interested participants and provided them with an informed consent letter to read and sign, which included details of the study. With the informed consent signed, the authors proceeded to schedule zoom interviews with participants. Any interested individuals who met the criteria were included in the study. All participants were employed as full-time faculty members at a four-year college or university and had at least one child under the age of 18 living at home. All participants also worked at an academic institution and resided in either the U.S. or Australia. A total of 21 MotherScholars, 16 American and five Australian, participated in the study. While the number of American participants exceeded that of the Australian participants, we were encouraged that all five of our Australian participants held levels of A, B, or C, the three levels that most closely match the American ranks of assistant, associate, or full professor. Additional participant information is summarized in Table 1.

Table 1

Participant Demographics

Pseudonym	# (Ages) of Children	Promotion Status
	United States	
Demi	2 (8 yr; 1 yr)	Lecturer, non-TT
Panda	2 (7 yr; 4 yr)	Instructor, non- TT
Brennan	3 (5 yr; 5 yr; 5 yr)	Assistant Professor
Stella	2 (2 yr; 5 mo)	Assistant Professor
Avery	2 (3 yr; 1 yr)	Assistant Professor
Christine	2 (4 yr; 2 yr)	Assistant Professor
Anne	1 (9 mo)	Assistant Professor
Emory	1 (8 mo)	Assistant Professor

Annie	2 (15 yr; 10 yr)	Full Professor
Violet	2 (11 yr; 6 mo)	Associate Professor
Liz	2 (5 yr; 3 mo)	Associate Professor
Zelda	3 (8 yr; 5 yr; 13 mo)	Associate Professor
Carly	2 (2 yr; 8 mo)	Assistant Professor
Sarah	1 (3 yr)	Assistant Professor
Erin	2 (5 yr; 8 mo)	Associate Professor
Jessica	1 (18 mo)	Research Associate Professor
	Australia	
Millie	1 (3 mo)	Lecturer (B)
Amy	2 (14 yr; 12 yr)	Senior Lecturer (C)
Petunia	4 (12 yr; 10 yr; 7 yr; 5 yr)	Senior Lecturer (C)
Janette	2 (9 yr; 4 mo)	Senior Lecturer (C)
Elizabeth	3 (13 yr; 11 yr; 5 yr)	Associate Professor (D)

Data Collection

Data were collected via semi-structured one-on-one, Zoom video interviews as well as through document analysis. Upon agreeing to be part of the study, participants were directed to sign up for a Zoom interview with one of three members of the research team. Interviews lasted between 30 minutes and an hour and were conducted during the spring of 2021. All Zoom interviews were audio recorded and later transcribed. Immediately following each interview, the researchers typed reflective field notes to use in interpretation of data.

The interview protocol was developed by the researchers and was heavily guided by Goode's role strain theory. The purpose of the protocol was to allow the researchers to better understand the experiences of American as compared to Australian MotherScholars during the pandemic; specifically, how they managed instances of dual and conflicting roles as both mothers and professors, and how their institutions supported (or failed to support) them. For instance, one question asked, "How has the COVID-19 pandemic influenced your career as a faculty member?", and a second asked, "How would you describe the departmental climate with respect to parenthood and children during COVID-19?"

Though much of our data were collected through Zoom interviews, the research team also searched documents in the form of family-related policies at participants' institutions and federal labor related policies and regulations for both the U.S. and Australia. Policies were cross referenced with participants' knowledge of said policies, and their perceptions regarding the acceptability of taking advantage of policies within their departments and universities.

Data Analysis

Data were analyzed in a two-step process. First, utilizing the constant comparative method of Glaser and Strauss (1967), we generated open codes by reading through and line-item coding transcripts. For example, in the open coding phase, we would pull out words such as "guilt" or "fortunate" or "stress". Second, we constructed these codes into related concepts and ideas. For instance, the words "stress" and "guilt" could be associated as they both related to feelings experienced by MotherScholars. Finally, the related concepts were collapsed into overarching themes that encompassed the nature of the content regarding the MotherScholar's experience of the pandemic. This initial analysis was blinded, that is, as we engaged in the comparative process, we were not able to identify the participant's country, unless they shared the information within the content of their interview.

During the second phase of data analysis, we sorted the participants into the U.S. and the Australian groups. Then we utilized a cross-case comparative analysis approach (Merriam, 1998) using our theoretical framework, Goode's role strain theory, to understand how American as compared to Australian MotherScholars made meaning of their experiences. This approach allowed us to understand not only the general MotherScholars` experience of the pandemic, but also the role that socio-culture and context play in shaping how our participants navigated their experience.

Trustworthiness

Several strategies were used to enhance trustworthiness. First, having three researchers allowed us to utilize investigator triangulation (Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Poth & Creswell, 2018). Investigator triangulation allows different perspectives on the same data, the understandings of which will ideally converge. We acknowledge that we brought our personal understanding to the interpretation of the data, and thus having three researchers, from the same university but from three different disciplines, with differing perspectives influenced time living and working in the two comparison nations, allowed us to challenge each other and argue out our differences in instances where we took different meanings from the data. Furthermore, as suggested by Lincoln and Guba, cross-comparison of multiple sources of data allowed for method triangulation. We also engaged in peer debriefing where we utilized the expertise of our peers in reviewing our themes, comparisons, and overall findings to confirm that they were appropriately reflective of our data. Taken together, we contend that these approaches lend to the credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability of our findings (Poth & Creswell, 2018).

RESULTS

Here we present the major findings from this paper. This section is organized into two sections. First, we describe the themes that emerged from the collective samples of participants, both American and Australian. Second, we present the results of the comparative analysis of American (U.S.) and Australian (AUS) MotherScholars. Finally, we organize our discussion by reflecting on these findings through the perspectives provided by Goode's role strain theory, before turning to implications of the research and conclusions.

General Themes

Three overarching themes emerged from the constant comparative analysis of our participant's narratives. The three themes, accumulative burdens, rationalization, and gendered expectations are explored in more detail here.

Accumulative Burdens

The first theme of this research, accumulative burdens, refers to the way the women in our study described how the pandemic affected their experience of being both a mother and a scholar. Several women articulated the ways in which the pandemic exponentially increased the demands of both their work and home lives. Annie (U.S.) shared,

> as a faculty member, [the pandemic] has brought an enormous amount of extra stress...with the pandemic, [my work] list grew and so now on top of the traditional responsibilities, just even at work, there was responsibilities for learning new technology, finding alternate ways to collect data on projects...making sure our students were feeling safe and secure and mentally okay, new policies, new procedures, there was a lot of stress that was added…[but] the university administration never addressed the fact that these were accumulative burdens, right?.

Carly (U.S.) added that the pandemic facilitated a change in her teaching approaches that increased the amount of work for preparation of her classes, [prior to the pandemic] "everything's in person...I didn't do any online classes. This was the first time I've had to—I basically had to spend the last couple of months just transitioning my class to an online class." Beyond the added stress of the extra work burdens resulting from the pandemic, several of our participants talked about how the pandemic affected their abilities to separate work and home life, and that the constant role-switching from mother to scholar was exhausting and mentally draining. Sarah (U.S.) explained this:

> [prior to the pandemic] I think the worlds were isolated. I get to drive to work and I get my time to just be like, "all right, mom's gone. I get to be a professional, I get my classes, I got my students, I have my research, this is what I am doing". I get to live my day that way and then I get to drive home to say "all right, I got laundry to do. I know [partner] is cooking dinner tonight, I'm going to put [daughter] to bed and I'm going to cut her toenails tomorrow". I had that division, the brain switching I think for me was just the most exhausting and carrying the stressors of both into the other world was just—it's not like they're related, but you just carry it with you.

Compounding the exhaustion of constant role switching, our participants expressed feeling inadequate in both their home and work lives, and a subsequent guilt over not being able to devote the appropriate time and attention to both. When asked about what some of the biggest challenges were for her during the pandemic, Elizabeth (AUS) shared,

> I guess that feeling of being in two places at once. When the kids are doing an activity...I have probably got five minutes to do something. You never really quite settle into having the time and space to properly use your brain for critical thinking that you might need when you're say, working on a grant, working on a paper. Then someone would just come in and interrupt you. It's almost like trying to wear two hats at once. I found it very mentally draining. When you keep doing work, you're thinking about the kids and when you're with the kids, you're thinking about work.

Amy (AUS) expanded on this idea and the associated guilt she felt in attempting to juggle her roles as a mother and scholar. "It's always that guilt, either you're guilty because you're not working and you're not getting where you want to be, or you're feeling guilty because you're not spending time with the kids". Taken together, these women expressed how the pandemic circumstances facilitated the need to switch between the roles of mother and professor more frequently than their pre-pandemic lives required. The abrupt switching led to feelings of extra stress and guilt over not having enough time to devote to one or the other role.

Rationalization

The second theme of this research speaks to how the women in our study rationalized, or made sense of, their circumstances. We noted many instances where our participants described themselves as "fortunate" or "lucky" in some way in comparison to others, conceivably as a way to rationalize their

reflections on their experiences as a mother scholar during the pandemic. For instance, Annie (US) described herself as:

> fortunate that my children are older. ...I don't have to entertain a toddler or feed a newborn like some other faculty mothers are having to do, but at the same time, last March when schools closed, both children were home and both children needed something to do and so my workload increased at my faculty role, but also in my mothering role my workload increased astronomically.

Elizabeth (AUS) reflected on her research faculty position in comparison to her faculty colleagues with teaching responsibilities:

> I'm very lucky that I have a full-time research role...I'm lucky in that regard to my role was much more flexible than what other mums would have typically had I imagine...I didn't have to get everything online really quickly like what a lot of other academics had to do.

When asked about support systems, several participants pointed to their partners as huge sources of support, but often did so in a way that attributed the support to fortune or luck. As Sarah (US) shared,

> Oh, my husband, not even a question, yes. Again, I am super fortunate to have him. I'm sure other moms have maybe said this, too, but I honestly feel he's excited about being a parent. He puts her to bed half the time. He cooks meals half the time. He does laundry. He does it all...my partner, he's super cool.

Carly (U.S.) spoke about feeling lucky that her partner had a flexible schedule:

> I'm also lucky because my husband is pretty flexible. He's only in a part-time job…[and] they let him work from home a lot. He's very flexible in his schedule. I'd say that's been helpful.

Beyond attributing good support to luck or fortune, several participants rationalized their experience by initially presenting the good parts of their pandemic experience, before returning to confront parts of the experience that were more stressful. For instance, Petunia (AUS) shared:

> Just trying to remember. It's almost like I wiped it from my brain. Clearly, [the pandemic experience] was far more traumatic than I've just made it out [to be], it sounds like this idyllic life I was living. It was scrambles to get stuff done...the days became blurred.

Another way our participants made sense of their circumstances was expressed through their perceptions of how they themselves were progressing in their work as compared to others who did not have children. Many of our participants shared that the pandemic caused a slowdown in their productivity, though they perceived that the pandemic allowed others without children to accelerate their productivity. As Violet (U.S.) shared, "I still have a lot that I said I would do for previous projects and grants that is happening extremely slowly". Petunia (AUS) explained how the pandemic situation slowed her work, "I tried to work through [having children at home] but it just didn't work...it was fairly nightmarish really, but I stripped back work to the absolute bare minimum of what I need to do, which was my front-facing teaching". Annie (US) shared similar sentiments,

> If I didn't have kids, I really think my research output would have been strong...my output was good, not as good as the year before, but it was still considered good. But yeah, if I didn't have kids, I think it would have been a banner year...I have colleagues in my department who don't have children [win big, time-consuming awards] and I'm like, "how can you even [do] that during a pandemic?" But all they had was work, right?

Sarah (U.S.) also talked about her perception of the productivity of her colleagues without children as compared to her own.

> What [frustrated] me… so much, is that all of my colleagues who don't have kids, and I'm also going to call up some of my male colleagues who happen to fall into that like "I'm a man and I have a job, so I get to do whatever [I want]", they would be posting on social media…'I've been learning all these new skills, or whatever. I'm like, "who has time for this?!" What do they do? They teach class, and then they've got nothing to do. There's nobody at home, they've got no responsibilities.

> When faced with altered patterns of life that were prompted by the pandemic, the women in our study found various ways to rationalize their circumstances, their behaviors, and their decisions regarding priorities and productivity.

Gendered Expectations

The third theme of this research that emerged from our work centered around gendered expectations. Many of the participants talked about the cultures in their departments with respect to children and parenting as outrightly negative. Others initially shared that they had positive feelings about their department cultures, though upon further reflection indicated that they rarely, if ever, mentioned their children among departmental colleagues. Furthermore, several indicated that there were obvious gendered expectations for mothers vs. fathers in the department. When asked to describe her departmental climate with respect to children and family Anne (U.S.) responded,

> Overall, it's okay, it's good...but, I've never been asked explicitly about my parenting or my children, which is kind of interesting. I've never been asked during the pandemic if my kids are at home or at school. I've never been asked what I need, I've also never been told "hey, you have to be here at a certain time" or you know "why aren't you in the office?"

Annie (U.S.) also reflected on the gendered expectations of mothers and fathers in her department:

> If a father has to miss a meeting or leaves work or something to, let's say, attend a school event, they are father of the year. They are amazingly committed to their children and isn't it great how they balance everything...if a mother has to miss a meeting or leave work early for a school event or something children related, it's "are we sure she's committed to her job? Are we sure she can do both of them?" So instead of being praised and respected for dual roles, it's all of a sudden casting doubt on commitment for the mother.

Sarah's (U.S.) experiences were similar to those Annie described. Sarah shared that her department was "pretty good when it comes to family and kids" but then added, "not that we talk about it very often, but it's pretty comfortable". When asked about gendered expectations for mothers and fathers, she responded,

> Most definitely, not even a question...I've definitely noticed that my colleagues have been like, "oh I'm taking care of my kid so I can't make that meeting". I would be embarrassed to say that...I feel like if I said that there would be the perception of, "why is your kid getting in the way"?

For women faculty in largely male-dominated disciplines, the experience of being a MotherScholar during the pandemic was difficult. Petunia (AUS) shared that her department, both pre-pandemic and post pandemic, was very negative with regard to children and family. In Petunia's words,

> Overall, very negative. Like I said, I'm predominantly in a male-dominated school. Very few with young children. I think my head has a young child, but he's a father and he's not the primary caregiver at all. Any people that have had children, we leave for school pick up and we continue work at home after school and that's all looked down upon. It's just an awful environment...my school particularly is not a pleasant school to be in as a female and it's certainly not a pleasant school to be a female with children.

These participants' words reflect an overarching theme regarding how women in the academy perceive a lack of social acceptability regarding acknowledgement of their roles as mothers in their work settings. While the pandemic altered their opportunity to compartmentalize and separate these roles, they did not necessarily perceive a change with regard to the social acceptability of acknowledgment of family roles and responsibilities.

Comparative Analysis Findings

In this section we present the findings from the comparison of the American (U.S.) and Australian (AUS) MotherScholar experiences, after which we return to our theoretical framework to help us unpack and interpret our findings.

The three themes, (1) accumulative burdens, (2) rationalization, and (3) gendered expectations, emerged for our MotherScholars in the U.S. and Australia. Because we were purposeful in our selection of comparison nations to include the U.S. as an example of a nation with socio-cultural norms that are less family-friendly, and Australia as a nation where socio-cultural norms are more family-friendly, we expected to see overt and distinct differences in the experiences of MotherScholars during the pandemic. Australian higher education institutions incorporate frameworks from organizations like Athena SWAN (Scientific Women's Academic Network), that encourages and promotes gender equity in higher education. Australia has more extensive paid parental leave compared to the U.S., a time when mothers are able to dedicate more time to childcare and less on paid work (Chzhen et al., 2019; Craig & Mullan, 2010). In Australia, organizations such as Parents at Work dedicated to creating family-friendly workplaces have administrative and government support. As infants and toddlers grow, Australia's government spends over sixteen times as much money as the U.S. government on early childhood care (Chzhen et al., 2019; Craig & Mullan, 2010; Miller, 2021).

Although the experiences between the two groups of MotherScholars were more similar than we might have anticipated, still we noted some differences that speak to how societal norms in the U.S. and Australia influenced the pandemic MotherScholar experience. One of these ways was the participants' understanding of what we meant when we asked about family-friendly policies. Several of our US MotherScholar participants asked for examples or needed clarification on what we meant by family-friendly policies, whereas the Australian MotherScholars were more able to easily elaborate on family-friendly policies that either existed, or that they wished existed, on their campus. Overall, and as expected, the policies and practices available at the Australian universities were far more robust than were offered to our American participants. For instance, Elizabeth (Australian) shared that her institution was awarded, by Athena SWAN, a quality assessment framework that recognizes institutions of higher education that advance gender equality. Consequently, Elizabeth also reported her department to be "very inclusive", her department head (a woman) sending messages such as "we understand the pressure on you. We understand your family situation, caring responsibilities. Thank you very much for the extra work." This attitude was in stark contrast to the messages received by our American MotherScholars, even those who thought their departments were supportive during the pandemic. For instance, Annie (U.S.), who shared the department was "very supportive," went on to describe her perception of her department's view of mothers and fathers where mothers "instead of being praised and respected for dual roles, it's all of the sudden casting doubt on the commitment of the mother, and I have experienced that my whole career." She also mentioned, with regard to the pandemic, that her department was "a focus on business as usual and almost had blinders on to the pandemic a certain amount…emails about [expectations that] everyone can be in the office more." While not all of our Australian participants (particularly those who were in male-dominated departments) felt comfortable using available policies, their awareness of the policies' existence, particularly as compared to the American participants' lack of awareness, was noteworthy. This observation underscores the notion that perceptions matter and is consistent with previous research on faculty satisfaction and intention to leave where the perception of available family-friendly policies and support of department chair were key elements in facilitating supportive and welcoming climates for women faculty in male-dominated STEM disciplines (Pascale, 2018; Xu, 2008).

Also of interest was that though both U.S. and Australian MotherScholars talked about the ways in which they stripped down and slowed down their work responsibilities during the pandemic to allow them to better manage their competing demands, our Australian participants were more inclined to be comfortable with that slowdown, whereas our U.S. participants expressed feeling more pressure to keep up with their colleagues in terms of research productivity. Perhaps this is in part due to the differing academic advancement structures in the U.S. and Australia. Whereas in the U.S. system advancement occurs only three times and is highly structured, particularly with regard to promotion from assistant professor to associate professor, the Australian system includes five levels with no mandated time frames between promotions. It is plausible that the contextual system contributed to the differing attitudes towards pandemic-caused slowdowns in research productivity.

DISCUSSION

Role Strain and the Pandemic MotherScholar Experience

In our interpretation of these findings, we return to Goode's (1960) role strain theory to allow us to make meaning of our participants' words. The pandemic caused significant role strain for our participants, much of this stemming from the struggle to handle the simultaneous and competing role demands from their roles as both mothers and scholars. Goode described four strategies employed by individuals to manage role strain: compartmentalization, delegation, elimination of role relationships, and extension. Here we examine how our participants engaged these strategies, or in some instances how the unprecedented circumstances posed by the pandemic limited our participants' ability to utilize role strain coping mechanisms.

Compartmentalization

Compartmentalization occurs as individuals set intentional boundaries for demands from each role set, allowing for dedicated time and energy to attend to each role's demands. Through the perspectives of our MotherScholars, one of the more exhausting by-products of the pandemic circumstance was the inability to successfully compartmentalize. Many of our participants talked about role switching, or brain switching, and the inability to spend designated and uninterrupted time on work during the pandemic. Australian mothers who utilized parental leave policies felt less of a need to compartmentalize.

Delegation

Delegation is another strategy to manage role strain. Individuals who delegate give away some of their responsibilities to another qualified individual. Our participants routinely cited their partners as support systems and expanded on the ways in which some of the work of childcare was delegated. On the other hand, they also confirmed instances where some of their pre-pandemic delegate supports were not available during the pandemic. These examples included childcare or housekeeping services on the home front, and support from graduate students, teaching assistants, or other faculty members for their faculty demands.

Elimination of Role Relationships

With this strategy Goode described how individuals remove or distance themselves from role relationships that are deemed to be overwhelming. We observed this strategy play out as participants noted the ways in which the pandemic prompted faculty to tackle essential tasks only. From a role strain perspective, elimination of role relationships was the most successfully employed of the strategies described, though this coping mechanism resulted in a loss of productivity for our MotherScholars.

Extension

Extension refers to the strategy of assuming a new role in an effort to alleviate strain caused by demands from another role in a socially acceptable manner. In the pandemic circumstance, despite the immense role strain experienced by our participants, extension was not a viable strategy as there was neither opportunity to extend to add new roles, nor would adding additional roles during pandemic time translate to reduced role demands as either a mother or scholar.

IMPLICATIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

From the present study we draw several implications lending insight into how to better support MotherScholars. First (?) From a role strain theory perspective, it is recommended that institutions of higher education consider the ways in which they may reduce role strain for faculty mothers. This includes being intentional about supporting role strain strategies. Higher education leaders might consider checking local school calendars for days off of school in the setting of important meeting dates. Further,

higher education leaders might try to schedule important meetings to avoid typical school drop off or pick up times. Shifting the culture to be more family friendly may be more likely if women, and especially women with children, are in leadership positions as women leaders with children was noted and pointed out as having an impact on facilitating family-friendly academic cultures.

The women we talked with viewed themselves as high achievers who contributed much to the success of their respective departments. They recognized and stepped up to the challenge to perform but felt it important to be given the flexibility and autonomy to manage their work and home life balance on their terms. To that end, it is recommended that higher education administrations consider ways to continue to allow for hybrid and online learning modalities for teaching, and flexible work from home options. Timing of important meetings and networking events should also be considered, avoiding early morning and late afternoons to better accommodate scholars with families. This research points directly to the importance of implementing family-friendly policies like these in institutions of higher education. Universities might also consider how to de-stigmatize the reality of being a MotherScholar. For example, positive acknowledgment and normalization of mention of faculties' lives outside of work are necessary to facilitate a shift in departmental cultures that are hostile towards MotherScholars.

Third, there was a distinct difference between the U.S. and Australian mothers when discussing family-friendly policies, and this relates to the stark difference in top-down policies issued by the government such as paid maternity and/or paternity leave. Such policies and practices serve as an outward-facing symbol that the university values gender equity, which translates to increased feelings of institutional support for MotherScholars.

Finally, on a systemic level, universities might re-examine their promotion models. When comparing MotherScholars from the two nations, a system that adopts key features of the Australian model, with more levels and less emphasis on rigid time frames, may be more conducive to supporting MotherScholars and facilitating their success.

CONCLUSION

In this study we explore the pandemic experience of MotherScholars in the U.S. and in Australia through the theoretical lens provided by Goode's (1960) role strain theory. Our findings suggest that the circumstances of the pandemic rendered obsolete many coping mechanisms MotherScholars previously utilized to manage role strain, which contributed to increased role strain between the role systems for mother and scholar. This study describes how the COVID-19 pandemic affected MotherScholars and the strategies they utilized to manage the strain caused by the excessive demands of two competing role systems, mother and scholar. We suggest that the stress caused by the pandemic emanated from the lack of coping strategies available to our participants pre-pandemic. We offer several recommendations for higher education institutions, including ways that higher education leaders might use the findings from this study and role strain theory perspectives to intentionally design practice and policy to better support MotherScholars globally.

Beyond this research on MotherScholars, future research might consider how academic fathers or graduate student parents experienced the pandemic. In the changed landscape of post-pandemic academia, the future of higher education relies on the institutions' ability to pivot in a way that is supportive of the new pandemic-altered realities of students and faculty alike.

Closing this research, we urge university administrators to consider this quote by Hollis (2020):

> Hear this: In the rush to return to normal, use this time to consider
> which parts of normal are worth rushing back to. If things go back
> exactly as they were, we will have missed the opportunity to take the
> good from this bad.

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Exploring Scholarly Productivity, Supports, and Challenges of Multinational Women Graduate Students During a Global Pandemic

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ABSTRACT

The onset of the COVID-19 pandemic led to shifts in higher education globally. This study reports the tensions multinational women graduate students experienced due to the change in delivery methods caused by the pandemic. Additionally, they examined how the students felt about their changing roles and lived experiences. This study highlights areas that institutions should address along with the type and level of support provided to their graduate student population. The authors recommend that institutions focus on providing equitable resources for graduate students, help to develop a support network, both in-person and online, provide resources to maintain a healthy work-life balance, and provide outlets to reduce the stress involved in graduate study.

Keywords: academic support, COVID-19, dissertation, doctoral students, graduate students, higher education, pandemic research, women academics

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INTRODUCTION

In March 2020, higher education institutions shifted face-to-face instruction to online and remote delivery due to the COVID-19 pandemic. As a result, faculty and students experienced multiple disruptions from their routines and had to adapt to the "new normal" of the pandemic (d'Orville, 2020; Rapanta et al., 2021). This shift exposed some of the nuances of the graduate student and faculty mentor experiences that were not apparent when classes were face-to-face. These distinctions include graduate students' varying roles and associated institutional demands, relative power, access to resources, and the

discrepancy in institutional and personal support between faculty and graduate students serving the university in official roles (Gammel & Rutstein-Riley, 2016; Nyquist et al., 1999).

With the increasing focus on engaging students and facilitating effective learning via new modes of delivery, the struggles of graduate students, assistants, and others employed in supplemental faculty/staff roles were overlooked, making them vulnerable (Jenei et al., 2020; Wang et al., 2020). While those serving in these roles were often granted some of the same resources as full-time employees, they are generally not considered when it comes to providing a full range of needed resources, from equipment and supplies to mentoring and general support.

Perhaps due partly to the lack of support, graduate and professional students expressed that the pandemic has impaired their ability to complete their degrees on time, according to the Center for Studies in Higher Education (Chirikov et al., 2020). The expected delays ranged from adding one term to their academics (24%) to uncertainty if or how much of a delay would be needed (34%). In sharing the reasons for the expected delay in completion, students reported being distracted (52%), barriers in conducting research (43%), and barriers for presenting research and networking (35%).

This study aimed to explore multinational women graduate students' lived experiences using a qualitative research design that enabled sharing the participants' perspectives and creating meaning from the collected data (Merriam, 2009). Multinational means from many nations and involving many people (Merriam-Webster, n.d.). It is a polycentric term, whereas international is ethnocentric. The term multinational is inclusive as research on domestic and international always tends to create an in-group vs. out-group (us vs. them) dichotomy. In this time of division, we see it more prudent and beneficial for our and our readers' well-being to use terminology that connects us.

Descriptive phenomenology was used to explore how multinational women graduate students described their academic experiences since the onset of the pandemic. The researchers specifically examined how these students described their experience of working and learning in the time of the pandemic and what kind of support, if any; they received from institutions of higher education and other entities.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Graduate Students' Experiences with Expectations in the Academy

The uncertainty experienced during the pandemic had significant and widespread negative consequences for students. In a comprehensive survey of graduate students from public institutions across the United States, Oglivie et al. (2020) found that the pandemic created critical challenges for participants. A third of the respondents reported mental health issues, a decrease in economic security with increases in food and housing insecurity for a quarter of the respondents, and disruptions in childcare for the 18% of parents in that group. Mental health challenges correlate to an even higher degree (Wang et al., 2020). In their study of 2031 participants from Texas A&M University, 48.14% scored in the range of moderate-to-severe depression, 38.48% had moderate-to-severe anxiety, and 18.04% had suicidal thoughts. For an overwhelming majority of participants (71.26%), their stress/anxiety had increased during the pandemic. More than half of them indicated that they could not cope with the stress related to their current situation.

Moreover, students receive graduate teaching or research assistantships intended to help them support themselves as they study, learn university expectations, and establish a teaching-mentoring opportunity. Yet, as Malveaux (2004) points out, graduate assistants in American universities have the lowest status, often teaching multiple courses with heavy grading loads and little pay. While students in the Ogilvie et al. (2020) study felt supported by their faculty, many described feeling unsupported by university administration, specifically those in graduate assistant roles. Of the graduate students interviewed, only 11% said they felt "very supported" by the university administration, while 37% responded they felt "very supported" by their faculty and advisors.

Women graduate students often find themselves having to fulfill multiple roles while pursuing graduate education. For example, a case study by Younes and Asay (1998) of eight women graduate students at an American university found that the participants struggled with several challenges. These

factors included finding a balance between being thought leaders in their professions, personal financial security, maintaining familial commitments, and dealing with resentment from others regarding their academic pursuits. Ultimately, the women felt torn between their personal and professional lives.

Negotiating these roles may even be more challenging for international students. Le et al. (2016) found that while international women graduate students from several countries had to negotiate the same roles as other women graduate students while studying in the United States; they also had other challenges to overcome, including language barriers and cultural differences. However, those interviewed found the experience as international graduate students to be valuable enough to persist.

In addition to the cultural struggles, international and domestic women in academia in the United States feel isolated and more excluded than their male counterparts (Wiest, 1999), and international women graduate students even more so (Le, 2016). Collectively, women graduate students often report feeling overlooked for opportunities to engage with senior faculty in discussions, receiving less critical feedback, and exclusion from research co-authoring opportunities (Weist, 1999). Additionally, they express concerns regarding safety, finances, representation, and mental wellness.

The struggles to balance life and the academy persist throughout graduate education. For example, Nyquist et al. (1999) found doctoral students in Research I institutions and master's students in comprehensive institutions in the United States often struggled with learning and understanding the nuances of life in the academy. The study further concluded that graduate students found explicit messages from the university regarding expectations for excellence in teaching to contrast with the implicit messages that privilege research productivity in tenure decisions. These mixed messages led graduate students to struggle with finding a balance that would enable them to succeed. Thus, graduate students reported that they "s[aw] themselves as alone, facing down the odds and slaying the dragons along their path by themselves" (p. 23). With this bleak outlook on the progression from graduate students to faculty, many students leave their degree program and the academy. Analysis of data from the Ph.D. Completion Project found that the completion rate ten years after students begin their doctoral program in the United States is 56.6% (Sowell et al., 2008). More currently, Ogilvie et al. (2020) found that more women (35%) than men (27%) reported having to extend time in their program of study as a result of complications from the pandemic. The need for additional time in an academic program makes mentoring relationships essential to seeing students complete their degrees and transition to professional fields. Thus, the struggles women face in academia across the globe can make academic pursuits difficult on many levels, which may be made more challenging during a global pandemic when various connections to support groups may be less readily available.

Mentoring Relationships

The advisor-advisee relationship may be vital to some national and international graduate students' success in completing their education in the United States (Dodson et al., 2006) and in China (Liu et al., 2019). Some students find their advisors very close and supportive, while others find them distant and unapproachable (Dodson et al., 2006). Several studies have shown that mentoring guides students through university, department, and unspoken expectations (Brown, 1985; Kogler-Hill et al., 1989). Furthermore, these mentoring relationships are personal and reciprocal, especially for indigenous students (Chew & Nicholas, 2021). In China, mentoring programs often have a structure and focus that helps guide a student through different aspects of their graduate education (Liu et al., 2019)

Students entering these mentoring relationships often bring a variety of concerns, interests, and skill levels, while faculty has their own set of expectations. In some cases, there is a disconnect between faculty and student expectations. For example, Dodson et al. (2006) found that in American universities, master's students were excited about the possibilities of graduate school but were concerned about living up to expectations. Similarly, the Ph.D. students were concerned about being overwhelmed and struggled with their role relating to the mentor. The mentors, however, focused on following university and scientific procedures while helping the student become independent for the future. Nevertheless, both student groups expressed concern regarding their time management abilities, writing abilities, workload, and realizing overall program and faculty mentor expectations.

Faculty actively involved in mentoring graduate students strive to provide the right mix of motivation, feedback, and support for the students they are mentoring. Yet, as Gammel and Rutstein-Riley (2016) point out, the act of mentoring often falls into a relationship, is a power imbalance which can lead to women graduate students being marginalized. In their analysis of six mentoring relationships among women, the researchers found three primary mentoring relationships: a learning relationship, a collaborative relationship, and a joining relationship which extended beyond the research goal to include connections beyond academics and the profession. This led the researchers to conclude that relational mentoring that promoted mutual growth served both the women advisors and women graduate students better than the power dynamic found in traditional mentoring.

Mentoring may be more valuable for international women graduate students. This group reported turning to professors as a vital connection due to being without their home support networks (Le et al., 2016). The women graduate students mentioned they built positive relationships with their faculty advisors via knowledge of the academic area and navigating personal challenges. Regarding specific disciplines, Cline et al. (2020) found that women graduate students in agriculture education reported perceiving they were entering a male-dominated field where they lacked representation in mentors; however, they found peer support encouraging.

For many graduate students, seeking a mentor may be a difficult task. According to Waldek et al. (1997), graduate students in the United States had trouble starting a mentoring relationship with faculty. These students reported that faculty members were distant, unapproachable, or reluctant to enter into mentoring relationships. In China, many mentors treat their students as part of their family, thus building a bond that lasts beyond the time in school (Liu et al., 2019). As technology has improved, mentoring has evolved to include digital communication along with maintaining elements of traditional face-to-face communication. However, the pandemic removed some elements of mentoring as graduate students could not just stop by a mentor's office during office hours but had to arrange for connectivity along with a quiet space.

The Impact of Distance Learning

In the wake of the pandemic, one of the major changes was the overwhelming majority of faculty and students that were suddenly teaching and learning online. Even before the pandemic, those who had experience teaching online or participating in a fully online degree program had many barriers to overcome to reach academic success. Müller (2008) explored the promises made by universities such as flexibility and access for online education in 20 online women students (nine U.S. based undergraduate and 11 graduate). The participants expressed that personal growth, peer and faculty support, and feeling challenged were significant reasons they persisted in obtaining their degree. Barriers to degree completion included existing responsibilities, lack of connection with the faculty, technology, and feeling overwhelmed.

The impact of distance learning on graduate student stress has been somewhat explored. Furlonger and Gencic (2014) found that the stressors for on-campus and distance learning graduate students from Australia, Hong Kong, and Singapore were similar. In a later study, Silinda and Brubacher (2016) reported that distance learning brought about unique stressors for graduate students enrolled in a South African program. However, the themes that were reported as stressors for students completing their graduate degree via distance learning were the same as those reported by on-campus learners: the need for more support, the need for more critical feedback, the need for guidance on how to maintain a work-life balance and the uncertainty regarding the writing process. Consequently, as beneficial as technology is, the digital divide remains and creates issues for students without ongoing access to campus-based hardware and software. It is clear that while distance learning has enabled universities to expand education, this method of content delivery also has a unique set of stressors that should be explored at the national and international levels.

RESEARCH METHOD

To explore multinational women graduate students' lived experiences, we utilized a qualitative research design which allowed us to share the participants' perspectives and create meaning from the collected data (Merriam, 2009). We used descriptive phenomenology to explore how the participants described their academic experiences since the onset of the pandemic. The purpose of phenomenological inquiry is to discover the essential meanings of participants' shared lived experiences to arrive at a deeper understanding of the studied phenomenon (van Manen, 2007). Furthermore, phenomenology ensures flexibility for analyzing how adversity influences professional development.

Descriptive phenomenology focuses on interpretation and seeks meaning from understanding the ontology of human experiences (Creswell, 2013; Moustakas, 1994). This approach to phenomenology requires us as researchers to describe the participants' lived experiences. This is done while simultaneously bracketing personal prejudices by engaging in reflective interpretation to fully understand the true essence of the participants' lived experiences (Giorgi, 2009; 2012). Descriptive phenomenological data analysis moves from the raw data to the identification of meanings to organizing these into patterns and writing the results of themes related to the focus and context of the study.

As with most other methods of qualitative analysis, findings are reported and described contextually with direct quotes from the participants (Giorgi, 2012). Three unique benefits of using descriptive analysis to better understand the lived experiences of a phenomenon are: the holistic and authentic insights received, its appropriateness when the researchers are not directly involved in the phenomenon but are observers, and its claim of scientific rigor (Giorgi, 2009). Thus, using descriptive phenomenology, meanings have been found from the multinational women graduate students' experiences; they have been described in the text and organized into themes.

Data Collection

The collective research group consists of 16 multidisciplinary, academic women from around the world, self-titled *the COVID G.A.P* [Gendered Academic Productivity], who collaborated to explore the lived experience of fellow academic women. Our collective focus is on how the pandemic disparately impacts academia, particularly gendered biases. We met virtually via Zoom and developed a questionnaire focusing on the academic experiences of women during the pandemic. As a sub-group, our cohort focused specifically on questions about the participants' academic/scholarly expectations, supports, challenges, perceptions of productivity, and self-evaluations about graduate students.

All our participants were recruited from the I Should Be Writing (ISBW) Facebook group after receiving approval from the group administrator and the Institutional Review Board (IRB) of Adler University using purposive sampling. Although there are many benefits to using purposive sampling, one of the main limitations is that the data may not be representative of larger groups. We recruited from this pool for several reasons. First, the members of the group and the researchers have shared identities as academic women with the common goal of scholarly productivity. Secondly, this group hosts global, academic women at varying levels of their educational attainment, which made it ideal for participant recruitment. Lastly, this group was the space where our research team coalesced. We used a qualitative, eight-item open-ended survey to address the following research questions:

1. How do multinational women graduate students describe their experienced academic support in light of the COVID-19 pandemic?
    a. Do multinational women graduate students who are also employed in roles such as professors, adjuncts, lecturers, instructors, teaching/research assistants, and staff perceive they received more institutional level support than graduate students only?

The ISBW Facebook group is dedicated to helping women, and non-binary academics find support in their academic writing journey. Although communication in the group is primarily conducted in English, the group members are multinational and ethnically diverse. Participants are already confirmed to be committed to scholarly writing and identify as a woman or non-binary based on the membership guidelines for ISBW.

A message was sent to the group's Facebook administrator requesting permission to recruit. The message described the purpose and the significance of the study, the criteria for participants, and the participants' expectations. The questionnaire was delivered via Qualtrics, and all participants completed an informed consent immediately before starting the survey. No compensation was provided for participation. Furthermore, the participants' self-selected pseudonyms for anonymity and they are used throughout the remainder of the manuscript.

Participants

Our target population was women who were members of the ISBW Facebook group that further identified as graduate students during the onset of the pandemic. The ISBW membership criteria matches participant criteria for participation in this study.

The data from this study comes from 32 multinational women graduate students. These participants were selected because they responded that they were currently in a graduate program working towards degree completion. With this being a global group, we had quite a diverse sample, with 44% of our participants coming from the United States and 56% from Australia, Bulgaria, Canada, France, Norway, Scotland, South Africa, and the UK. The participants' composite demographic information is presented in Table 1. In addition, Table 2 shows a breakdown of the participants' countries of residence and their highest degree attained at the time of the study. This demographic information helps to understand the participants subjectively and contextually in the cross-cultural analysis process. Finally, the participants reported areas of study are presented in Figure 1.

Table 1

Participants Demographic Information

Demographic	Participants Data
N=	32
Ages:	24-45
Ethnicities:	26 White; 6 BIPOC (Black, Indigenous, and Persons of Color)
Gender Identity:	Female/Women
Highest Degree (Completed):	5 Bachelor's Degrees; 27 Master's Degrees **These degrees are at different levels depending on the participant's country of residence. All of the participants were graduate students working on Master's Thesis or Doctoral degrees at the time of the study.*
Relationship Status:	9 Single; 21 Partnered; 2 Other
Employee Status:	13 Full-Time; 7 Part-Time; 12 Other/Non-Disclosed
Student Status:	18 Full-Time; 14 Part-Time

Table 2

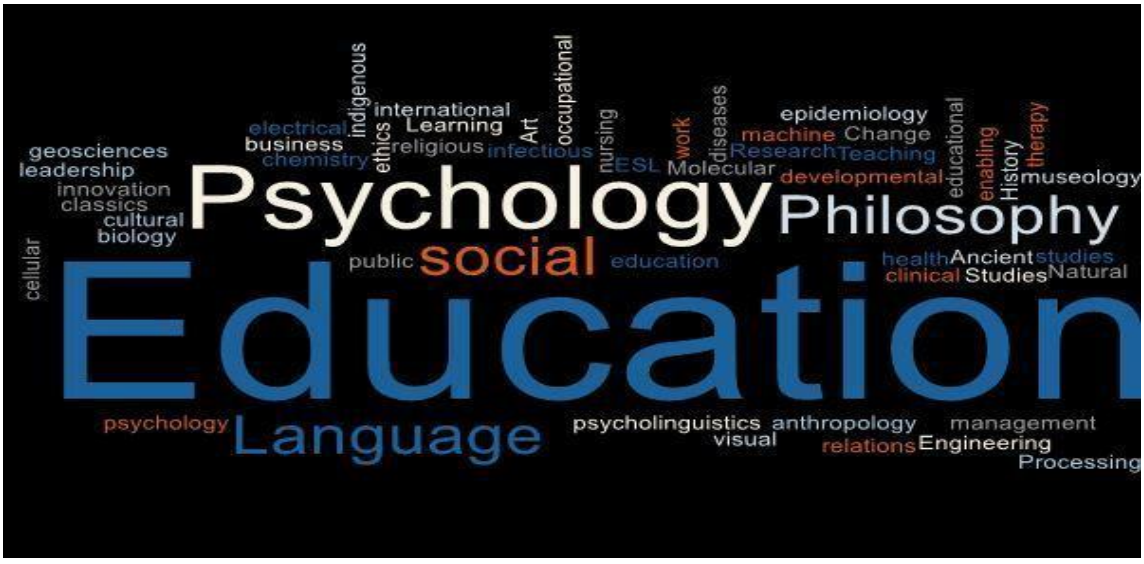
Participants Country of Residence and Highest Level of Education

Participant	Country of Residence	Highest Level of Education Completed (at time of the study)
Amy	Australia	Honours
Kaz	Australia	Master's Degree
Shon	Australia	Bachelor (Hons)
Evie	Australia	Master's Degree
TSVM	Bulgaria	Master's Degree
ToffeeMaky	Canada	Master's Degree
Gabi Mandl	Canada	BSC Chemistry
Claire	Canada	Master's Degree
Schmeadow	Canada	Master's Degree
Bextrad	France	Master's Degree
Garja	Norway	Master's Degree
Regina Phalange	Norway	Master's Degree
Dog-Mum	Scotland	Master's Degree
Abe	South Africa	Master's Degree
Dee	South Africa	Master's Degree
Anna	UK	Master's Degree
KS	UK	Master's Degree
Tired Brit	UK	Master's Degree
Martina	United States	Master's Degree
Nell	United States	Master's Degree
M	United States	Master's Degree

STG	United States	Master's Degree
Beckella	United States	Master's Degree
Nightskey	United States	Master's Degree
Suze	United States	Master's Degree
Andrea	United States	Bachelor's Degree
Peyton	United States	Master's Degree
Florence	United States	Master's Degree
Frosty	United States	Master's Degree/EDS
Catherine McCatty	United States	Bachelor's Degree
Darwino	United States	Master's Degree
Amyrlin	United States	Master's Degree

Figure 1

Word Cloud of participants areas of study



Data Analysis

Our team aggregated the raw data from Qualtrics to remove any potentially personally identifying information. Analysis of the responses included line-by-line coding and finding significant themes using descriptive phenomenology processes (Giorgi, 2009). To make the data analysis process easier and more efficient, we used Dedoose qualitative analysis software (https://www.dedoose.com) to code the responses. Dedoose was used to help find common statements and quotations, create codes, and find

emerging themes. We then wrote a description of what the participants in the study experienced as multinational women graduate students evaluating their scholarly productivity, supports, and challenges during a global pandemic. Lastly, adhering to phenomenological research approach traditions, we wrote a structural description of how the experience happened and a composite description of the essence of the experience.

To demonstrate trustworthiness (Creswell, 2013) and dependability (Lincoln & Guba, 1985) in the present study, our research team employed three methods of verification: (a) peer review, (b) bracketing/bridling, and (c) considered alternative/rival explanations. First, the non-analyzing members of our research team acted as peer reviewers for debriefing to help with understanding and interpretation of the study and to help the readers better resonate with the findings. Secondly, bracketing/bridling was used throughout the study, clarifying researcher bias and creating transparency, which resonates well with the readers. Lastly, we were sure to consider and discuss negative or discrepant material opposing the themes to further increase the findings' authenticity.

Researcher Positionality

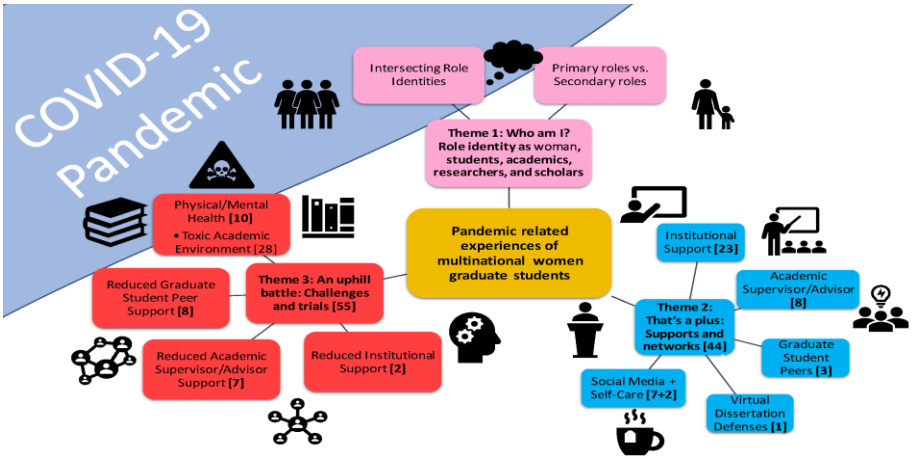
The current researchers all identify as women who hold doctoral degrees. Two researchers identify as Caucasian, and one identifies as a Black woman. All three of the researchers are citizens of the United States. While our fields of study are diverse, we elected to study women graduate students due to seeing a need to explore the lived experiences of women graduate students and help foster an environment where future women graduate students can and will be better prepared for entering the academy than we were. We acknowledge and appreciate the work done by women academics who have come before us and, in some cases, served as mentors for us on our academic journeys. Throughout data analysis, the researchers identified, discussed, and questioned any biases in order to maintain a neutral data analysis.

RESULTS

Three broad themes emerged from the participants' responses: (1) Who am I? Role identity as a woman, an academic, a student, and a scholar, (2) That's a plus: Supports and networks, and (3) An uphill battle: Challenges and trials. We found that the participants have diverse perceptions of their supporting networks during the global pandemic; however, the challenges outweigh the supports, as represented in Figure 3.

Figure 3

Flowchart of Themes, Codes, Invariant Constituents, and Frequency of Mention



Theme 1: Who am I? Role Identity as Women, Students, Academics, Researchers, and Scholars

The participants in this study identified as several categories such as women, females, graduate students, doctoral/Ph.D. students, teachers or educators, academics, scholars, researchers, mothers, partners/wives, advisors, employees, mentors, mentees, parents/caregivers, friends, and peers/colleagues. It was evident that varying identities intersected and influenced the participants' perceived levels of scholarly productivity, support, and challenges during the onset of the pandemic.

Beckella (USA) talked about finding her identity as a scholar during her graduate studies relating to her mentor.

> It wasn't until my doctoral studies that I truly had a female mentor. I'd had professors that were women, but I'd never had a female mentor...Working with S completely changed how I understood myself as a scholar. I was able to ask her questions that I wasn't able to ask even my advisor because she was navigating academia as a women, too.

Graduate students must reconcile multiple, sometimes conflicting roles and challenging experiences that can have long-lasting social, emotional, and cognitive effects (Leshem, 2020). Bextrad (France) confidently was able to navigate her role as a Ph.D. student and mother during the pandemic, standing up for herself at times it felt necessary when comparing her experiences to her peers' concerning communications with her academic supervisor.

> I feel like everyone is very much doing the best they can…my (male) Ph.D. supervisor did send a group email at the start of the pandemic that we would have time for loads more research, and we'd get loads of writing done, that we should see it as a great opportunity. His other students are 22 years old with no family or professional responsibilities. His own children are old enough to look after themselves.

Academics can include roles such as professors, adjunct professors/instructors, and teaching, graduate, or research assistants. Balancing professional responsibilities as academics and scholarly expectations as a graduate student can be taxing on ground and downright traumatic during a global pandemic.

When asked about teaching expectations since the pandemic, the participants had mixed reactions. Amy (Australia) mentioned the benefit of "condensed classes," which modified her teaching time. Claire (Canada), however, perceived that there was "lots" of support for teaching faculty during the pandemic but "none for [graduate students]." She went on to say that university "emails about balance" they received after the fact was "tokenistic." Gabi Mandl (Canada) talked about having more time to focus on research and scholarly tasks as her "administrative" and academic tasks such as being a "teaching assistant [TA]" were postponed during the pandemic.

Regardless of the role that the graduate student is in, there are several responsibilities and tasks that they are expected to complete. Having the proper supporting networks should promote academic success in all areas.

Theme 2: That's a Plus: Supports and Networks

The participants in this study mentioned various forms of social and emotional support and networks that helped them continue their productivity. This support came from the institutions, academic supervisors, student peers, and from increased use of social media and self-care tactics. The participants further mentioned special accommodations such as virtual dissertation defenses that allowed graduate students to continue with their scholarly activity.

Institutional Support

Dyke (2020) points out that "graduate students -- who exist within professional and graduate fields with vastly different requirements and expectations -- are often left to decipher how such messages apply to them and are merely instructed to consult their advisers." However, graduate students support institutional operations at a salary that is significantly lower than faculty and universities benefit from their teaching, research, and service but these students have been left with unclear guidance during the pandemic. Only

one participant, Regina Phalange (Norway), described an authentic increase in institutional support outside of her direct advising and dissertation committee team:

> The department head didn't really communicate with me much before the pandemic, but now he sends weekly emails about how things are going and new/updated plans. He has also reached out to me personally to see how I am doing...the university has declared Ph.D. students a "vulnerable population", so basically, administration is doing everything they can to help us. I think they will be pretty lenient this year during our evaluations with research and whatnot…[admin] have definitely been reaching out to me and asking how I'm doing, what they can do to make things better for me, just saying hello... much, much more than usual.

Tech Support and Professional Development

The primary source of institutional support that the participants mentioned receiving from their institutions of higher learning came as tech support or increased professional development training as institutions shifted to the virtual learning environment. Florence (USA), Nell (USA), and M (USA) described their increased use of the video conferencing software Zoom to help employees familiarize themselves with the necessary resources to work remotely. Beckella (USA) specifically states her program "has instituted monthly Zoom check-ins, and there's a weekly departmental Zoom gathering for those who are still more closely connected to campus." Having increased "online support," according to Shon, has been beneficial for the transition to working remotely. Others, such as Catherine McCatty (USA), described "MANY" forms of training and support. "You name it," she states, "we have access to it, teaching, technology, writing workshops, online data collection workshops..."

Academic Supervisor/Advisor

After the onset of the pandemic, academic supervisors and advisors had to not only transition to virtual instruction but had to help their graduate students navigate the changes that the pandemic was going to cause on their programs and research plans. Regarding support, we were able to identify *increased* levels of academic support and *maintained* levels of support from academic supervisors and advisors.

Shon (Australia) describes her supervisors as having been "supportive" and "more flexible" throughout the pandemic, stating that "there's a level of leniency regarding the impacts of the pandemic on deadlines and mental health." KS (UK) describes her supervisors as "supportive" as they have "continued to meet/discuss work regularly during the pandemic." Anna's (UK) supervisor has been "kind and understanding," having "complemented [her] on completing so much during the pandemic." She states he "really cares about how [she's] doing and asks whether [she's] coping." Gabi Mandl's (Canada) supervisor has been very "respectful about the pandemic and constantly says if [they] do not feel comfortable going to the lab, to stay home and he will respect it."

Graduate Student Peers

Although minimal for this group, having the increased support of graduate student peers during the challenges and changes of the pandemic proved beneficial to a couple of the participants. STG (USA) talked about how she had been able to adjust but is not sure her peers are.

> …my other grad student friends are all feeling more overwhelmed and are not doing that, so I often find myself in a place where it seems like nobody is on the "same page" as I am. I have spent more time talking with my lab members about adjusting to working from home and things like that, which has been helpful.

Tired Brit (UK) described interaction with her peers as valuable to those involved even with visible gender differences in the group.

> In terms of my studies, I see far more interaction from my female peers, support, and engagement in maintaining the collegial aspect of our studies. In a recent coffee break, a male student came for 20 mins, talked for 16, and was given support for 4. The remaining 20 mins were discussions between the five female participants, equally split, a give and take.

Social Media & Self-Care

Finding support can come in various ways, and for some of the participants, those were via social media and connecting as self-care. As the pandemic progressed and people were mandated to social distance and quarantine in some instances, social media was the only outlet and method of communication that they had with the rest of the world. To maintain some semblance of sanity, participants had to find unique and creative ways to provide self-care and remain academically productive.

Amyrlin (USA) appreciated Facebook memes about not "feeling pressured to be uber productive during this time." She stated, "That was a pressure I was [putting] on myself, and having the community rally together to tell us all via social media that it's okay not to become super productive really helped prevent that from becoming an added stressor." Nightskey (USA) made sure to "follow strong women on social media" whereas Tired Brit (UK) became a strong woman on social media by organizing and facilitating online doctoral support networks.

> I set up and run a biweekly doctoral coffee break originally through zoom and have now been given a channel on my institutional Teams account. In 2 months, it has become a solid 20 doctoral students' key support network. Much of that burden falls on me but I am happy to be making a difference. I also have weekly research sounding boards with like-minded Ph.D. students.

She has further been able to access and take advantage of classes and sessions that she might not have been able to virtually prior to the pandemic.

> Eventbrite has become a site of scholarly debate with numerous free or very reasonable events with luminaries such as Slavoj Zizek, Gloria Steiner, Ian MacGilchrist. I went to a coffee house event at the Royal Society of the Arts which would normally have been closed to me last week, did a masterclass on negotiation, sat in on a psychoanalytic panel.

Schmeadow (Canada) received the opportunity to participate in a "virtual dissertation boot camp, and that has increased [her] productivity." She further went on to say that "while [she and her] colleagues are not meeting in person, [they] have scheduled online meetings and touch base with each other every 25 minutes or so. This has been a positive benefit to the stay-at-home orders". Dog-Mum (Scotland) has found support for writing through both the ISBW group and Rowena Murray's Facebook writers' group. She stated, "This has helped me to write at least once a week in a structured retreat, and if it hadn't been for this, I would probably be no further forward with my doctorate since March."

During the pandemic, few participants discussed the benefits of increased attention to self-care on their scholarly productivity. Anna (UK) discussed the benefits that breaking away from her desk has on her scholarly activity.

> I…chose to take some time for self-care every day because it makes me feel much better. It took a few months, but I am now convinced that spending less but more focused hours behind my desk actually increased my productivity instead of decreasing it…I limited the hours to make more time for self-care (taking a walk, reading a non-academic book, dancing, biking on the home-trainer, napping). This has actually made me more productive. I found that when I'm well-rested and don't try to spend 9 hours in a row focusing, I can do a lot more in the time that I do spend behind my desk.

Amyrlin (USA) shares how a simple trip to the coffee shop cleared her mind and allowed her to "escape" as "some days [she] gets crabby being in the house all the time, but now that [their] coffee shops have reopened, [she] can take [her] laptop and escape for a couple of hours." She goes on to say that "without that occasional escape, [she] starts exhibiting signs of depression and anxiety."

Virtual Dissertation Defenses

Before the pandemic, doctoral dissertation defenses were traditionally delivered face-to- face on a college campus or at least in the same room, in front of a dissertation committee (Chang, 2007). There has been little deviation from this format until the social distancing guidelines were mandated. As such, social

media became not just a place of entertainment and social support but a necessary means to connect with faculty, colleagues, and peers. Beckella (USA) explained that with her program now, "[dissertation] defenses can now be done via Zoom. Previously, there were no exceptions to the rule that defenses must be done with all parties physically present in the same room. This is huge, as [she] lives quite far from the city in which [her] institution is". Saving students and committee members` resources such as time and money, the virtual dissertation defense may be the new normal for doctoral programs of study.

Theme 3: An Uphill Battle: Challenges and Trials

These participants' challenges presented as reductions of support from the institutions, supervisors/advisors, and their student peers. Furthermore, a major area of concern for the participants was the ideology of the "toxic academic environment" and its impact on their physical and mental health.

Reduced Institutional Support

The reduction of institutional support was briefly highlighted by a couple of participants in the study. KS (UK) spoke to the challenges of limited access to campus resources when "the library closed (and is still closed now) so [she was] limited to online resources for [her] thesis." On the other hand, Tired Brit (UK) suffered significant institutional support loss before and after the onset of the pandemic.

> ...last year, [my] University shifted its criteria to only include those who placed more than 30% of their time on research which as the director of learning and teaching was impossible. As a result, the support structure was considerably lessened. When COVID hit, those structures were further compromised and, with my choice to step down and take voluntary severance, removed.

Reduced Academic Supervisor/Advisor Support

> The reduction of support from academic supervisors/advisors was a significant challenge the participants addressed in their responses. For example, Abe (South Africa) found that her employers have been far more "understanding" of the challenges associated with the pandemic than her Ph.D. supervisor. Nell (USA) had issues before the pandemic started, which were exacerbated as her "advisor was very hands-off and [she] didn't have much of a Ph.D. cohort so [she] already felt difficulty finishing [her] Ph.D. pre-pandemic". Similarly, Nightskey (USA) mentioned limited academic support during this transition as well.
>
> We used to have weekly in-person meetings with my faculty adviser…After March, I have had…sporadic emails from my advisor if I reach out first. [Their] emails back are usually one short sentence. If that…I have not heard from my department at all.

STG (USA) understands that academic supervisors and advisors have had to navigate their work/home life balance through the pandemic as well:

> My clinical and research supervisors/advisors both have kids at home and are managing a lot, so I feel less connected to them and more uncomfortable reaching out for support. When we do have meetings, they are distracted by kids and figuring out how to reopen the university, and my concerns/writing progress feel like they matter less, and I feel like a burden sometimes.

Reduced Graduate Student Peer Support

Participants reported on the reduction of support of their student peer support and the influence that has had on their scholarly productivity during the pandemic. M (USA) mentioned that her graduate school peers are a big part of [her] support system and being distant from them has been hard." Anna (UK) has "not been in touch with [her] fellow Ph.D. students and has no idea how productive they have been."

Suze (USA) discussed missing conducting research with her lab mates after everything transitioned online in the Spring as she stated she was "spending more time individually writing and analyzing data, rather than doing so with [her] lab or collecting data in [their] community." Gabi Mandl

(Canada) was also "extremely close" to her lab mates. She described losing contact with them as being "very strange and somewhat sad at first as [she] used to be very reliant on their guidance and emotional support when things were going badly."

Anna (UK) and Amyrlin (USA) spoke specifically of experience with Ph.D. program student peers. Anna discussed missing contact and failed attempts to reconnect with fellow Ph.D. student peers:

> I used to see them often around seminars and lectures and in the library, and we would talk about our research at lunch afterward, but since the pandemic has started, this contact has faded. I have tried to reach some of them but did not get any response…

Amyrlin feels a general distancing from her peers, including an inability to share successes with them.

> [My] Ph.D. student cohort has always been supportive, but lately, I feel like I shouldn't share as much with this group. I've had some early successes with publications, and I feel kind of like that's playing into a general sense of distancing within the group, especially with those who have struggled more to progress. Or maybe we're all just going our separate ways at this point. Anyway, I feel like this group is less of a support structure lately.

Physical and Mental Health Challenges

Scholarly productivity and academic output have been diminished for this group due to lapses in physical and mental health. Since the pandemic began, Beckella (USA) has been able to find her groove and become productive; however, "for the first month, it was a really rough adjustment mentally, physically, and productivity-wise" for her. Amy (Australia) identified as feeling "isolated and a bit depressed" throughout this pandemic, where Dee (South Africa) described her mental health as "pretty much non-existent." She went on to state that "even though there is time, [she] feels overwhelmed and simply unable to focus" on producing academically or scholarly. The changes in higher education due to the pandemic have caused Tired Brit (UK) to struggle with "a quagmire of self-doubt and self-flagellation" while job seeking in the "worst crisis" in several years.

Claire (Canada) described her mental health as being "low," and her "brain is absolutely exhausted." She went on to say:

> I have to take sleeping meds much of the time to work through the anxiety and got to a bit of a place of acceptance that while I have done nothing but work hard for five years and while I built up an exceptional CV it is now potentially not enough as I have lost a lot of "productivity" over the last six months. I may have to leave academia, but I am not sure that is the worst. The productivity required does not motivate original work these days; just output after output. I am coping partly by focusing on the negatives of academia as I may likely not get a job within it.

Anxiety has proven to be a real deterrent in scholarly productivity for these participants. Amyrlin (USA) was "less motivated by [her] usual interests (including research and writing) due to general anxiety and emotional exhaustion." STG (USA) spoke about the impact of her anxiety on her scholarly productivity and was highly aware of the privilege of not being responsible for another during this difficult time.

> ...I have days where I am more anxious and worried and find it hard to focus. On the other hand, I know that feeling productive is a bit of a coping mechanism for me when I am feeling anxious or overwhelmed, so I have actually made progress on a lot of projects (mostly writing)...

Evie (Australia), too, spoke of the mental health challenges that the pandemic has presented on her doctoral journey. The stress of limited support from partners and family members "made [her] consider giving up." The strain on her mental health impacted her perceived "ability to be a good parent."

Toxic Academic Environment

Suggesting that higher education and academia are toxic is not news to those in; yet, it has been recently suggested but not validated that the pandemic is amplifying academia's toxic nature. A few of the participants discuss some of their toxic experiences since the pandemic began.

Nightskey (USA) was required to "work on campus even during lockdowns," while KS (UK) was expected to complete "UNPAID online training AFTER term finished on their [own] time." Although

these may seem small scale in terms of severity of toxicity, there are levels to it. Tired Brit (UK) discussed a variety of topics that academics are challenged with.

> A feeling of time being compressed, expectations higher, timescales shorter - write a white paper based on your research for next week - really? However, coupled with BLM, there is also a reckoning - the complacency of the institution is being challenged, and because everything is online, it is far more difficult to gatekeep the respondents. This, at least, is a positive. However, the financial implications are dire, and I do not expect my funding to continue...

Claire (Canada) feels that academia is a "toxic sludge which has just become thicker through this all." She went on to say:

> I don't expect handouts, but this is certainly just a drop of me by my colleagues as I can't produce in the ways I usually do. Support for parent researchers has been to abandon them, and as someone that does not have a job, I fear how it's now going to happen as I haven't published as much as "I should" through this despite the fact that I barely sleep and work and parent at all times...My child's mental health has suffered from the pandemic, and my attention needs to go there... it's just been absolutely traumatizing to try to function in an already toxic institution…

DISCUSSION

Early in the pandemic, scholars predicted that women academics would experience tremendous hardships regarding professional stagnation during the pandemic in the form of decreased research productivity (Flaherty, 2020, Kibbe, 2020). However, this prediction has been disputed as studies find that while overall production patterns may appear the same, discrepancies are apparent when analyzed by discipline (Jemielniak, et al, 2022). Even before the pandemic, doctoral students' professional formation involved difficult experiences such as: isolation, alienation, and loneliness as part of the first steps into becoming an academic (Leshem, 2020). This team sought to understand how multinational women graduate students described their perceived academic support in light of the pandemic, and in doing so, three key themes emerged. It was discovered that role identity significantly mattered regardless of whether they were identifying as a woman, student, academic, educator, mother, and any intersection or variation of these, influencing their scholarly productivity. Continuing to seek an advanced degree in the shadow of a global pandemic has allowed these women to see some of their greatest supports, networks, and strengths take center stage.

Although being a graduate student is a unique challenge within itself that is already fraught with adversity, the pandemic exacerbated that for some participants. Factors such as isolation and loneliness, stress, conflicts and lack of support, work/life imbalance, struggles with time management, and reduced motivation and burnout are all associated with graduate school (Allen et al., 2020; Kalubi et al., 2020; Yusuf et al., 2020). Add in navigating a global pandemic and the personal experiences that come with that, and it could be a powder keg for graduate students. With reduced support from institutions, academic advisors/supervisors, and student peers, the graduate school journey becomes even more lonely, isolating, and exhausting. Aristovnik et al. (2020) conducted a large-scale study (30,383 students from 62 countries) on how students perceive the impact of the first wave of COVID-19 crisis on various aspects of their lives. They found that students' perception of a higher workload affected their performance in the new teaching environment made necessary by the pandemic. The findings also showed that female students and students who faced financial problems were affected more by the pandemic both emotionally and in terms of personal circumstances. Key factors influencing students' satisfaction with the role of their university are also identified.

Graduate school, more specifically doctoral programs of study are stressful, demanding, and can be quite isolating and lonely; thus, student peer support is significantly valuable for predicting factors such as satisfaction and successful completion (Tompkins et al., 2016). In considering whether there were any variations in support for the participants that were employed in roles such as professors, adjuncts, lecturers, instructors, teaching/research assistants, staff, nothing was reported. However, faculty members were expected to be far more flexible in their students' teaching responsibilities, thus increasing their workload.

Though there is a sense of nervousness and fear of the unknown, our study found that resilient eagerness drives these participants to continue on their paths. The participants acknowledge that they have worked hard, but they also attribute their success to the support from those closest to them. Lastly, the benefit of social support such as the ISBW Facebook group has proven helpful beyond measure, especially amid a global pandemic. The specialized support provided by social relationships such as those through social media sites may be essential to student success. Social media is associated with several categories, such as academic engagement, mentoring, professional development, career exploration, and funding opportunities, to name a few. Although there is a significant body of literature that says broad and unspecified social media use such as doom scrolling is highly detrimental to mental health (Pruulmann-Vengerfeldt, 2020); targeted, specialized, and private social media use has provided scholarly and academic support that prior generations were not able to access (McLaughlin & Sillence, 2018).

IMPLICATIONS & LIMITATIONS

As with all studies, this study has its limitations. The respondents of this study came from an online community devoted to academic writing, which encouraged women to support women. This could have resulted in a preponderance of responses from people who struggle with writing and expected significant support from their institutions. Additionally, this study only looked at responses from women graduate students. Arguably, this only tells half of the graduate student story by excluding male graduate students. Future research should look at the support received by all graduate students to compare and complete the picture of the type of support they received during the pandemic.

CONCLUSION

The literature (Jenei et al., 2020; Wang et al., 2020) and this study demonstrates that graduate students are vulnerable due to mental unrest, career uncertainty, power dynamics within institutions, work-life balance, and disparities in research funding. The pandemic has exacerbated areas that cause students the most anxiety, resulting in a wellness crisis among graduate students. Higher education has an ethical and practical responsibility to advocate and provide for student wellness to enable their success. In practical terms, universities should strive to ensure that the same support mechanisms available to faculty are available to graduate students and that access to those systems is communicated clearly and regularly. Additionally, universities should incorporate structures and supports to help graduate students with their self-care and mental health, as many have done for undergraduate students. This should go beyond a general optional check-in to providing access to additional networks for the benefit of graduate students. This should be even more so for those graduate students that work in those professional roles serving the institution.

Graduate students represent the future of the professoriate and many other fields. As such, they are a resource that should be cultivated in their future profession and supported to enable them to succeed. The pandemic has highlighted a disparity that women academics are facing regarding their scholarly productivity due to several internal and external factors. Our participants shared several scenarios describing their experiences and the challenge to be scholarly productive since the pandemic began with a few exceptions. We believe that the experiences of these participants are more common and far-reaching than even the scope of this study extends.

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Pandemic Repercussions: The Future of International Education at US Community Colleges

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ABSTRACT

The disruptions of the COVID-19 pandemic have both short- and long-term repercussions on higher education. To crystallize these impacts in a sector that was particularly vulnerable to the economic effects of the pandemic, this mixed- methods study explores the intersection of international education and community college responses to the pandemic. Findings indicated that due to the pandemic, community college international education programs faced a reallocation of institutional resources, both financial and otherwise, which shapes the educational opportunities available to students and informs the institutional habitus of the US community college. This study's findings have implications in the areas of international student recruitment, limits to higher education access, and impacts on local and regional communities.

Keywords: community colleges, COVID-19, impact on internationalization, mixed methods

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INTRODUCTION

While the COVID-19 pandemic certainly disrupted US international higher education in the short term, essentially eliminating student mobility and costing institutions considerable financial resources in refunded program fees and lost revenue (Martel, 2020; NAFSA, 2020), perhaps the greatest effects of the pandemic on international higher education will be long-term. These effects are likely to include persistent declines in international student enrollment, changes in internationally-focused institutional policies and structures, and permanent modifications to education abroad programs (e.g., Redden, 2021). The community college sector, composed primarily of public two-year institutions, was especially hard hit during the pandemic, suffering general enrollment declines and revenue shortfalls not seen in other sectors of US higher education (Weissman, 2021; Whitford, 2021). To add insult to injury, community colleges also received considerably less emergency relief funding through the CARES Act, passed by the US government to provide financial support for higher education institutions during the crucial early days of the pandemic, an event that foregrounded financial implications yet to come for this sector (St. Amour, 2020). Implications of the pandemic for community colleges generally and their international education programs have the potential to be especially fraught in the future.

The US community college traditionally addresses multiple missions while focusing on the needs of the college's local community. Thus, these institutions often provide a wide variety of programming and learning opportunities, including career-focused and continuing education as well as pathways to more advanced degree programs (Barringer & Jaquette, 2018; Dougherty & Townsend, 2006). Community colleges serve over 11 million US students and, given the open-access nature of their programming, tend to serve student populations that are more diverse than their four-year college and university counterparts (American Association of Community Colleges, 2021; Bailey & Morest, 2006; González Canché, 2018). Although international education programming often sits at the periphery of these institutions and reports lower participation rates compared to similar programming at four-year colleges and universities (IIE, 2020; Raby & Valeau, 2016), current research suggests that community colleges provide an important conduit to international education experience for underrepresented and underserved student populations, including those from minoritized racial/ethnic backgrounds and lower-income households (Whatley, 2021; Whatley & Raby, 2020). These students rely on their institutions to provide resources, financial and otherwise, that allow them to access international education opportunities and subsequent benefits.

The purpose of the current study is to explore the intersection between international education and community college responses to the pandemic, thus highlighting how the pandemic impacted international education in a particularly vulnerable sector of US higher education, and how this impact may endure well into the future. In this mixed-methods study, we specifically explore the allocation of institutional resources, both financial and otherwise, to international education programming. Resource allocation is not only key to the short- and long-term survival of these programs, but also communicates to students and other institutional stakeholders about the college's values and priorities (Massey, 1996). While this work focuses especially on the US community college, it has broad implications beyond this sector, particularly for institutions that serve historically and currently underserved student populations, including technical and vocational education and training institutions (TVETs) located around the globe (Legusov et al., 2021), who may find themselves in an equally financially precarious situation in the context of the pandemic.

CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

This study takes as its point of departure the notion that institutions provide resources to their constituents, whether financial or otherwise (Berger, 2000). Within an institution, allocation of resources has clear consequences for students, as these resources contribute both to the educational opportunities available and the extent to which students can take advantage of them (Taylor & Cantwell, 2018, 2019). The relationship between resources and opportunity structure may be especially salient in the community college context, particularly given the demographics of the student population they serve. Rhoads and Valadez (1996) highlight the multiple missions of the US community college, discussed more in-depth in the literature review section, including vocational education, community education, and provision of

credits that students can transfer to four-year institutions. While these multiple missions may help community colleges to serve a more diverse student population, a key component of their open-access character, multiple missions may also translate into uncertainty in resource allocation, given finite resources to go around. That is, the multiple missions of a community college can make it difficult for administrators, legislators, and other decision-makers to decide where to allocate resources and how much to allocate, particularly in times of crisis, such as the COVID-19 pandemic.

The allocation of resources comprises a key component of the organizational habitus that students encounter when they attend an educational institution. According to McDonough (1997), organizational habitus consists of "a common set of subjective perceptions which individuals receive from their immediate environment" (p. 106). When institutions allocate resources to certain institutional functions, such as admissions, academic affairs, or athletics programs, these allocations speak to the institution's values (Massey, 1996). Students and others who come into contact with the institution subsequently perceive these values and derive worldviews that delimit the full range of educational possibilities that might be available. In this study, our focus is on the allocation of resources to international education, and how this resource allocation shifted in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic. In shifting resources towards or away from international education, institutions send students messages about what is valued at their institutions and about what educational experiences are most important to their future success.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Multiple Missions of Community Colleges

For many decades, scholars and policymakers alike have strived to encapsulate the complex mission of US community colleges (Ayers, 2017; Bailey & Morest, 2004; Bragg, 2001; Cohen et al., 2013; Zook, 1947). Most common is perhaps Cohen et al.'s (2013) curricular approach, which defines the community college mission as providing a comprehensive curriculum. The colleges' curricula include collegiate or academic transfer education; workforce development, developmental education; continuing education aimed at community members, and general or integrative education (Cohen et al., 2013). Bailey and Morest (2004) explain that outside of its academic and transfer core curricular function, the community college also pursues expansions, such as attracting international students and providing English language programs (Bailey & Morest, 2004).

Although the Truman Commission recommended the internationalization of community colleges through enrolling international students, providing education abroad opportunities, and infusing global concepts in the curriculum (Zook, 1947), the most frequent definition of community used at community colleges has largely excluded foreign nationals and the global marketplace (Levin, 2001). Informed by these perspectives, we view the mission of the US community college as three-pronged: Community colleges provide open access to a comprehensive curriculum, including international opportunities, that serves a number of communities, including local, regional, and beyond. This mission drives the financial infrastructure of the college, such as institutional budgets and resource allocation (Bailey & Morest, 2004; Cohen et al., 2013), which in return impacts educational programs and student recruitment strategies.

International Education at US Community Colleges

Community colleges have played an important role in preparing 41 percent of US undergraduate students for a diverse workforce and have been key actors in higher education's internationalization efforts (AACC, 2021; Zhang, 2011). These institutions first began to internationalize in the 1960s (Raby, 2020), yet internationalization still often exists at the periphery at many community colleges (Green & Siaya, 2005; Raby & Valeau, 2007). In the decade prior to the pandemic, community college researchers observed an increasing focus on campus internationalization (Raby & Valeau, 2016), coupled with considerable challenges regarding increasing outbound mobility (Raby & Rhodes, 2018) or working to attract and support international students (Falcone, 2019; Zhang, 2016). At many community colleges, internationalization was simply not a priority, as reflected in its lack of inclusion in college policies (Raby & Rhodes, 2018), such as strategic plans and mission statements. As of 2006, approximately one-fifth of

community colleges included campus internationalization as a key component of the institution's strategic plan and only one quarter of community college mission statements referenced internationalization (Raby, 2008). The growth of internationalization has also been hindered by a lack of institutional funding for designated departments of international education, resulting in a limited number of education programs being offered (Raby & Rhodes, 2018) and, likely, in a lack of access to international recruitment tools.

This absence of institutional support for international education may be in large part due to the community college mission being perceived as directed primarily toward its local community (Cohen et al., 2013). This perception is perpetuated by ideas such as the internationalization of community college curricula having no direct impact on the jobs that graduates obtain. However, campus internationalization need not be counter to the local mission of the community college (Raby et al., 2014), but can, in fact, contribute to community colleges' "meeting their mandate of preparing students for their future roles in a global economy, where international literacy is a basic skill needed in the workplace" (Raby, 2008, p. 8). In recent years, community college outward mobility has made great strides (Raby, 2019), reaching nearly 8,000 students in 2018-19 (IIE, 2020). Since 2007, the number of community colleges that reported sending students on education abroad programs has more than tripled to almost 300 institutions (IIE, 2009; 2019). Additionally, at the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic, community colleges enrolled approximately 80,000 international students (IIE, 2020).

Short-Term Impact of the COVID-19 Pandemic on the Community College Sector

Community colleges appear to have suffered the brunt of the 2020 COVID-19 pandemic's impact concerning campus health, enrollment declines, and budget uncertainties, in part further complicated by already existing financial constraints due to declining state funds (Floyd, 2021; Gardner, 2020). Spring 2021 community college enrollment declined by 11.3 percent compared to the previous spring, dropping another 2 percent from fall 2020. In contrast, spring 2020 to spring 2021 enrollment in bachelor's programs decreased by only 2.2 percent, and graduate enrollment grew by 4.4 percent (National Student Clearinghouse, 2021). The resulting reduction in community college enrollment-based funding was exacerbated by sector-wide state support declining by $457 million or 2.0 percent between 2020 and 2021 (compared to $63 million or 0.1 percent in the four-year sector). Funding for community colleges declined in 22 states, with six states decreasing funding by more than 10% (Laderman & Tandberg, 2021).

In terms of international education, like all higher education institutions, community colleges with existing education abroad programs experienced disruptions in services and programming due to health concerns and travel restrictions caused by the pandemic (Martel, 2020; NAFSA, 2020). Students abroad were recalled, and upcoming education abroad programs canceled or postponed through spring 2022 (Cossey & Fischer, 2021; Martel, 2020). Community colleges with international students felt enrollment declines almost immediately. For fall 2020, international student enrollment at community colleges declined by 27 percent, compared to 15 and 21 percent at doctoral and master's institutions (Baer & Martel, 2020).

The current study addresses aspects of the pandemic's impact beyond immediate student mobility restrictions. Specifically, we explore how the pandemic impacted the resources, financial and otherwise, that community colleges devoted to international education during this time of crisis. Reallocation of resources towards or away from international education has the potential to impact the survival and success of these programs well into the future and sends a clear message to students and other stakeholders regarding how international education fits into institutional priorities.

RESEARCH METHOD

The data that we draw from in this exploratory study was collected as part of a larger mixed-methods research project carried out in June and July 2020, the time period immediately following the academic term that the pandemic interrupted, with the broader goal of understanding community college international educators' responses to the pandemic. In this study, we focus on data sources that speak to institutional responses related to the well-being of international education programming generally rather

than a specific subfield of international education, such as international student enrollment or study abroad (see Whatley & Fischer, 2022, for an overview of this study's findings related to international students specifically). Our data collection followed an explanatory sequential design consisting of two phases (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2018). In Phase 1, we collected quantitative data using an online survey instrument (17 participants), involving a random sample of 300 community colleges that reported enrolling international students in the 2018-19 academic year. The study's second phase consisted of interviews with three community college international educators who volunteered to participate in follow-up interviews. Both data sources focused on the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on international education broadly, including but not limited to topics surrounding international student recruitment, education abroad programming, and international student services.

Phase 1

The survey data collection instrument that we used for the first phase of our study asked respondents (N=17) for general information about how COVID-19 had impacted international education at their college, namely international student enrollment and programming, education abroad, and the future of international education. Although this is a relatively small sample, this sample size is sufficient for our exploratory study on a new phenomenon (Stouffer & Lazarsfeld, 1937), particularly in the context of a pandemic, which increased the difficulty of collecting data from individuals who were adversely impacted in a number of ways. In this study, we focus attention on this latter section of the survey, which asked participants to select, from their perspectives, the most pressing impacts of COVID-19 on international education, particularly from a resources standpoint. Survey questions were multiple choice and participants were allowed to select multiple responses for a single question if applicable to their institutional context. Participants were also asked to provide short written responses regarding their greatest concerns for international education at their institution, which were then categorized and counted as an additional quantitative measure from our survey. In total, the survey was estimated to take participants no more than 30 minutes to complete. Participants were not compensated for their participation in the survey.

To collect survey data, after piloting and refining our data collection instrument, we identified US community colleges that reported enrolling non-US resident students in the National Center for Education Statistics' Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System in the 2017-18 academic year (the most recent year for which data were available at the time of data collection). We randomly selected 300 institutions from this list and found contact information for the person or office that worked with international students (e.g., the Office of International Education, International Student Life, or the Office of Student Services). We sent an initial recruitment message along with two reminder messages to this contact with an invitation and link to complete the survey. In total, we received responses from representatives of 17 institutions (please see Whatley & Fischer, 2022 for additional information about our data collection process).

Survey respondents represented institutions in a variety of US geographic regions, including California, Iowa, Michigan, Missouri, New Jersey, New Mexico, New York, North Carolina, Pennsylvania, Texas, Virginia, and Washington, and worked in international programs of various sizes, with international education offices (or the equivalent) ranging from a single employee to 15 international education employees. Survey respondents selected job titles such as international student advisor (N=8), international student recruitment/admissions administrator (N=8), and lead international administrator (N=8). Other respondents were academic advisors (N=6) or admissions officers (N=6), reflecting the multiple roles that community college employees often fulfill in their professional lives.

Phase 2

We gained broader insights into survey responses by interviewing three participants who volunteered for the qualitative Phase 2 of the study. We combined the two participants with similar institutional characteristics for a group interview and spoke with the third volunteer individually (Creswell, 2013). Interviews were semi-structured, and we took turns asking questions from an interview

protocol. This protocol included questions about the impact of the pandemic on the participants' institution at the onset of the crisis, both generally and regarding international education specifically. Questions centered on services provided to international students, the future of international education at their institution, and recommendations for international educators in case of future crises. Scripted questions were supplemented by probes informed by participants' survey responses to draw out detail related to their institutional contexts and individual experiences.

Qualitative data analysis began with transcribing each interview verbatim. We then read each transcript several times before independently coding each transcript twice in an iterative manner. The first round of coding was deductive, informed by our theoretical framework (Strauss & Corbin, 1990). In this round, we applied codes related to resource allocation and its corresponding opportunities and communicated values. Next, we coded inductively, which allowed us to identify patterns and themes beyond those of our theoretical framework (Strauss & Corbin, 1990). Throughout the coding process, we engaged in several peer-debriefing sessions, which contributed to interrater reliability (Marshall & Rossman, 2011). In the final step, we selected illustrative quotes to support our findings.

Researcher Positionality

Both authors brought with them experiences and perspectives that influenced how they viewed this study's data. At the time of data collection, the first author was a doctoral candidate in a higher education program, conducting dissertation research on US community colleges. Prior, she had enrolled in higher education as an international student from Germany at a US community college. Her professional experience included working with international students in an academic advising capacity and leading education abroad initiatives. During the data collection phase of this study, the second author's professional role included collaborating with community college leaders to conduct research that could be used for decision-making purposes. Although never a community college student or employee herself, she has extensive experience working with community college international educators in a research capacity and has worked in international education for over 10 years.

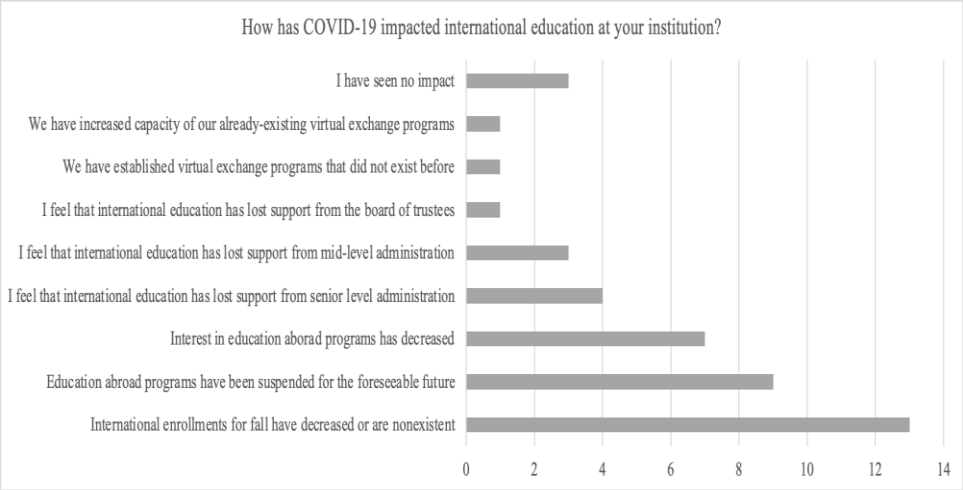
RESULTS

The following sections summarize the results of each phase of our study. We begin with an overview of Phase 1 results, centered on our survey data, and follow with the results of Phase 2, our interview data.

Phase 1

Figure 1 summarizes survey participants' responses regarding how COVID-19 impacted international education at their community colleges. The responses listed on the left-hand side of this figure were provided to participants, and they were allowed to select all responses that applied. The most frequently selected pandemic impact was that international student enrollment for the following fall term (fall 2020) had decreased or was nonexistent (N=13). Participants also selected responses related to education abroad programming with frequency: education abroad had been suspended at these institutions (N=9) and interest in education abroad had decreased (N=7). Some respondents were concerned about lack of support from administration, a key resource for international programs, with four participants concerned about support from senior-level administration, three concerned about support from mid-level administration, and only one participant concerned about support from the board of trustees. Virtual exchange programming seemed to be less of a concern for survey respondents, with only one participant each concerned about establishing virtual exchange programs and increasing capacity of already-existing programs. Three survey respondents indicated that COVID-19 had not impacted international education at their college.

Figure 1 Number of Survey Responses Indicating How COVID-19 Had Impacted International Education at Respondents' Institutions



Our survey also asked respondents about financial resources for international education programming specifically. Eleven respondents indicated that international education was included in the institutional budget for the following (2020-21) academic year, while four responded that it was not (see Figure 2). One respondent indicated that it was currently unclear whether international education would receive financial support in the following year, even though participants completed the survey as the 2019-20 fiscal year was coming to a close for most institutions.

Finally, Figure 3 summarizes survey respondents' written comments regarding what they viewed as the greatest concerns for international education at their respective institutions. Five respondents wrote comments related to international student enrollment, listing issues such as travel restrictions and slow visa processing times. Three respondents were concerned about funding issues while another three were concerned about international student recruitment for the upcoming academic year. Of lesser concern for survey respondents in general was a loss of momentum for international education efforts (N=2), online education (N=1), a decreased willingness on the part of students to travel (N=1), and avoidance of international students (N=1) (presumably among domestic students, although the survey respondent did not specify).

Figure 2 Number of Survey Responses Indicating Whether International Education Was Included in Institutions' 2020-21 Budget

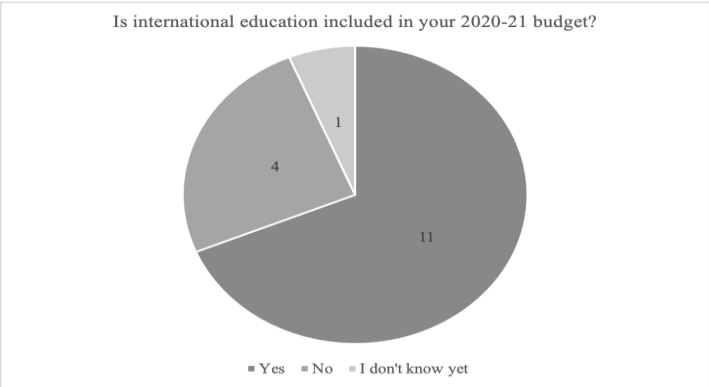
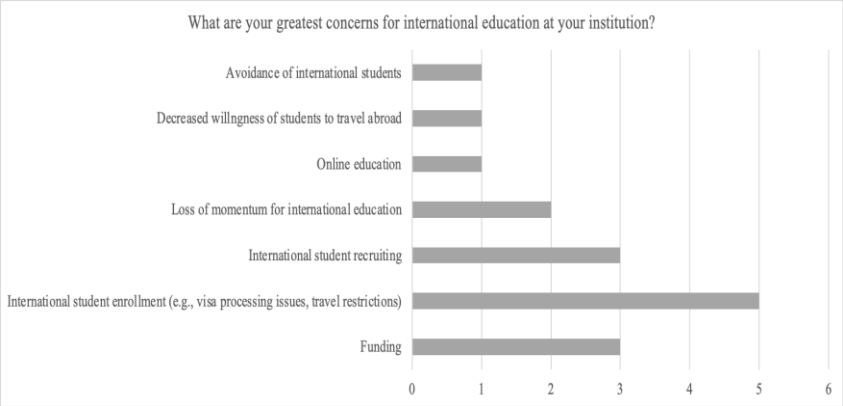


Figure 3 Number of Survey Responses Indicating Respondents' Greatest Concerns for International Education at their Respective Institutions



Phase 2

Our interview responses added perspective and additional complexity to the survey data. We group our qualitative findings into two broad themes: the short-term impact of the pandemic, and the pandemic's long-term implications for international education at community colleges. The short-term impact included declines in international student enrollment and retention and cancellation or suspension of professional activities and memberships. For the longer term, community college international educators navigate uncertainty about human and financial resources and the impact of the pandemic on recruitment of international students. Interviewees also stressed that the pandemic's impact on institutional resources redoubled the need for collaborations and partnerships and the critical importance of communicating the value of international education at their institutions.

Short-Term Impact of Pandemic

Short-term impacts of the pandemic include those activities that are affected while the COVID-19 pandemic is ongoing. Interviewees explained that the immediate impact of the pandemic resulted in reduced international student enrollment, retention, and outbound student mobility alongside canceled international recruitment travel and canceled memberships to professional organizations.

Impact on International Student Enrollment, Retention, and Mobility. Similar to our survey data, qualitative responses indicated concern about enrollment of new international students and outbound student mobility, but interviewees elaborated that these concerns also included the retention of current students, which impacted short-term tuition and fee revenue. Interviewees explained that some international students had withdrawn from their institutions and others had deferred enrolment to spring 2021. Lisa, a director-level international educator at a small community college in a city, shared, "we've lost only three so far directly due to COVID. Three people who are like, 'We're leaving. We're not coming back' and that probably wouldn't have happened if [COVID] hadn't happened."

Interview data also shed light on the complex nature of the pandemic's intersection with the 2020 civil rights and political climate in the United States. At a rural community college campus enrolling slightly more than 60 international students, international student coordinator Jenn explained, "I think politics have a lot to do overall with how people are viewing the US and, obviously there's some [immigration] limits happening from the US side too." Interviewees felt that international perceptions of the political and cultural attitude toward immigration and diversity further exacerbated international student enrollment in the short-term. In sum, the pandemic and its associated political fallout substantially impacted institutional efforts to enroll and retain international students. Without these international students to support, many international programs lose the core of their function at the community college.

Impact on Professional Activity and Resources. In the short term, community colleges also pursued a fiscally conservative decision-making strategy. For international educators, this resulted in canceled international recruitment travel and canceled memberships to professional organizations such as NAFSA: Association for International Educators. These budget curtailment decisions were made at the senior-most level. Heather, an associate director for international programs at a large suburban community college, shared,

> I was actually supposed to travel [abroad] for a two-week trip at that time..., because that was also when spring recruiting plans were in place...So I remember, I didn't have to make the call, because then our President decided no one's traveling internationally.

At some institutions, funds from canceled recruitment travel were available to repurpose to supplement strained budgets. Lisa was able to award unexpected grant dollars to international students in need due to the pandemic. She explained,

> I had a big recruitment thing coming up…And I had gotten a grant from our school's foundation for $9,000. And I returned it because 'I'm not going to use this, other students are probably going to need it for COVID.' And then I was like '*our* students need it for COVID!' I did a pitch to our foundation and asked if we could get that money back to be used for direct support for students because the CARES Act wasn't going to work. They gave it to us.

At her community college, Heather was met with resistance when trying to spend unused recruitment travel funds, as budgets were frozen. She elaborated

> I was hoping to use money that I had left over from the spring for all the travel that we weren't going to do. I thought I could use that money to put it towards some digital marketing and some other resources and I couldn't spend anything. So, even my NAFSA membership is gone right now, which is kind of extreme in terms of basic tools for what's needed to stay in the know and stay on top of compliance issues.

Budget freezes also extended to vacant positions. Our survey data indicated suspension and declining interest in education abroad. Heather elaborated that at her institution, this was the case because the education abroad coordinator had been reassigned to another functional area where there was an unexpected vacancy. She explained,

> Study abroad, which we were starting to build up, all the momentum behind that got just swept away and so the person overseeing that she's been moved to a completely different unit right now for most of her time, so there's not even an interest in trying to maintain some kind of virtual exchanges or anything like that. We need to fill holes because there's a hiring freeze and there's work that needs to be done in other units to support the students we have.

Heather's remarks betrayed a sense of uncertainty as to whether the education abroad position would become a priority again once the hiring freeze was lifted. Without proper administrative support, it is not surprising that student interest in education abroad, whether virtual or not, would wane.

Long-Term Implications

In summer 2020, at the time our interviews took place, international educators expressed uncertainties about the long-term implications of the pandemic. Jenn noted, "everybody's asking questions and who knows any answers at this point?" There are, however, indications of what is to come for international education at community colleges. Key themes in our interviews concerned with long-term implications included: uncertainty about resources, impact on international student recruitment efforts, the importance of collaboration and consultation, and a critical need to share the institutional value of international education.

Uncertainty about Resources. There was consensus among interviewees that departmental budgets would be uncertain for the foreseeable future. While our survey data indicated that for most institutions, international education was included in the institutional budget for the 2020-21 academic year, interviewees cautioned that budgets would be subject to international student enrollment in the coming

terms. Lisa elaborated, "We can probably weather a couple of bad quarters, but I do think after a couple of bad quarters if we start losing money by our very existence...you could get rid of a director…that saves a lot of money." Heather explained that budget uncertainties due to declining student enrollment at the institution in general, both international and domestic, were coupled with a financial impact on sponsored programs at the state department level, such as those for J-1 scholars. Institutions that depend on sponsored programs for teaching and financial support feared the repercussions of those cuts at the federal level. Further, budget freezes and long-term budget declines may lead to higher caseloads for international student advisors as vacant positions are not filled or reassigned to other units at the institution.

Impact on Recruitment Efforts. The pandemic also had long lasting ramifications on recruitment strategies for international students. Two interviewees emphasized that travel and budget restriction had foregrounded the need to consider creative new recruitment strategies. Heather explained that she had not been able to renew contracts with agents and suggested recruiting students in alternate ways, saying

> We're not going to be put back in the budget line in any significant way. I need to start thinking differently about recruiting students...We're starting to see some reports where students would be interested in taking classes online if they knew it was a certain period of time, and it was leading to eventually coming to the US to finish their studies...I think if you could link it to a larger recruitment strategy there could be interest there.

Heather also suggested that her office may start considering recruiting different visa types, beyond F and J. Lisa recommended that community colleges consider flexibility in charging international students in-state tuition, which may support enrollment increases. She expressed her frustration with state policies regarding tuition, saying

> If we had more flexibility in what we were charging if the state did decide to have a moral epiphany and say, 'Hey, let's charge in state tuition' or 'let's allow us to have a few more waivers than we normally would.' And just give that flexibility to us and not have to charge these students more than two and a half times what the domestic students are paying, I think that would be a help. The rigidity of the structures and the bureaucracy itself is a limiting factor.

Importance of Collaboration and Consultation. The impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on institutional resources for international education also foregrounded the long-term importance of collaborations, both across and between institutions. In that vein, Lisa cautioned institutional leaders "to remember to invite the people who work with the [international] students, or the students themselves to the table when you're making decisions, to make sure they have a voice when planning and making decisions, because their needs are so dramatically different."

In addition to cross-campus collaboration, interviewees also stressed the importance of networking between community colleges as well as developing partnerships and recruiting pipelines with universities. Lisa emphasized,

> community colleges [need to] have a way to talk to each other to share best practices...finding out better ways for us to connect across and communicate with each other and not competing. How can we help solve this without competing with each other? Could there be a good way to save international education or help international education? How about we come up with this creative solution that maximizes resources for everyone?

University partnerships may be an additional way to reconsider recruiting strategies for some community colleges. Lisa suggested that community colleges could develop feeder programs that allow international students to enroll first at a community college and then transfer to a regional university, rather than competing with each other for enrollment numbers.

Critical Need to Share Institutional Value of International Education. Finally, our qualitative data provided perspective on a perceived lack of support for international education from college administrators, with clear implications for resource allocation in the future. This lack of support appeared

to occur at the intersection of leadership changes and changing priorities, coupled with lost momentum regarding international education broadly. Heather explained:

> There's an assumption right now that International isn't busy. We're not busy, because we don't have students and we won't have students. And because we can't do any recruitment that our advisors can take on other tasks and that's not the case right now.

Because of the perception that international education was at a COVID-induced standstill, community college international educators found themselves in the position of having to communicate the value of international education and their department to ensure their survival, which they anticipated would continue well into the future. This discourse included stressing the value that international students add to domestic institutions, both on a cross-cultural and financial level, as well as appropriating tasks that justify the department's existence. Lisa shared that at her institution students rarely interacted with diverse populations, so international education provided an intrinsic value beyond tuition dollars. She explained:

> This is the only exposure someone might get to interact with someone from a different country, and how amazing is that? So it has an intrinsic value and being able to make sure that that intrinsic value is understood and perhaps we are just as important as the library. The library doesn't make any money either.

Heather shared this conviction and elaborated that her institution had a propensity to equate a department's value with financial contributions, explaining:

> We were bringing in money with our sponsored programs which brought us more attention at the table. But now these things are kind of not seen as necessary, in a sense. And because our student population is already diverse and our teaching staff is already diverse it's like, well, we kind of already checked that box.

Heather compared the necessity to explain international education's worth as a "fight." Her department pursued the possibility of providing services to students of all visa types, including those previously served by other offices, saying "maybe we should be supporting them more officially. We need to find some other roles to play in the college that add value that maybe were done by other offices."

Beyond advocacy on their own college campuses, international educators also stressed the importance of advocacy on the state and national levels. Participants feared that the long-term economic impact of the pandemic may have adverse effects on international education at community colleges into the future. Lisa encouraged college presidents to advocate on behalf of international education with their elected officials, saying,

> They can have some sway in keeping international education top of mind when they are able to get the ear of a legislator, maybe percolating that up to the various associations that they're a part of and just being that voice for a population that sometimes does get forgotten about.

Lisa's insight underlined international educator's perceptions that international education has value and is faced with considerable challenges that merit executive-level advocacy at the national level.

Limitations

Although our survey and interview data provide key insight into the short- and long-term implications of the COVID-19 pandemic for community college international education, particularly regarding resource allocation, our results should be interpreted with four limitations in mind. First, participation in our survey data collection was entirely voluntary on the part of participants, and as a consequence our sample may not be representative of the broader community college population we intended to generalize to. Second, also related to our survey data, as our study was focused on the institutions that participants represented rather than on the participants themselves, we do not have extensive demographic data about our participants. As such, we are unable to speak to the extent to which our survey respondents represent a diverse group of individuals. Third, our interview data was obtained from a small sample and may not be transferable to all international education programs at community colleges. However, the trustworthiness of the study is supported by robust sampling methods (Robinson, 2014), a deductive analysis guided by sound theoretical drive (Morse et al., 2006), and strong ethical

considerations that considered the vulnerability of our participants during a challenging time for their field. Finally, two interviewees' institutions did not have education abroad programs, so there may be additional pandemic implications that are not considered here.

DISCUSSION

In the context of ongoing uncertainties around the status of international education for US community colleges in the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic, this study's results speak to the necessity for international educators to implement strategies and policies that will prepare their programs for future disruptions. Our study has important implications for community college leaders and international educators as they consider the impact of both the COVID-19 pandemic and the related economic crisis, specifically on the resources provided to international programming. This allocation of resources has a clear impact on the educational opportunities available to currently enrolled students and also speaks to the educational priorities of the institution in general, which are communicated, whether explicitly or implicitly, not only to current students, but also to prospective students and myriad external institutional stakeholders. While this study takes place in the unique context of the COVID-19 pandemic, our results are broadly applicable to future decision-making regarding resource allocation at US community colleges and other similar institutions worldwide.

Our work supports the notion that the allocation of resources by community college leadership contributes to the educational opportunities available to both international and domestic students (Taylor & Cantwell, 2018, 2019). For the former group, canceled recruitment trips may lead to fewer international students being able to pursue a college credential in the United States for the foreseeable future. Further, canceled professional memberships and higher caseloads for international educators due to reassigned positions may lead to a reduced quality of advising and immigration services for the students who do enroll. For domestic students, the pandemic clearly affects their ability to study abroad, whether virtually or in person, through their community college. Similar to Cossey and Fischer (2021), whose study indicated that 70% of community colleges had no plans to pursue virtual international education, only two of our survey respondents indicated a desire to expand existing or develop new virtual exchange programs as a result of the pandemic. Additionally, for at least one institution, budget freezes also resulted in the reassignment of the education abroad coordinator, resulting in a long-term reduction in education abroad programming offered at the institution, and a lack of pursuit of virtual education abroad options. Our survey data also shed light on decreased student interest in education abroad and lack of support for international initiatives from senior or mid-level administration, which may have implications for the vitality of community college education abroad programming specifically and international education programming generally well into the future.

This long-term reallocation of resources reflects the value community college leaders place on international education, thus communicating to current and prospective students what educational activities are important for their future success (McDonough, 1997). These values impact both professionals and students at the community college. Our qualitative data included discourse regarding the need to 'fight' for positions or departments in support of international education, as well as the ongoing and urgent need to articulate the value that international education can have for community college students. Community college international educators appear to be concerned about their professional existence in the post-COVID environment. For both domestic and international students, these resource-driven values reflect that international education, which was already not a priority at most community colleges (Raby & Rhodes, 2018), may be further pushed toward the periphery in the post-COVID-19 educational climate.

These long-term and short-term repercussions speak to limitations of access to international education broadly. While the disruptions of travel at the height of the pandemic were unavoidable in light of travel restrictions and current health guidelines, the effects of the resulting resource reductions and reallocations may disproportionately affect the future of international education at the colleges where we conducted our study. Our findings suggest that community college international educators are exploring

new recruitment strategies to justify their existence, such as recruiting international students for online programs or for four-year institution pipeline programs. These new recruitment strategies may marginalize those international individuals residing in internet deserts or whose educational goals may not include a four-year degree. Further, our study supports reports that education abroad programming may be impacted into the future (Martel, 2020; NAFSA, 2020), perhaps particularly at community colleges. For example, at one community college, suspended educational abroad travel led to the reassignment of the education abroad coordinator to a non-international function, thereby slowing or even stopping the momentum of program development. In both cases, new international student recruitment strategies and lack of affordable education abroad programs for community college students raise concerns about access, equity, and opportunities for students to participate in international higher education, particularly for the marginalized communities that are often represented in the community college student population.

By extension, pandemic impacts will also be felt by the local and regional communities that community colleges serve - communities that are in many regions supported by a diverse and globalized workforce. This impact on the workforce may be particularly salient, as community colleges' missions are in service to their local communities (Cohen et al., 2013). As a result, community colleges have a responsibility to educate an internationally fluent workforce (Raby, 2008; Zhang 2011), and graduates who have not meaningfully interacted with individuals from other cultures due to a reallocation and reprioritization of resources may be at a disadvantage in the diverse labor market of the future.

CONCLUSION

The purpose of this study was to provide a robust examination of the intersection between international education and community college responses to the COVID-19 pandemic. Our results highlight leaders' concerns regarding internationally-focused programs on their campuses and potential short- and long-term impacts of the pandemic on international education. These findings highlight how the reallocation of resources, both financial and otherwise, due to the pandemic both shapes the educational opportunities available to students and informs the institutional *habitus* of the US community college. However, the implications of our study are not necessarily confined to the community college context. Indeed, numerous institutions in the United States and in other parts of the world experienced similar struggles regarding resource allocation in the wake of the pandemic. Our data support the notion that international education leaders will be contending with the pandemic's impact well into the future.

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International Recruitment: China Recruiters' Experience during COVID-19 Pandemic

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this qualitative study was to explore the experiences of China recruiters during the pandemic, particularly with their job stress and sense of job security. The study also explored the new norms of Chinese students' recruitment following the post-pandemic crisis. Using qualitative analysis, we found that China recruiters experienced different stressors during the pandemic regardless of their working location. The participants recognized the importance of communication and seeking institutional support to help overcome their stress during the pandemic. They suggested that higher education administrators should be sensitive to the needs of their international recruiters. The participants also suggested several new norms for future recruitment, such as using the hybrid recruitment model, promoting university collaboration, initiating joint programs between US and Chinese institutions, and hiring domestic recruiters. Implications for practice are discussed.

Keywords: China recruitment, Chinese student, covid-19, higher education, international recruitment, international student, job security, job stress

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INTRODUCTION

International recruiters are university admission officers hired by US higher education institutions (HEIs) to recruit international students to study in the US. International recruiters play a key role in the growth and advancement of US higher education institutions that are striving to create a more diverse and

inclusive learning environment. Additionally, they are assets to the financial success of the institutions, particularly HEIs that rely heavily on out-of-state tuitions from international students to offset the decrease in state funding. Despite the important roles that international recruiters hold in US HEIs, there is limited literature that focuses on international recruiters' experiences (e.g., Herget, 2013). Most studies focus on the outcomes of using agents to recruit international students or the importance of international recruitment in HEIs (e.g., Goralski & Tootoonchi, 2015; Huang et al., 2014; Nikula & Kivistö, 2018, 2020). As Herget (2013) shared it is relatively common for admission recruiters to get burnout and experience monotony of the repeating admission cycle. Despite her challenges with international recruitment in Asia, her experience has changed her perception and outlook of her position. This might not be the case for other international recruiters. During the COVID-19 pandemic, US HEIs have turned to international students as a solution for the budget issue. This might have stressed international recruiters, especially those who recruit in China.

Research shows that Chinese international students have become great assets to US HEIs. In fall 2019, 1,075,496 international students enrolled in the US. Thirty-five percent of the international students originated from China, followed by India (Open Doors, 2020a). China and India have consistently been the top two countries sending students to study in the US since 2000, but China has taken over the top rank as the country that sent the most students to the US starting 2009 (Open Doors, 2020a). Despite the 43 percent decline in international student enrollment in fall 2019, China international students contributed $15.9 billion to the US economy in 2019 (Open Doors, 2020b). The financial contribution was significant given many US HEIs were facing financial challenges and a decline in domestic enrollment. Previous research shows that the growth of the Chinese economy has made it financially feasible for Chinese parents to send their children to study abroad (Falcone, 2017). Chinese international students consider studying abroad in the US as an opportunity to broaden their horizons, receive a world-class education, and develop their global citizen identities. Some Chinese parents are also considering the US HEIs because of the post-graduation employability and migration opportunities. However, Chinese international students have experienced unpredictable challenges studying in the US ever since the Trump administration's inauguration in 2017 (Bartram, 2018; Forbes, 2020; Rose-Redwood & Rose-Redwood, 2017). Multiple foreign policies aimed at scrutinizing Chinese international students both in the US and those who were preparing for their applications to the US HEIs were implemented (Time, 2019). In addition to the hostile political environment, a global pandemic also brought uncertainty to Chinese international students (Cheng, 2019; Mok et al., 2021; Wan, 2020). The combination of these challenges has created additional obstacles to international recruiters who are responsible for the China recruitment market. This study helps to fill the gap in the literature and provide insights into HEIs administrators and international China recruiters' experience during the COVID-19 pandemic.

LITERATURE REVIEW

The Importance of International Enrollment and Marketing

Student enrollment is a fundamental operating component of US HEIs. The enrollment trends developed by HEIs offer insights for institutional budgeting and provide one of the earliest and most accurate indications of the current and future financial health of an institution (Gyure & Arnold, 2001). Student enrollment departments and the admissions office are often considered the engine of a HEI's operation (Huddleston, 2000; Kim et al., 2020). For the past decade international student enrollment has become a focus of many institutions' overall enrollment management strategy (Dennis, 1998; Meyer et al., 2007). Research shows that US HEIs have greatly benefited from hosting international students on their campuses (Chankseliani & Hessel, 2016; Choudaha et al., 2013). Besides the economic benefit, other benefits of enrolling international students include increasing financial revenues for institutional development, enhancing domestic students' global perspective, and promoting cultural and international understanding (Kwenani & Yu, 2019; Knight, 2012).

The marketing and recruitment activities strategically planned by admissions officers provide sustainable growth for their institutions (Briggs, 2006). They have also become resources for international students and their families to stay informed about their options to study abroad (Briggs, 2006; Eder et al., 2010). Many HEIs around the world have strategically integrated international admissions offices to support international marketing and recruiting efforts (West & Addington, 2014; Zinn & Johansson, 2015) and promote their institutions in a complex, ever-changing, and culturally diverse market to compete for global talents (Assad et al., 2013; Briggs, 2006; Goralski & Tootoonchi, 2015).

The Role of International Recruiters

When HEIs around the globe are competing in the market for international students, the role of international recruiters is no doubt a key for the success of international student enrollment. To acquire the best student talent, HEIs have developed diversified strategies and invested financially to increase international student enrollment (James-MacEachern, 2018; Knight, 2004). Hiring international recruiters is the most commonly used approach among HEIs when executing institutional international recruitment strategies (James-MacEachern, 2018). Research shows that the recruitment outcomes are connected to the characteristics of the recruiters, such as the "informativeness, personalness, and trustworthiness" (Alderfer & McCord, 1970; Chapman et al., 2005; Denzin & Lincoln, 2005). Besides those personal traits, international recruiters are also expected to be highly knowledgeable and resourceful in helping international students and their families with their decision-making process, as the process is complex and highly stressful due to the diverse cultural and educational backgrounds of the international students (Briggs, 2006). Therefore, international recruiters need to acquire sufficient admissions and institutional knowledge to provide appropriate guidance to international students and their families at various stages of the admissions process.

Challenges Faced by International Recruiters

International recruitment is a challenging and stressful profession due to the repetitive admission cycle and constant long distance travelduring the recruitment season (Herget, 2013). International recruiters encounter different challenges when working with international students. For example, what is considered as the "big picture" of an applicant's enrollment process for the domestic market is very different for the enrollment process in a global context for international recruiters. International enrollment process requires not only the pursuit of diversity, equity, and inclusion as domestic enrollment does, but it also involves additional efforts to compete for global talents in a political and culturally complex environment (Ramos, 2019; Shields, 2019). Additionally, the diversity and equity issues, complex overseas recruitment practices, international traveling policy, and the differences in foreign education systems are related challenges to the international recruiter profession. International recruiters also face an additional challenge on how to diversify their international student population based on their country of origins(Altbach, 2015; Andreson & Svrluga, 2019; ICEF Monitor, 2017; Mok et al., 2021). Research shows that the global pandemic has also altered the landscape of international recruitment practices (Mok et al., 2021). The scope and severity of the COVID-19 pandemic has created a profound public health crisis that negatively impacted international students in the US (Cheng, 2019; Meyer et al., 2007). Recruiting international students was further complicated by travel restrictions and closures of high school campuses during the COVID-19 pandemic. The impact on international students was especially profound due to the legal requirement of maintaining their immigration status as nonimmigrants (Mok et al., 2021). International students' preferences for universities may involve course options, academic reputation, career outcomes, teaching qualities, and more (Soutar & Turner, 2002). As international recruiters, they must address all the concerns and issues faced by international students and their families. Tough questions including the safety of the campus and racial discrimination among Asian students have to be addressed as part of recruitment practice during the pandemic (Mok et al, 2021). As a result, international recruiters must have an accurate working knowledge of enrollment management that they can integrate into their recruitment activities (Gyure & Arnold, 2001).

Job Stress

The University of Connecticut's study (2020) reported that 41 million US. workers filed for unemployment between February and May of 2020, which was the highest unemployment rate since the Great Depression. The COVID-19 pandemic has caused US workers to experience job insecurity and financial concerns which eventually led to depression and anxiety. US workers were fearful of the effects of COVID-19 on their employment (University of Connecticut, 2020). In Park and colleagues' (2020) study, they found some of the most common stressors experienced by their US participants were reading and hearing about the severity and contagious nature of the COVID-19 virus, uncertainty of the length of quarantine and social distancing requirements, changes to social and daily personal care routines, and financial concerns. Of all the stressors, loss of job security or income was also the biggest concern among the participants followed by the risk of a loved one's illness, stigma related to being high risk, loss of job, and lack of access to information.

Song and colleagues' research (2020) revealed that the pandemic has also caused an economic downturn and increased the unemployment rate in China. Similar to Park et al.'s (2020) study, many working adults in China were experiencing mental health and work attitude issues due to the fear of losing their jobs or having salaries cut. 20.7 percent of the participants experienced regular insomnia and 13.5 percent recognized that they experienced depression during the pandemic (Song et al., 2020). Aligning to the findings, researchers from a university in Brazil also found their university staff was also experiencing psychological distress during the pandemic (Serralta et al., 2020). The transition to working from home has led university staff to experience work overload, digital fatigue, and loss of boundaries between personal and professional life. However, the study revealed that the older staff exhibited less psychological distress because of their maturity and financial stability. This aligns with the results from a national study conducted in the US (De Bruin, 2021).

Job Security

Job security is "employee's expectations about the stability and longevity of their job in an organization" (Lu et al., 2017). Job security is an important indicator of work performance and organizational commitment (Yousef, 1998). Several research studies have been conducted to examine the importance of job security and its correlation between employees' wellbeing (Burke, 1991; Pacheco et al., 2020; Silla et al., 2009), retention (Raub & Streit, 2006, Samual & Chipunza, 2009; Griffeth et al, 1997), and job satisfaction (Ahmed & Jameel, 2018; Lacy & Sheehan, 1997).

Natural disasters and public crises can affect the level of job security (Mastroianni, 2009). Pacheco et al. (2020) conducted a study two weeks after the social distancing measure took place in Canada during COVID-19. Their research shows that the COVID-19 pandemic negatively impacted the employees' job security and wellbeing. Staff members who worked in HEIs and supported students during COVID-19 also experienced a higher level of anxiety about job security (Bauman, 2020). According to Bauman (2020), besides the stress of handling the pandemic, university staff was also concerned about being furloughed. Additionally, staff were reluctant to express their health and safety concerns, even as they were tasked with additional roles and responsibilities (Anderson, 2020).

RESEARCH METHOD

In this qualitative study, we aim to understand the phenomenon of China recruiters' experience with Chinese international student recruitment, their job stress, job security, and the new norms with Chinese international student recruitment post COVID-19 pandemic crisis. To develop an understanding of participants' recruitment experience during the pandemic, a purposive sampling technique was applied to recruit participants who met these criteria: a) responsible for Chinese international student recruitment, b) responsible for China recruitment during the COVID-19 pandemic, and c) recruited for a US HEI. With the aim of getting more in-depth knowledge and perspective of China recruiters' experience, the participants were also selected based on their geographical location. The participants were based in China and outside of China.

Participants

Upon receiving IRB approval from Texas A&M University-Commerce, the authors shared the study and purpose of the study via emails with international recruitment colleagues whom they have met through professional recruitment associations and networks (e.g., International IACAC, Education USA, and LANTO China). Additionally, the first author shared the research with other international recruiters through the Chinese International Student Recruitment social media group (WeChat). The first author emailed all interested participants a brief description of the purpose of the research and a consent form. For a variation in sampling, three participants were based in China and the other three were based outside of China when the interviews took place. Among the three participants who were based outside of China, two of them were living in the US and the other one was living in the U.K. The demographics and characteristics of the participants are summarized in Table 1 (Results). Three out of six participants recruited for a US private institution while the other three participants recruited for a US public research institution.

Data Collection

The data collection process consisted of two phases. For the first phase, a demographic survey link was distributed to the participants individually via e-mail. In the demographic survey (Appendix I), the participants were asked to rate their job stress level and job security level during the pandemic on a 10-point Likert scale (1 = being extremely low to 10 = being extremely high). The second phase of the data collection process included semi-structured interviews conducted individually with the participants via Zoom. The following research questions were predetermined based on the review of the literature to guide the study:

1. What were the challenges faced by Chinese student recruiters during the COVID-19 pandemic?
2. What institutional support did Chinese student recruiters need or find helpful during the pandemic?
3. What are the new norms of Chinese international students' recruitment post-pandemic crisis?

Additional probing questions (Appendix II) were conducted with participants individually during the interviews to gain a deeper understanding of their overall recruiting and work experience during the pandemic crisis. Each interview lasted about 45 minutes. The first author led all the interviews while the second author listened to all the interviews. Per IRB guidelines, we assured each participant that their participation is voluntary and that they could stop their participation in the study at any time. The participants provided consent to have their interviews recorded for transcription and data analysis.

Data Analysis

Descriptive data analysis was used to describe the background of the participants. The qualitative data were analyzed and interpreted using Creswell's (2014) qualitative analysis approach. We triangulated our data using the member checking process. The recorded interviews were transcribed verbatim. The interview transcripts were read multiple times before the data was assigned codes and themes such as recruitment challenges, job stress, job security, solutions and support services, and new norms of China recruitment. Finally, the interpreted data and findings were used to elaborate on each emerging theme. Relevant quotes from the participants were included to provide more details to illustrate the findings of the study.

RESULTS

Demographic Descriptions

The demographic descriptions of the participants are summarized in Table 1. The study consisted of three male and three female recruiters representing three different types of institutions – Public, Private not-for-profit, and Private for-profit. All the participants were seasoned recruiters. They had three years to 15 years of experience recruiting Chinese international students for US HEIs. Four recruiters were self-

identified as Asian descent, one Black, and one White. Three recruiters were based in China and the remaining three were based outside of China. In this section, descriptive analysis was used to summarize the participants' responses to the research topics.

Table 1

Demographic Description of Participants

Participant	Gender	Race	*Total Years of Experience*	*Types of Institution*	Location of Institution	International Student Population
John	M	Asian	8	Public	Midwest	11%
Cristi	F	Asian	7	Private not-for-profit	Midwest	3%
Adam	M	Asian	3	Public	Northeast	14%
Sally	F	Asian	4	Private for-profit	South	1%
Sharon	F	Black	6	Public	West	13%
David	M	White	15	Private not-for-profit	East	10%

Recruitment Challenges

Prior to the COVID-19 pandemic, China recruiters had experienced different challenges in recruiting Chinese international students to study in the US. The participants indicated the political climate in the US was a primary concern among Chinese students with parents who were seriously considering the US as a study abroad destination. Several executive orders initiated by the Trump's administration had restricted Chinese students' access to study in the US. Those policies had directly impacted Chinese international and prospective students (Forbes, 2020). On top of the challenging political environment, the COVID-19 pandemic also hindered Chinese international students' study abroad journey. Chinese international students experienced challenges in applying for a student visa to study in the US due to the temporary closure of the US embassies and consulates. Additionally, Chinese parents and students perceived that Chinese international students were not welcome in the US as Adam indicated:

> …a lot of times, parents are worried about whether they should still send their kids to United States because they're worried that due to the political climate between China and US the US citizens will not treat their children as well as before…

Sharon also added:

> There was this perception that I gathered when meeting with students and parents, while in China, ...the idea of the Trump administration not wanting Chinese students in the US so that caused the fear and some reluctance to apply to US schools.

The other challenge the participants encountered was the university's ranking in the U.S. News & World Report plays a major role in their ability to schedule a campus visit or meeting with high school counselors and students. A participant who represented a lower-ranked institution voiced his opinion:,

> I think the Chinese people want to "save face" so you've got kids go to a more reputable or higher-ranking university, both the students, counselors and the parents felt very proud.

On the other hand, another participant who represented an institution that ranked higher in the U.S. News & World Report experienced a different type of struggle, she shared,

> [it] was difficult to get to all the schools that we were invited to attend, so that was a good problem to have, but also I didn't have the opportunity to visit a lot of the rural schools that I would have liked to get to.

During the pandemic, the participants experienced a different set of challenges. Many high school counselors, students, and parents were concerned about the safety of their children who were interested to study in the US due to the Asian discrimination caused by the COVID-19 virus. For example, Sally shared, "10 out of 10 Chinese students will ask me am I going to be safe in America?" and Adam added, "[parents] are worried that more discrimination will happen in the United States." David also added:

> Crime against Asians in the US has definitely gotten a large play in the press here and that's an issue so it has become more challenging as time has gone on, especially with the mishandling of the pandemic in the US. The US isn't welcoming and the US isn't safe, especially this is a concern for parents.

With the closure of high school campuses in China due to the COVID-19 pandemic, virtual recruitments via Zoom and other online platforms were the only ways to reach Chinese students. Unfortunately, it was not an easy process for international recruiters globally because Chinese high schools have put in place a rigid and selective process before allowing university recruiters to reach their students virtually. Participants who were based outside of China also expressed concern about the time zone difference. John stated:

> I was based in the Midwest of United States, there's always a 13- or 14-hour time difference so most of the events I organized are at 1 AM, 2 AM, 3 AM, 5 AM…it was very tough for me. It's at night that I need work to do the recruitment.

On the contrary, participants who were based in China experienced the uncertainty of organized high school campus visits and education fairs. Participants had to be agile and learn to deal with last minute schedule changes. For instance, Cristi said:

> There are starting to be things [recruitment events] that we can do, maybe at 50, 60, or two-third of the capacity as before pandemic, but the tricky thing is, I think for the second phase of the pandemic, is that everything is subject to a last-minute change or a lot of variables.

Also, Adam shared his concern:

> Different schools require COVID testing before I visit and a lot of times I'll get uncertain answers from counselors because they're not sure if their COVID policy is cleared at the local government or they're not sure if they are able to host in-person visit.

Job Stress

The COVID-19 pandemic had increased the stress level of China recruiters despite where they were based at during the pandemic. Two out of six participants indicated a stress level of seven (out of 10) during the pandemic. The other four participants indicated a stress level of eight. With China being on lockdown, schools moving to the online learning format, and US HEIs restricting international traveling, these caused stress among the participants particularly recruiters who experienced severe pressure from their institution to meet the set enrollment goal. A couple of participants indicated that their institutional

leadership had different perceptions about the Chinese international student recruitment market and developed unrealistic expectations. For instance, a participant shared,

> I think they have this illusion about China because we are giant bubble, so people see China is a big market with a huge population…big market means big giant prospective students or audience.

Another participant also expressed her institutional leadership's perspective on China recruitment "As long as you have online virtual thing, so the number should go up."

Participants who were based outside of China experienced an additional level of stress due to overwork. Time zone differences forced participants to work early in the morning and late in the evening to accommodate the needs of high school counselors and students. For example, a participant complained:

> It's at night I need to do the recruitment and then in daytime I also have meetings, emails come in that I need to answer. Then, there's a phone call coming from a student or parent that wakes me up and that I need to answer. No daytime or nighttime, it is going all of the time, so it was very difficult.

Additionally, Sharon also expressed:

> [I] was not being able to properly balance work-home life because I'm home 100% of the day. And I'm working during the day, and you're at home, for me it was just hard to cut it off at five o'clock. If I'm sitting in front of the TV I may just be okay, well I'm going to read a few applications or I'm going to you know schedule some sessions or answer emails, so it seemed that I was always trying to keep busy with work.

The other factor that triggered stress among the participants was the individual expectations of their job performance. Several participants had high expectations to excel in their work so when the outcomes did not meet their expectations, they began to experience stress. For example, John shared:

> I want to increase [the number] no matter how hard I tried it still the number that doesn't get an increase dramatically, so that's the pressure…so that's probably the reason I couldn't bring the numbers up so that give myself pressure, that probably put on myself…probably because I didn't do it the right way or didn't work hard enough.

Adam also commented:

> I was probably the busiest one. I still feel that I could do more because I want to exceed US expectations…I will say this part of stress well actually came from myself because I am a self-motivator…I wanted to do better because I love [institution] way too much and I want more schools to get to know [institution] in a sense and if I can get to travel to four schools each day out and four schools, if I can get five I would do five.

Job Security

Two out of six participants had identified their job security as a five or lower (on a 10-point scale). A participant was particularly troubled by the budgetary restrictions of her institution, as a result, she was limited on the work she could complete based on the limited budget that she had, yet the institution was expecting the same enrollment outcome. The other participant was concerned about his job because his institutional leader had proposed to hire a recruiter based in China. This led to a fear of losing his position.

On the other hand, two out of six participants rated their job security with a 10. They were very confident about their position. One of the participants stressed that his institution even had to hire an additional staff member last winter to support the additional workload. The other participant claimed, "…because we started our China market, right after the pandemic happened…"; therefore, he did not feel pressured or insecure about his position. He also had prior experience working for the same institution before the institution decided to establish an office in China. Additionally, these two participants also expressed that their institution focused on the long-term recruitment strategy instead of the short-term enrollment result. They experienced less pressure from their institution during the pandemic, as a result, they felt secure about their position.

Solutions and Support Services

Despite the different challenges the participants experienced during the pandemic, participants had found different ways to overcome their challenges. In addition, US HEIs also provided different resources to assist and support their recruiters during challenging times.

Communication

Communication was crucial to the participants during the pandemic. With the limitation of what the participants were able to do, they had to rely on their colleagues from their institutions and other institutions (e.g., university recruiters, recruiting agents, and education fair companies) to help and support their recruitment initiatives. Sally suggested, "Reaching out to every single resource you have. I don't really have an excuse or like trick to do something easy and quick and smart, just reaching out all the resources we have." Additionally, it was crucial for the participants to maintain close communication with recruitment agents, high school counselors, and prospective students, as Sally commented "…you know if you really don't talk with agencies and students and the parents and the teachers in person, they don't really remember you very well. They can really forget you." David also agreed, "The first thing was to keep contact, the most important thing was to keep contact, and this mostly involved that Weixin, of course, what's a Weibo."

Institutional Support

Participants encountered different challenges with their recruitment during the pandemic. To better serve the China recruiters, US HEIs had provided different types of resources and support systems to assist their recruiters. For example, Sharon shared:

> The institution was incredibly supportive and when I even talked about the stress of balance that was one of the first things that they wanted to make sure we all maintained…they wanted us to every so often pull away to take give ourselves a break, take a lunch, even though we're at home, go for a walk to get out of the four walls so there's a lot of support with mental health and having that balance while working at home…There was a lot of support, with more one-on-one meetings, just to really be able to unpack.

John also expressed the support that he received from his supervisor and colleagues:

> Sometimes my supervisor even as, for example, two events in the same night or in the same early morning, my supervisor will take one, and then I take one, and then sometimes it is like a very long or two or three hours or some events that very busy one couldn't handle, then I asked my colleague…from India…depends on when she is available.

New Norms of China Recruitment

The COVID-19 pandemic had taken a toll on university recruiters who were responsible for international student recruitment. With China being on lockdown, limiting foreign travelers from entering the country, and high schools limiting university recruiters visiting prospective students, the participants were forced to explore alternate ways to reach out to high school counselors, students, and parents. When asked what are some of the new norms of China recruitment in a post-pandemic era , the participants consistently shared that utilizing a hybrid recruitment model, collaborating with other university recruiters, creating joint programs with Chinese institutions, and hiring a university recruiter based in China are the new norms with China recruitment.

Hybrid Recruitment Model

The virtual platform was the primary tool the participants utilized to conduct information sessions and workshops for high school counselors, students, and parents during the pandemic. Even post-pandemic participants who were based outside of China continued to utilize the online platform to

connect and engage with high school counselors and prospective students. Sally utilized the virtual platform to stay connected with her former students who enrolled at US institutions. She was able to assist the students with their questions and transition virtually. Also, Sharon claimed:

> In the virtual space, I can meet with those students that are much farther out in China's countryside, in those rural areas and I am able to get to many more students and have more personable conversations one-on-one or in group settings.

The virtual recruitment platform may be a valuable tool for recruiters, particularly those who are based outside of China, but high school students are experiencing digital fatigue. John shared, "So we attended a lot of online events organized by the event organizers…nobody showed up, very frustrating to waste my time, but also waste the cost…" In addition, Adam had a similar experience when interacting with high school counselors:

> I reach out to counselors a lot of times because in September and October last year, we were actually experiencing zoom fatigue, so if you try to do a virtual visit with them it's tough, counselors don't really want to schedule a virtual visit because they know their students won't be paying attention to it.

Despite the benefits virtual recruitment platforms have to offer, David emphasized that virtual platforms "are just placeholders, online just simply doesn't work in China." The in-person visit remains important to successfully recruit in China. It can add another layer of richness to the overall recruitment experience of the recruiters and students. For instance, Adam pointed out:

> I really love the hybrid model because it gives us a wider reach so, for example, I will probably never go to Xinjiang forever to recruit or even Lanzhou, that's out of my reach….I don't have the time to travel there to do an in-person visit, but with the hybrid model, more counselors are open to a virtual visit so I get to schedule visits with those schools that I'm not able to visit in person.

Additionally, an in-person meeting may also be a tool that recruiters use to engage and retain prospective students as John mentioned, "I think a lot of universities they will do international travel and later they will do online small one-on-one while following up sessions they will do many of that." Cristi summed up "I think the hybrid of online workshop and in-person workshop will be a new norm, but I think that's not only in China, that's just overall."

University Collaboration

The COVID-19 pandemic forced recruiters to view their work responsibilities differently compared to pre-pandemic. Despite the fact recruiters are competing for students, recruiters may have to work more collaboratively with one another to reach their recruitment goal. For instance, Cristi shared:

> I think for me to do one school presentation is hard because you can't really have 20 or 30 audience that are necessary interested in [institution], so what I've been trying out for the past semester, the academic year is to line up with a few liberal arts universities…so that can benefit a larger group of audience.

In order to meet the needs of the students, Sally had also tried to be more strategic when collaborating with other university recruiters. She shared,

> …you can talk with a different university representative working
> together as long as you are different type of universities…we offer
> different kinds of programs, which are really attractive those students
> and…we need each other.

University collaboration efforts not only attract prospective students to attend the different virtual sessions, but also to improve the effectiveness of the virtual recruitment sessions and outcomes. For example, Sharon shared her experience working with three other university partners,

> "We created dates that we share with our key schools that we wanted to
> reach out to and planned individual sessions with those schools, we did
> probably about 14 sessions together, along with a panel discussion…"

Additionally, David thought that university collaboration initiatives may be an opportunity for China recruiters who are based outside of China to have a better representation in Chinese high schools given the restricted traveling policy China is enforcing.

Joint Programs

As universities across the globe compete for international students, some US HEIs have stepped up to this challenge by initiating joint programs (also known as partnership programs) with international high schools and HEIs in China with the intention to enroll and retain international students. During the pandemic, David attested that the joint programming his institution developed is a "silver lining to the pandemic". He shared, "During this time, [parents] have wanted their child to begin their studies in China and so joint programs have done very, very well under this situation." Sally shared, "…we never ever had any cooperation with any Chinese universities in China…we start to have a first cooperation with the university in China…is not easy for them to accept a new mode, but they try their best." Cristi's institution also developed academic partnerships with universities and high schools on pathway programs. Additionally, Sharon also speculated:

> We're going to see more of our pathway programs with international schools where that will allow international students to study in their home country...you know of where we are now it has been there's still a level of uncertainty and apprehension with coming to the US. And we still want and need international students, so I do see schools exploring those opportunities and expanding those type of pathways into their portfolio in order and offerings for students.

Domestic Recruiter

Virtual tools (e.g., Zoom, Skype) and virtual platforms including Cialfo and self-organized virtual events by high schools and associations, such as Education USA may have provided an alternative solution for China recruiters based outside of China to conduct virtual information sessions and fairs to high school counselors, students, and parents; however, this may not be a permanent solution for US HEIs that rely heavily on international student enrollment. Even though the Chinese government has restricted foreign travelers from entering the country during the pandemic, people who live in China have the flexibility to travel around China. This allows a domestic recruiter to have the privilege to schedule high school campus visits that recruiters based outside of China are not able to complete. As David shared:

> Fortunately, for us, we were able to go back to in-person relatively quickly, very quickly, in fact, by summer of 2020 we were largely back face-to-face and by the autumn of 2020, you know exhibition traveling schedule was completely back to normal, same as it was before the pandemic and that has kept up again until last week.

John arguably said:

> [Students and parents] are eager to meet those university representatives…any university, who has a representative in China, they do have a lot of advantages…and that's why [institution] was very much determined to hire somebody to be based in China to recruit out there because within the country they can travel as no problem.

Additionally, David emphasized "I don't know how you can survive if your job is only to recruit in China and you're based in the US…I think you know institutions that don't have representation here are at a huge disadvantage at this point."

Limitation

The major limitation of this study is the small sample size. We believe that in-depth studies using a small sample size must not be overlooked as they provide nuanced details of sub-populations within larger systems such as HEIs. Second, all the participants recruited were from US HEIs so the findings, discussion, and implications are presented within the US context and may not be generalizable for international institutions.

DISCUSSION

This study explored China recruiters' experience during the COVID-19 pandemic. Our findings indicate that China recruiters experienced challenges in addressing the concerns that Chinese high school counselors, Chinese international students and their parents have pertaining to the safety and values of studying in the US during the pandemic. The US political and social climate and the pressure to deliver short-term recruitment results had added a layer of stress on the participants. Our participants indicated that finding a work-life balance was relatively challenging when working remotely from home because of the difficulty separating their work and personal lives. This aligns with the research conducted by Serralta and colleagues (2020) when they discussed the effects of psychological distress due to work overload, digital fatigue, and loss of boundaries separating personal and professional life. Additionally, the concerns that some of the participants had about their job security supported Bauman's study (2020) that describes how the pandemic has pushed hundreds of thousands of higher education employees out of the workforce.

On the contrary, the findings also address that maintaining close communication with high school counselors and education agents during the pandemic was crucial for them to schedule in-person or virtual meetings with the students. This echoes Herget's (2013) perspective on the values of developing relationships with guidance counselors and following up with the students and counselors. The participants also suggested using the hybrid recruitment model, promoting university collaboration, initiating joint programs between US and Chinese institutions, and hiring domestic recruiters are new norms of recruitment in China. International recruiters have experienced different challenges with international recruitment, trying to recruit international students during the global pandemic was a new challenge to many international recruiters. Therefore, HEIs administrators and leaders need to be sensitive to the needs of their international recruiters so that they can provide adequate resources to support their recruiters. The participants revealed that despite the chaos and stress they endured, they were grateful that their supervisors would help with some recruitment events and encourage them to find time for self-care.

Based on the findings of the study, four potential implications for practice were identified. First, China recruiters should seek out recruitment collaboration opportunities with other university or college recruiters to gain traction and interest of Chinese high school counselors and students. Second, China recruiters who are based outside of China should consider collaborating with recruiters who are based in China if they plan to recruit Chinese international students using the hybrid recruitment model because this will allow them to establish a connection with high school counselors, students, and parents. Third, US higher education leaders should consider developing joint programs with Chinese's partner institutions should the institution's long-term goal be to recruit and retain Chinese international students to study in the US. Fourth, US higher education leadership may consider hiring a recruiter who is based in China or establish a recruitment office in China to have a stronger foothold in recruiting Chinese international students.

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APPENDIX I

Demographic Survey

1. First Name: _____ Last Name: _____
2. Email address: _____
3. What gender do you identify as:
    a. Male
    b. Female
    c. Non-binary
    d. Other: _____
    e. I prefer not to say
4. What is your ethnic background:
    a. White
    b. Hispanic or Latino/a
    c. Black or African American
    d. Native American or American Indian
    e. Asian or Pacific Islander
    f. Mixed race
    g. Other: _____
5. What is your marital status?
    a. Single
    b. Married or domestic partnership
    c. Widowed
    d. Divorced
    e. Separated
    f. I prefer not to say
6. How many dependent do you have?
    a. No dependent
    b. 1
    c. 2-3
    d. 4 or more
    e. I prefer not to say
7. Name of the institution you were employed during the COVID-19 pandemic: _____
8. Total years of experience as a university recruiter (including previous institution): _____
9. Years of employment at the institution listed above: _____
10. I am a China recruiter based in:
    a. U.S.
    b. China
    c. Other:_____
11. Please rate the following statement based your experience during the pandemic (1-10; 1 being extremely low and 10 being extremely high)
    a. Job stress: _____
    b. Job security: _____

APPENDIX II

Interview Questions

1. **What were the challenges faced by Chinese student recruiters during the COVID-19 pandemic?**
   Recruitment Experience

   a. How would you describe your recruitment experience prior to the pandemic?
   b. What were some of the challenges that you faced as a Chinese student recruiter prior to the pandemic?
   c. How would you describe your recruitment experience during the pandemic?
   d. What were some of the challenges that you faced as a Chinese student recruiter during the pandemic?
   e. Politics can play an important role in your work as an international recruiter. When Donald Trump was in presidency, did the US- China relationship affect your work as a recruiter in China? If yes, how did it affect your work?
   f. Can you think of any challenges that you encountered as you were recruiting Chinese students to study in the US when Donald Trump was the president?
   g. After President Biden's transition into the administration, has the US-China relationship affected your work differently as a recruiter in China? If yes, how did it affect your work?
   h. Can you think of any challenges that you have encountered with recruiting Chinese students to study in the US after Joe Biden takes over as the US president?

   Job Stress

   a. How would you describe your job stress level during the pandemic?
   b. In your opinion, what were some factors that led you to experience such stress level?
   c. Do you still experience this level of stress now?
   d. Did you feel or experience any pressure from the institution during the pandemic in terms of meeting your recruitment goal?
   e. Did you receive any support from your institution during the pandemic?
   f. If yes, what type of support did you receive? Were there any other support or resources that you wish you had received from the institution?
   g. If no, what type of support would you hope to receive from your institution?
   h. In your opinion, why do you think your institution responded this way?

   Job security

   a. Given the changes with Chinese high schools' campus climate and also the restricted traveling policy during the pandemic, were you concern or nervous about your job security? If yes, why were you concern or nervous?
   b. Had you thought about changing jobs during the pandemic? Why or Why not?
2. **What institutional support did Chinese student recruiters need or find helpful during the pandemic?**
   a. Did the institution hold you to a recruitment standard during the pandemic?
   b. Did you receive any support from your institution during the pandemic?
      i. If yes, what type of support did you receive?
      ii. If not, what type of support would you hope to receive from your institution?
   c. In your opinion, why do you think your institution responded this way?
3. **What are the new norms of Chinese international students' recruitment post-pandemic crisis?**
   a. With Chinese high schools moving to an online learning format and high schools restricting campus visit and college fair, what were some strategies that you found useful or helpful to your work during the pandemic? How did these strategies help you with Chinese student recruitment?
   b. What had you seen other university recruiters do differently with Chinese student recruitment during the pandemic?
   c. What would you say are the new norms for Chinese recruitment after the pandemic crisis? Can you provide some examples?

Empirical Article

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Impacts of The COVID-19 Pandemic On First-Generation, Low-Income And Rural Students In Indonesia And Vietnam: A Cross-Cultural Comparative Study

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ABSTRACT

Comparative studies around the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic are still limited. This paper explores the question: how has the COVID-19 pandemic affected higher education students, and which ones have been most impacted? Indonesia and Vietnam are our focus. We leveraged a rich set of data collected online from both countries (n = 2600). We used regression analyses to measure students' wellbeing, financial hardships, access to technology, and educational satisfaction. As expected, we found statistically significant differences between both countries except for the wellbeing domain. For within-country comparison, consistent for both countries, low-income students were less likely to access technology and were more likely to experience financial distress than their counterparts. Indonesian first-gen students also showed a similar trend. Lastly, we observed a lower likelihood of satisfaction from rural and low-income students in Indonesia for their education during the pandemic. We provide our policy recommendations for both countries.

Keywords*:* COVID-19 pandemic, comparative study, disadvantaged students, first-generation, higher education, low-income, rural

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INTRODUCTION

The COVID-19 pandemic has affected 600 million students in higher education institutions across 200 countries. Studies from across the world have also shown that there is a widening gap for access to digital devices across socioeconomic (SES) status (Adnan & Anwar, 2020; Murgatrotd, 2020; Pokhrel, 2021; Rodriguez-Planas, 2020; UNESCO, 2020; World Bank 2020b). This study aims to explore the question: how has the COVID-19 pandemic affected higher education students, and which ones have been impacted the most? We focus specifically on Indonesia and Vietnam.

The COVID-19 pandemic has affected students' outcomes in higher education in Indonesia and Vietnam, particularly students' well-being, access to technology, the financial hardships they have endured, and their satisfaction with the quality of learning throughout the pandemic. Many studies focused on the COVID-19 pandemic and its impact on higher education have only examined within-country or its regional effects (Aucejo et al., 2020; Agasisti & Soncin, 2021; Arënliu et al., 2021; Coman et al., 2020; Rodriguez-Planas, 2020). However, no comparative studies have explored this question for the Southeast Asia (SEA) region, one of the most rapidly industrializing, urbanizing, and fast growing economic regions globally in the second quarter of 2020 before the COVID-19 pandemic hit (Djalante et al., 2020). For developing countries such as Indonesia and Vietnam, the pandemic's enormous impact on their higher education students has been notable. Throughout this study, we intend to bridge the gaps that we observe in the literature.

We selected Indonesia and Vietnam as two countries to compare for several reasons. First, they are both from the SEA region. They are experiencing demographic bonus dividends from their respective populations in which there will be an increase in labor market participation that may boost the productivity of their economies. These two countries have invested in their higher education systems in anticipation of current and future demographic dividends that will positively impact their economies (Afandi, 2017, World Bank, 2016). As a result, there has been an upward trend in the total enrollment of higher education students over the last two decades, including first-generation higher education students (Asian Development Bank, 2011). Therefore, examining the COVID-19 pandemic's impact on these two countries sheds light on future policy implications. Second, studies have shown that the retention rate of SEA first-generation students is among the lowest rates for students in higher education systems across the globe. Understanding the context of these two countries deeply is worthwhile because they were simultaneously trying to provide financial assistance to low-income families during the pandemic (Djalante et al., 2020). Third, there are different approaches to how the two governments handled the pandemic. Vietnam has shown itself to be one of the most successful countries globally for its handling of the COVID-19 pandemic, while in stark contrast, Indonesia has suffered immensely from the pandemic (Djalante et al., 2020; UN News, 2020; Willoughby, 2021).

With more than 12 million higher education students in the SEA region and over 75% of them from Vietnam and Indonesia, our study will provide important lessons learned about the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on higher education students in the SEA region. Ideally, in future research, we hope to include other countries in the SEA region that have shared cultural and demographic similarities with Indonesia and Vietnam for more robust results. However, we decided to only compare these two countries with our current time and resource constraints. Future research will build on our findings by including more countries in the SEA region.

The remainder of this paper will be divided into four sections. First, we will discuss the theoretical framework, prior research findings, and the literature, as well as comparative studies about the COVID-19 pandemic and its impact on higher education. In addition, we will highlight parts of the

literature that aim to bridge the gap with our research study. Second, we will elaborate on the cross-sectional data in this study, specifically the methods and empirical strategies that we will employ to test our hypothesis. Third, we will present our results and discuss our findings. Finally, we will conclude with our findings, discuss important policy implications, acknowledge the limitations of our study, and point out opportunities for future studies.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Currently, no specific theoretical framework is geared towards the wellbeing and burnout of college students when referring to the current COVID-19 pandemic. Therefore, our research draws prominent theories developed before the pandemic, mainly from industrial and organizational psychology. The concepts of well-being and burnout have been thoroughly researched in recent decades and are confirmed to be psychological and multidimensional. In the realm of psychological well-being, researchers have proposed many theories. Ryan and Deci (2001) summarized two primary theoretical views in their study of well-being: the hedonic view and the eudaimonic view. The hedonic view suggests that "well-being consists of pleasure and happiness" (p. 143). The eudaimonic view states that "well-being consists of more than just happiness" but "in the actualization of human potentials" (p. 143). More specifically, Ryff (1989) proposed six dimensions of psychological well-being: autonomy, environmental mastery, personal growth, positive relationships, purpose in life, and self-acceptance (Ryff, 1989). Maslach (1993) defines burnout as a multidimensional psychological syndrome. Its three core components are emotional exhaustion, depersonalization, and reduced personal accomplishment. Emotional exhaustion means "feelings of being emotionally overextended and depleted of one's emotional resources" caused by "work overload and personal conflicts at work" (Maslach, 2000, p. 69). Depersonalization "refers to a negative, cynical, or excessively detached response to other people" caused by "overload of emotional exhaustion" (Maslach, 2000, p. 69). Reduced personal accomplishment "refers to a decline in feelings of competence and productivity at work" linked to "depression and an inability to cope with the demands of the job," which may be exacerbated by "a lack of social support and of opportunities to develop professionally" (Maslach, 2000, p. 69).

We used the above theories to guide our study. Well-being and burnout are multidimensional and associated with many factors. Those factors and dimensions exist at the personal, interpersonal, and institutional levels. For college students facing the pandemic, we see the following factors as determinants of their well-being and burnout conditions: institutional support, educational satisfaction, family support, finance, friendship, and health.

LITERATURE REVIEW

COVID-19 Studies from Around the Globe

Many studies from around the globe have shown that the COVID-19 pandemic has negatively impacted many aspects of higher education. A study by Aucejo et al. (2020) surveyed students in the U.S. showed that COVID-19 delayed graduation, increased loss of jobs, and decreased prospective earnings. The study also showed that low-income students suffered the most. Studies from different parts of Europe, including from the UK, Italy, Romania, and Kosovo, have also shown that the COVID-19 pandemic has negatively impacted students' financial situation, teaching and learning process in the universities, access to technologies, literacy, overall quality and satisfaction of learning and students' overall wellbeing (Agasisti & Soncin, 2021; Arënliu et al., 2021; Choi et al., 2020; Coman et al., 2020). These results are also identical to studies from Asia (Baloch et al., 2021; Barrot et al., 2021; Gopal et al., 2021; Hassan & Bao, 2020). However, all these studies are within-country comparisons, while comparative studies are still limited in numbers (Helsingen et al., 2020; Jae Moon et al., 2021; Kumar, 2020). Thus, the need for comparative studies is inevitable and urgent (Araújo et al., 2020) not only because most higher education systems have shifted to online learning (Chan, 2020), but the consensus in the literature has shown that there is a growing inequality during the pandemic (Bambra et al., 2021).

Consistent with within-country studies, a few comparative studies have shown that the pandemic impacted higher education students in their financial situations, technological access, overall quality and satisfaction of instruction, as well as their overall wellbeing (Djajadikerta et al., 2021; Ma et al., 2021; Mlambo and Ndebele, 2021; Tejegor et al., 2020; Tang et al., 2021). A comparative study involving 62 countries from Aristovnik et al. (2020) has also shown similar adverse effects on students' performance. However, there are still missing sub-groups in the literature about this topic: first-generation, rural, and low-income students (McFadden, 2015). Through this study, we hope to bridge this gap.

The COVID-19 Pandemic and Disadvantaged Students in Higher Education

Some studies about rural students and low-income students during the pre-pandemic period showed that students from these sub-groups experienced more barriers while navigating higher education systems than their counterparts did, but most of these studies are from the U.S. (Bastedo & Jaquette, 2011; Byun et al., 2012; Engle & Tinto, 2008; Eagle & Tinto; 2008; Goldman et al., 2020; House et al., 2020; Irvin et al., 2012; Kilgo et al., 2018; Lightweis, 2014; Padron, 1992; Tate et al.; 2015).

Very few studies from the pandemic focus on these vulnerable sub-groups, and the available ones only focus on a within-country context. For instance, Lee et al. (2021) found that first-generation students in the U.S. were more likely to take a gap year or time off from school. Another study has shown that compared to students in general, low-income students were 1) more likely to experience barriers attending online classes during the pandemic; 2) more prone to dropping their courses; and 3) more likely to experience financial and personal distress, including securing daily basic needs and shelter (Rodríguez-Planas, 2020). Another study from the California State University and University of California systems – one of the largest community college systems in the U.S. – has shown that the pandemic was much harder on students from minority and lower-income backgrounds within these groups of students, indicating that the most significant drop in enrollment was for community college students (17%) (Bulman & Fairlie, 2021). Additionally, young people who live alone with lower socioeconomic status (SES) and who have no secure employment experienced higher rates of mental distress when compared to their counterparts who were able to retain their jobs during the pandemic (Scarpetta et al., 2020).

Studies on the Impacts of the COVID-19 Pandemic on Higher Education in Indonesia and Vietnam

The COVID-19 pandemic and the shutdown of schools created some disruptions in Vietnamese and Indonesian education, which have not been evaluated to date. However, some emergent literature has focused on the impact of school disruption and higher education's response to governmental policies. Recent studies from Indonesia also note that access to technology, the quality of the instruction during the pandemic, as well as personal motivation and wellbeing have been significant determinant factors regarding the success of online learning during the COVID-19 pandemic (Yudiawan et al., 2021; Khusna & Khoiruddin, 2020).

In Vietnam, Pham & Ho (2020) described the possibilities and challenges of online learning in Vietnam's higher education system, acknowledging that there may not have been sufficient policies and resources to integrate online learning fully. They concluded, however, that "the COVID-19 pandemic has brought about an opportunity to introduce e-learning comprehensively into Vietnamese higher education" (Pham & Ho, 2020, p.1329), outlining pathways for its incorporation into post-COVID-19 Vietnam. Another study shows that there has been a high level of disruption from the COVID-19 pandemic on students' work, study productivity, and modes of learning (Nguyen et al., 2020).

However, these studies from Indonesia and Vietnam only look at specific institutions or regions. Through our research, we aim to not only compare the outcomes between Indonesia and Vietnam, but we will also compare them nationally. With virtually no comparative studies available about the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on first-generation, rural, and low-income students, especially from the context of Asia, we aim to bridge the literature gap.

Overview of Higher Education Systems in Indonesia and Vietnam

Indonesia

Currently, there are 122 state universities and over 3,129 private universities across Indonesia, serving seven million students (The Ministry of Education, 2017; BPS, 2019). There was a significant increase in the enrollment rate at higher education institutions in Indonesia, from about 3% in 2005 to almost 17% in 2019 (OECD, 2019). However, most higher education enrollment is mainly at private institutions, and concerns about their quality exist (see Appendix A for details). Inequality of access to higher education in Indonesia is also another concern. Students in urban areas are more likely to have higher education than in rural areas. More males attend higher education institutions than females (Digdowiseiso, 2020), and low-income students have lower rates than their counterparts attending universities (see Table 1). Not only that, access to university is also heavily concentrated in western Indonesia. Only a limited number of seats are available for attending more affordable public universities, making the situation more complicated (Nizam, 2016). This high level of competition leaves most students graduating from secondary schools to either attend a private university or participate in the labor market. To prepare a competitive labor market under the demographic-bonus window, the Indonesian government has reformed some top-priority sectors, including education, health, and economy (Afandi, 2017; Bappenas, 2017). For instance, the government provided more incentives and financial support to universities to conduct research and recruit a highly qualified teaching force and scholarships for students in public and private universities.

Table 1: Indonesia's Gross Enrollment of Higher Education Students by Income Level (2015 – 2020)

Income Quartile	Percentage of Higher Education Gross Enrollment by Income level					
	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020
Quartile 1	5.08	8.08	9.96	10.19	11.44	16.13
Quartile 2	8.60	13.69	14.74	14.86	16.34	19.31
Quartile 3	14.99	18.78	19.80	20.98	21.88	24.27
Quartile 4	26.48	30.47	29.72	31.38	29.83	30.23
Quartile 5	59.61	58.12	60.78	63.41	62.14	56.87

Source: Ministry of Education of Indonesia (Copyright 2020)

Indonesia's Universities and the COVID-19 Pandemic

Much like other countries around the globe, all these efforts have been disrupted by the COVID-19 pandemic. The Indonesian Ministry of Education and Culture (Kemdikbud, 2020) has issued national policies to ameliorate the barriers of transitioning from in-person learning to virtual learning through the Emergency Learning bill No. 4 that includes its commitment to help teachers, K-12 students, and higher education students and instructors with access to the internet during the pandemic. Through the *Permendikbud* bill No. 25 2020 (Kemdikbud, 2020), the government also decided to help students from low-income families who make less than $200 per month with financial packages for higher education tuition. For instance, those qualified for the program may pay half of the tuition during the pandemic if they only take up to 6 credits. However, this policy only applies to students who attend public institutions. Since most higher education students attend private institutions in Indonesia, the government's ability to help them is limited. For this latter group of students, the government has offered some financial packages

for about 800,000 students from low-income families who can maintain good performance in their studies through its *Kartu Indonesia Pintar* and *Bidikmisi* scholarship programs. (Kemdikbud, 2020).

Vietnam

Currently, Vietnam has four types of higher education institutions serving 1,778,855 students in undergraduate and graduate programs (Bui et al., 2017; Ministry of Education and Training, 2019). The details about the higher education system in Vietnam can be seen in Table 2. Since the early 2000s, privatization in higher education has thrived. Private institutions, however, are responsible to the state through their governing boards (Hayden & Lam, 2007, p.76). Vietnam has made significant reforms in its strategy to develop higher education in the last two decades, especially since "access to higher education has more than doubled since 2000" (World Bank, 2020a).

Issues still exist in higher education in Vietnam, however. There is a lack of representation of ethnic minority students (Hayden & Lam, 2007) and inequalities in higher education between rural and urban students (Trinh & Korinek, 2017; Vu et al., 2013). The quality of instruction and training is another concerning issue (Hien, 2010; Phan et al., 2016; McCornac, 2014; Tran, 2013). Most higher education institutions in Vietnam need significant aid in research, teaching, and learning, and they still lack institutional autonomy for their operation (Hayden & Lam, 2007). Higher education networks, quality of academic staff and teaching methods, assurance, and management mechanisms are also some of the World Bank's challenges in Vietnam's higher education institutions. (World Bank, 2020a).

Vietnam's Universities and the COVID-19 Pandemic

Vietnam has been a world leader because it successfully contained the spread of COVID-19 by the government's prompt and proactive precautions and legislation (117/2020/ND-CP) in areas such as transportation, immigration, information dissemination, and health care (Tran et al., 2020; Hartley et al., 2021; Le et al., 2021). The Vietnamese government was exceptionally responsive in the education sector. In January 2020, the government made rapid decisions to close all schools and move to online learning at all levels (Tran et al., 2020; Le et al., 2021, Pham & Ho, 2020). On August 13, 2021, the Ministry of Education and Training issued Circular No. 08/2021/TT-BGDĐT, where it added specific regulations for online teaching and learning in higher education in which universities must maintain the quality of teaching and learning at a comparable level to in-person teaching and learning. They must build online learning systems for students.

Table 2: Vietnam's Overview Higher Institutions (2019 - 2020)

Total undergrad students: 1.672.881 students			
By type of institutions	Public institutions: 1,359,402		Private institutions: 313,479
By gender	Male: 760,221 students		Female: 912,660 students
By ethnic groups	Ethnic minorities: 103.181 students		The Kinh: 1.569.700 students
By mode of study	Full – time: 1.514.862	Part – time: 118.419	Distance learning (E-Learning):

	students	students	39.600 students
Total graduate students: 105.974 students			
By level of the program	Master's: 94.920		PhD: 11.054

Source: Ministry of Education and Training Vietnam (Copyright 2019)

As of July 2021, public universities in Vietnam operate under different financial mechanisms: fully financially autonomous, partly financially autonomous, and fully financially dependent institutions. For financially autonomous and fully financially dependent institutions, their budgets have been allocated by the national or local government. For colleges and universities at the provincial level of supervision, local governments may provide further financial support to develop the necessary infrastructure and technology needed for online teaching and learning.

The Vietnamese government has passed two budget packages for COVID-19 relief; however, these packages do not specifically target higher education students. Some universities have had policies to support students during the pandemic, such as rent fee support, internet access support, and lodging support. The Vietnamese government has focused on two simultaneous goals: fighting the pandemic and maintaining economic development. Both goals are expected to keep the labor market stable for now.

RESEARCH METHOD

Research Question

In our exploratory study, we ask: *How has the COVID-19 pandemic impacted low-income, rural, and first-generation higher education students in Indonesia and Vietnam, and how does it compare to their counterparts within each country?* We will examine four domains in our analysis: the students' overall wellbeing, their financial and personal hardships, their access to technology and the internet, as well as their educational satisfaction.

Hypotheses

In summary, based on the existing literature reviews, we propose several hypotheses:

H_1: For our cross-country comparison between higher education students in Indonesia and Vietnam, we expect to see some statistically significant differences, especially on the access to technology, well-being, and educational satisfaction. We hypothesize that higher education students in Indonesia will be more likely to face barriers to these outcomes than Vietnam's students. We based this hypothesis on the different approaches these two countries took at the pandemic's beginning. Vietnam has been praised internationally for its approach to mitigating the COVID-19 pandemic, while in contrast, Indonesia was one of the countries in this region that were impacted the most by COVID-19.

H_2: For our within-country comparisons, we hypothesize that compared to their counterparts, first-generation, low-income, and rural higher education students in each country are more likely to face barriers in accessing technology and the internet, are more likely to experience financial and well-being distress during the pandemic and are less likely to be satisfied with their educational experience during the pandemic. We propose this hypothesis based on the current literature centered on the topic of first-generation, low-income, and rural higher education that show these students face more barriers than their counterparts as they navigate their education in their respective higher education system (Digdowiseiso, 2020; Dinh & Nguyen, 2020; Khusna & Khoiruddin, 2020; Nguyen et al., 2020; Rodríguez-Planas, 2020; Yudiawan et al., 2021).

There also might be some differences observed on the impact of COVID-19 across institutions in these two countries. For instance, institutions with fewer resources might be impacted heavily than those with more resources. Another possibility is also related to the geographical differences across institutions. For instance, there are significant socio-economic and developmental differences between western and eastern Indonesia and between northern and southern Vietnam. Students from geographically challenged areas like eastern Indonesia and northern Vietnam are more likely to face barriers to their studies, including access to technology and the internet, when compared to their counterparts or students who come from western Indonesia or southern Vietnam, in general. However, with the limitations of our data, we cannot empirically test this hypothesis. We only control the university's size as a proxy for this issue because most large universities in these two countries are located in western Indonesia and southern Vietnam.

Data and Sample

The rationale of this study is to see if there have been similarities and differences in the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic among our subgroups of interest: first-generation, low-income, and rural higher education students in Indonesia and Vietnam. We approach this rationale by making both cross-country comparisons between Indonesia and Vietnam for the whole sample of students and within-country comparisons for all the subgroups of interests with their counterparts in each country. The data for this study come from an online survey that we distributed to higher education students in Vietnam, Indonesia, and the U.S. through their International Student Offices, and we use convenience sampling to gather the data. We built the survey based on surveys from studies about the COVID-19 pandemic that look specifically at its impact on higher education students' outcomes and wellbeing (Rodríguez-Planas, 2020; Means, 2020; The Understanding America Study Survey; OECD PISA 2015 Student Questionnaire; Lee et al., 2021). In our survey, we focus on four domains: students' overall wellbeing, their financial hardships, their access to technology, and their levels of educational satisfaction during the COVID-19 pandemic. Forty-eight questions ask the respondents about their demographic backgrounds and the four main domains of our research.

We decided to focus on these four domains of questions for several reasons. First, comparative studies around the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic have shown that higher education students across the world are negatively impacted in these four domains (Djajadikerta et al., 2021; Ma et al., 2021; Mlambo and Ndebele, 2021; Tejegor et al., 2020; Tang et al., 2021; Aristovnik et al., 2020). Second, before the COVID-19 pandemic, studies centered on first-generation, low-income, and rural higher education students showed that these subgroups of students faced barriers to navigating their education in their respective higher education systems, including limited access to technology as well as higher financial and mental distress (Bastedo & Jaquette, 2011; Byun et al., 2012; Engle & Tinto, 2008; Eagle & Tinto; 2008; House et al., 2020; Irvin et al., 2012; Kilgo et al., 2018; Lightweis, 2014; Padron, 1992; Tate et al.; 2015). However, most studies concerning first-generation, low-income, and rural higher education students mostly come from the western part the world, particularly the U.S. context. No studies from the SEA region have discussed this important topic. We provide versions of the survey in multiple languages: English, Bahasa Indonesia, and Vietnamese, and ask the participants to respond to the survey using their primary language.

The details of all the domains are as follows. First, for access to the technology domain, we want to know how the respondents accessed technology during the pandemic. Second, we ask the respondents about their financial concerns for the economic hardship they might endure during the pandemic. Third, for the wellbeing domain, we ask the respondents to indicate their level of agreement on several statements about the sources of significant concern during the COVID-19 pandemic and the intensity of their burnout rates, as well as whether they thought about dropping out of school in the next term or semester. Fourth, we divide the educational satisfaction domain into two different analyses: the factors contributing to students' academic satisfaction and students' overall ratings during the pandemic on several aspects, including the overall quality of their schools, classroom engagement, the quality of instruction, the relationships between professors and students and the opportunities that their schools

provided. Lastly, we ask the respondents about their demographic backgrounds, including whether they are first-generation students, their major, their year in college, their age, their gender, their parental income level, the type of university that they attend, their ethnicity, and the area where they come from. We obtained 2,643 responses from both countries, with 2,080 responses from Indonesia and 563 responses from Vietnam from these cross-sectional data.

Analytical Strategy

We provide descriptive statistics of respondents' demographics from both countries for the analysis. These demographic characteristics include age, year of college, gender, income, urbanicity, type of higher education institution and its size, the sources of financing higher education, and whether the respondents indicate that they are first-generation students. We also provide descriptive statistics for all the outcomes from four domains by comparing the two countries. Lastly, we provide within-country comparisons between first-generation and low-income students and their counterparts from each country. Specifically, we calculate:

$$Y_i = \beta_0 + \beta_1 \text{Firstgen}_i + \beta_2 \text{LowIncome}_i + \beta_3 \text{Rural}_i + X_i + e_i$$

Y_i represents all of the individual *i* outcomes from all four domains. This variable Y_i is a binary variable that takes the value of 1 if the respondents *i* answered "Yes" or "Agree" to each of the statements in each of the four domains, and 0 if otherwise. Coefficients β_1 to β_3 represent our primary explanatory variables in our analysis. *Firstgen* is an indicator variable that takes the value of 1 if student *i* is a first-generation student and 0 if otherwise. We define first-generation students as higher education students whose parents did not finish any college education, following the definition from past research studies (McKay & Estrella, 2008; Pascarella et al., 2003). In addition, *Low Income* is a proxy of students' *i* socioeconomic status (SES) if the students' parents make less than $200 monthly. *Rural* is an indicator of the urbanicity of the students. *X* is a vector of demographic characteristics that we mentioned before.

RESULTS

Demographics of Higher Education Students in Vietnam and Indonesia

We provide important demographic information about our sample (see Table 3). We ran a simple t-test of all the demographic characteristics we plan to include in our regression models for this output. This t-test is used to inform us if the significance in the average between Indonesia and Vietnam occurred by chance. Significance results (p-value <.05) for each of the demographics in this table indicate that there are indeed significant differences between Indonesian and Vietnamese students in that particular characteristic.

Based on Table 3, of the analytical sample of 2,643, about 79% of the respondents are Indonesian, and only about 21% are Vietnamese. As expected, we observe that almost all demographic characteristics between these two countries are statistically different: income status, urbanicity, age, gender, type of university, and the source of students' college financing, but we do not observe a statistically significant difference in the first-generation status and the college year of the students.

Table 3: T-test for Analytical Sample Demographics

Variable	Indonesia			Vietnam			
	N	Mean	SD	N	Mean	SD	p-value
First-generation	2080	0.55	0.49	563	0.51	0.47	0.13

Low income**	2080	0.55	0.49	563	0.25	0.43	0.00
Rural***	2080	0.39	0.49	563	0.04	0.21	0.00
Age***	1636	37.31	14.33	545	22.19	3.77	0.00
Undergraduate	2080	0.75	0.43	560	0.78	0.02	0.18
Female***	2050	0.77	0.42	555	0.58	0.49	0.00
Public university***	2080	0.44	0.49	563	0.14	0.38	0.00
Big University***	2080	0.51	0.50	563	0.60	0.49	0.00
Family pays for education***	2080	0.40	0.49	563	0.85	0.35	0.00

*** p<.01, ** p<.05, * p<.1

Several vital findings show significant differences between these two countries. First, there is a higher percentage of low-income students from Indonesia than Vietnam (55% vs 25%). We use the cut-off of $200 to categorize the students as low-income students based on the guideline from the World Bank. In addition, we also notice that more students come from rural areas in Indonesia (39%) than those in Vietnam (4%). Third, we have over half our samples in both countries categorized as first-generation students. The rest of Table 1 presents the remaining summary statistics.

Cross-country Comparisons: Indonesia and Vietnam

In the next set of results, we provide a cross-country comparison of outcomes from four different domains in this study by running t-test comparisons for the average responses for each outcome between the Indonesia and Vietnam samples. The details of the cross-country comparison can be seen in Table 4.

The cross-country comparison in Table 4 found statistically significant differences between higher education students in Indonesia and Vietnam in almost all outcomes in the domains that we measured. We have found a higher proportion of students in Indonesia who expressed concern for having poor internet quality during the pandemic (23%) than the students in Vietnam (12%). The proportion of students who chose to do virtual learning in Indonesia (85%) is higher than in Vietnam (77%). In contrast, we do not observe any differences between the two groups regarding financial hardship (running out of money within three months). This finding implies that, on average, higher education students in both countries experienced the same level of financial hardship during the pandemic.

We also found a significant gap in the personal burnout rate between Indonesian students and Vietnamese students. On average, we noticed that there is also a statistically significant difference in students' perceptions of their workload during the pandemic by about a 20-percentage point difference, with Indonesian students having higher rates than Vietnamese students. However, we observe null results between the two countries on the rate of students thinking of dropping out of school during the pandemic. Lastly, for the educational satisfaction domain, we observe that, on average, Vietnamese students tend to give an overall higher rating of their study experience during the pandemic than Indonesian students do (Table 4 Domain 4).

Within-Country Comparisons

For our subsequent analysis, we seek to provide within-country comparisons among first-generation, rural, and low-income students for each country (see Tables 5 - 9). We compare these three sub-groups of students with their counterparts within each country. Overall, we did not find significant results in almost all outcomes.

For our first domain of access to technology (see Table 5), we found that low-income students are less likely to have access to technology when compared to their high-income counterparts by about 22 and eight percentage points in Vietnam and Indonesia, respectively. A similar trend is also observed regarding very poor internet quality. On average, when compared to their counterparts, low-income students in both countries are associated with a higher likelihood of experiencing very poor internet quality by ten percentage points and nine percentage points in Vietnam and Indonesia, respectively; and, for those who come from rural parts of Indonesia, the likelihood is even higher than for nonrural students (15 percentage points). For our second domain (see Table 6), we have found that being Indonesian and first-generation was associated with six percentage points of being more likely to run out of money in three months during the pandemic. Low-income Indonesian students were also 14 percentage points more likely to run out of money than high-income students. Finally, rural Indonesian students were five percentage points more likely to run out of money than their urban counterparts. A similar trend is observed in low-income Vietnamese students. Low-income students were 11 percentage points more likely to run out of money during the pandemic than students who did not come from a low-income background.

In our third domain of students' well-being (see Table 7), we do not find any statistically significant differences among all three sub-groups of students from Indonesia in all of the outcomes. However, we found that, on average, being a first-generation Vietnamese student is associated with a lower likelihood of experiencing physical burnout than their counterparts, by about nine percentage points. In addition, we have found that being a low-income student in Vietnam is associated with an increase of about 18 percentage points compared to their counterparts if they mentioned that they experienced a heavier school workload during the pandemic than before the pandemic. We did not find any statistically significant results for our Indonesian sample, implying no difference in students' wellbeing of first-gen, rural and low-income students and their counterparts.

Lastly, we observed that regarding our rating outcomes in Table 9, rural students from Indonesia tend to give lower ratings of their educational experience during the pandemic in several outcomes, including school's overall quality (5% points); quality of instruction (8%), instructor-student and student-student relationships (7% and 6% points); and job opportunities (7% points). We did not find this pattern among Vietnamese students.

Table 4 T-test of Outcome Variables between Indonesia and Vietnam: Cross-country Comparisons

Variable	Indonesia			Vietnam			
	N	Mean	SD	N	Mean	SD	p-value
Domain 1: Access to technology and the internet							
Virtual learning***	1933	0.85	0.36	523	0.77	0.42	0.00
Have access to technology during the pandemic	1686	0.93	0.25	451	0.90	0.88	0.08
Pay for technology from their own money***	1686	0.69	0.46	451	0.75	0.43	0.01

Very weak internet quality***	1686	0.23	0.42	451	0.12	0.33	0.00
Domain 2: Financial hardship							
Run out money in the next 3 months	2081	0.42	0.49	563	0.45	0.49	0.27
Increased tuition ***	2080	0.06	0.24	563	0.12	0.32	0.00
Taking more than 18 credits during pandemic***	1988	0.54	0.52	541	0.19	0.39	0.00
Domain 3: Well-being							
Health is major concern during pandemic	1686	0.79	0.41	451	0.76	0.43	0.17
Physically exhausted during pandemic***	1686	0.87	0.33	451	0.56	0.49	0.00
Emotionally exhausted***	1686	0.89	0.31	451	0.69	0.46	0.00
Thinking of dropping out of school	1686	0.19	0.39	451	0.20	0.40	0.51
Heavier schoolwork during pandemic***	1933	0.66	0.47	523	0.55	0.49	0.00

*** p<.01, ** p<.05, * p<.1

Table 4 (continued) T-test of Outcome Variables between Indonesia and Vietnam: Cross-country Comparisons

Variable	**Indonesia**			**Vietnam**			
	N	**Mean**	**SD**	**N**	**Mean**	**SD**	**p-value**
Domain 4: Factors Contributing to Educational Satisfaction During the Pandemic							
Cost of attendance**	1780	0.15	0.36	478	0.19	0.39	0.03

Teacher-student interaction***	1780	0.26	0.44	478	0.20	0.40	0.00
Job prospect	1780	0.07	0.25	478	0.05	0.23	0.29
Safety measure***	1780	0.07	0.25	478	0.21	0.41	0.00
Knowledge and skills ***	1780	0.38	0.48	478	0.27	0.44	0.00
Positive school's rating***	1780	0.19	0.39	478	0.24	0.43	0.01
Positive engagement***	1780	0.29	0.45	478	0.37	0.48	0.00
Better quality of instruction***	1780	0.23	0.42	478	0.35	0.48	0.00
Better relationship between professor and student ***	2081	0.23	0.42	563	0.28	0.45	0.01
Better relationship among students **	2081	0.23	0.42	563	0.31	0.47	0.00
Better rate for school to provide job and opportunities***	2081	0.21	0.40	563	0.31	0.47	0.00

Table 5: Domain 1 Access to technology

Variable	Virtual Learning		Access to Technology		Spend own money for technology		Poor internet quality	
	VIE	INA	VIE	INA	VIE	INA	VIE	INA
First-gen	.06	.04*	.01	-.03	.014	-.01	-.01	.040*
	(.04)	(.02)	(.06)	(.03)	(.04)	(.03)	(.03)	(.03)
Low income	-.02	-.03	-.22***	-.08***	-.10*	.00	.10**	.09***

	(.05)	(.02)	(.08)	(.03)	(.05)	(.03)	(.04)	(.03)
Rural	.10	.01	-.15	-.02	.10	-.07**	-.01	.15***
	(.08)	(.02)	(.16)	(.03)	(.09)	(.03)	(.07)	(.03)
Constant	.76***	.95***	3.87***	.72***	.68***	1.04***	.30***	.07
	(.16)	(.04)	(.23)	(.18)	(.06)	(.11)	(.11)	(.05)
Observ.	498	1498	429	429	1306	1353	429	1306
R-sq	.02	.03	.06	.03	.02	.02	.04	.07

Note: All models above control for demographic differences. Robust standard errors are in parentheses *** p<.01, ** p<.05, * p<.1

For our last domain of educational satisfaction determinants, we seek to understand what the determinants of students' educational satisfaction during their pandemic-learning experience are (see Table 8), the students' overall ratings of their schools, the quality of learning and instruction in the classroom, as well as what their engagement and relationships with their peers and instructors (see Table 9). From Table 8, we find that compared to their counterparts, both first-generation and low-income Indonesian students, as well as low-income Vietnamese students, are associated with a higher likelihood of saying that the cost of attendance is a critical factor in determining their educational satisfaction during the pandemic by six, four and 13 percentage points higher than their counterparts, respectively. On the other hand, we find that low-income Vietnamese students are about 12 percentage points less likely than their counterparts to say that teacher-student relationships and knowledge or skills obtained during the pandemic are critical factors in determining their satisfaction with education. On the other hand, Indonesian low-income students are less likely to say that their knowledge and skills during the pandemic are critical for their satisfaction than their counterparts by about six percentage points. This is understandable because low-income students in Indonesia seemed to be more worried by the cost of attendance in their education.

Table 6: Domain 2 Financial Hardship

Explanatory variables	Run out of money in 3 months		Increased tuition		Taking more than 18 credits (undergrad)	
	VIE	INA	VIE	INA	VIE	INA
First-gen	.07	.06**	.00	-.02*	-.04	-.01
	(.04)	(.03)	(.03)	(.01)	(.03)	(.02)
Low income	.11**	.14***	.05	-.01	-.00	.02
	(.05)	(.03)	(.03)	(.01)	(.04)	(.02)
Rural	.13	.05*	-.06	.00	-.03	.07***

	(.10)	(.03)	(.06)	(.01)	(.08)	(.03)
Constant	.19	.27***	.08	.07**	.41***	1.02***
	(.17)	(.06)	(.11)	(.03)	(.14)	(.05)
Observations	534	1617	534	1617	515	1542
R-sq	.02	.05	.04	.01	.01	.23

Note: All models above control for demographic differences**.** Robust standard errors are in parentheses *** p<.01, ** p<.05, * p<.1

Table 7: Domain 3 Well-being during pandemic

Variable	Health is a major concern		Physically exhausted		Emotionally exhausted		Thinking of dropping out of school		Heavier school workload	
	VIE	INA	VIE	INA	VIE	INA	VIE	INA	VIE	INA
First-gen	.06	-.03	-.09**	.010	.03	-.01	.02	.04*	-.04	.02
	(.04)	(.03)	(.05)	(.020)	(.05)	(.02)	(.04)	(.02)	(.04)	(.03)
Low income	-.03	-.04*	.04	.01	.04	.00	.04	.03	.18***	.01
	(.05)	(.03)	(.05)	(.02)	(.05)	(.02)	(.05)	(.02)	(.05)	(.03)
Rural	.01	.02	.04	.01	-.03	.02	-.03	-.03	-.00	.02
	(.10)	(.03)	(.10)	(.02)	(.10)	(.02)	(.09)	(.02)	(.11)	(.03)
Constant	.54***	.78***	.82***	.74***	.57***	.77***	.27	.16***	.88***	.75***
	(.16)	(.06)	(.19)	(.05)	(.19)	(.04)	(.17)	(.05)	(.18)	(.06)
Observ.	429	1306	429	1306	429	1306	429	1306	498	1498
R-sq	.03	.02	.04	.02	.01	.04	.04	.01	.05	.01

Note: All models above control for demographic differences. Robust standard errors are in parentheses *** p<.01, ** p<.05, * p<.1

Table 8: Domain 4: Main Factors Associated with Students' Educational Satisfaction During the COVID-19 Pandemic

Var.	Cost of attendance		Teacher-student interaction		Job prospect		Safety		Knowledge and skills obtained	
	VIE	INA	VIE	INA	VIE	INA	VIE	INA	VIE	INA
First-gen	-.03	.06***	.01	-.00	.03	.02	.02	-.03**	-.05	-.02
	(.04)	(.02)	(.04)	(.03)	(.02)	(.02)	(.04)	(.02)	(.04)	(.03)
Low income	.13***	.04**	-.12***	.01	.01	.01	-.04	-.02	.04	-.06**
	(.05)	(.02)	(.04)	(.03)	(.03)	(.01)	(.04)	(.02)	(.05)	(.03)
Rural	.06	.00	-.02	.04*	-.01	-.02	-.07	-.00	-.01	-.03
	(.11)	(.02)	(.08)	(.03)	(.05)	(.01)	(.08)	(.01)	(.10)	(.03)
Constant	.27*	-.01	.19	.22***	.03	.06*	.24	.03	.20	.67***
	(.14)	(.04)	(.13)	(.06)	(.01)	(.03)	(.16)	(.03)	(.17)	(.06)
Observ.	455	1385	455	1385	455	1385	455	1385	455	1385
R-sq	.04	.09	.03	.06	.02	.01	.03	.02	.04	.03

Note: All models above control for demographic differences**.** Robust standard errors are in parentheses *** p<.01, ** p<.05, * p<.1

Table 9: Domain 4: Educational Ratings During the COVID-19 Pandemic

Var	School Quality		Classroom engagement		Instruction quality	
	VIE	INA	VIE	INA	VIE	INA
First-gen	-.02	.01	-.02	-.02	.01	-.04
	(.04)	(.02)	(.05)	(.03)	(.04)	(.03)
Low income	.00	.01	-.08	-.03	-.10*	.01
	(.05)	(.02)	(.05)	(.03)	(.05)	(.03)
Rural	.04	-.05**	-.01	-.04	.010	-.08***
	(.10)	(.02)	(.10)	(.03)	(.10)	(.02)
Constant	.20	.13***	.13	.25***	.22	.21***
	(.17)	(.05)	(.19)	(.06)	(.18)	(.05)
Observ.	455	1385	455	1385	455	1385
R-sq.	.04	.03	.02	.02	.04	.03

Note: All models control for demographic differences. Robust standard errors are in parentheses
*** p<.01, ** p<.05, * p<.1

Table 9: Domain 4: Educational Ratings During the COVID-19 Pandemic (continued)

Var	Prof & student relationship		Students' relationship		Job opportunities	
	VIE	INA	VIE	INA	VIE	INA
First-gen	-.04	-.01	-.03	-.03	-.01	-.02
	(.04)	(.02)	(.04)	(.02)	(.04)	(.02)
Low income	-.00	.00	-.01	-.01	-.10**	.00
	(.05)	(.02)	(.05)	(.02)	(.05)	(.02)
Rural	-.03	-.07***	-.06	-.06**	.01	-.06***
	(.09)	(.02)	(.10)	(.02)	(.10)	(.02)
Constant	.21	.23***	.27*	.30***	.32*	.19***
	(.16)	(.05)	(.16)	(.05)	(.17)	(.05)
Observ.	534	1617	534	1617	534	1617
R-sq.	.01	.02	.01	.01	.02	.03

All models control for demographic differences. Robust standard errors are in parentheses *** p<.01, ** p<.05, * p<.1

DISCUSSION

Our exploratory paper found that college students in Indonesia and Vietnam differ in many aspects. This finding is expected since both countries differ in educational structures and policies, even though they are in the same geographical region and have similar economic growth. Such differences may also stem from the demographic composition of our samples, where Indonesian students are from rural and low-income families, and Vietnamese students are mainly from urban areas and study at private universities. In Indonesia and Vietnam, private universities are more expensive, indicating their students' high socioeconomic status. Therefore, we would expect to see differences in students' responses in the survey resulting in the differences we found in later analyses (Table 1).

When we compare outcomes in all four domains, even though most of the outcomes do not show significant results, which is expected, as discussed above, we still find a few statistically significant differences between Indonesian and Vietnamese higher education students. Indonesian students appear to have more concerns about their quality of education and perceive a higher level of burnout and workload than Vietnamese students. On the other hand, Vietnamese students tend to give an overall higher rating for the educational experience than their Indonesian counterparts. Many factors can explain these differences. First, Indonesia is geographically more extensive and has a bigger population than Vietnam. Given the size of Indonesia, it may have been more challenging to implement quick policy changes during the pandemic. On the other hand, Vietnam is a more systematically and politically centralized nation. Changes, therefore, may have happened faster. Therefore, changes in educational policy were

more consistent and prompter in the Vietnamese context, which helped with the students' perception of workload and levels of burnout.

In a sense, having a stable environment supports mental health and the quality of academic work. Vietnam achieved both with its rapid policies when the pandemic started (Tran et al., 2020; Hartley et al., 2021; Le et al., 2021). The differences in reactions to the pandemic from the Vietnamese and Indonesian governments at the early stages of the pandemic may have contributed to the differences between the two student populations.

Finally, we found that many more Vietnamese students in the sample are from urban areas than their Indonesian counterparts. This could explain why students in Vietnam experienced less burnout and had an overall better perception of their educational experiences online than Indonesian students. Students from urban areas are more likely to access technology (Trinh & Korinek, 2017; Vu et al., 2013). They are also more likely to come from affluent families and to have higher academic achievement. These reasons may explain the differences between the two countries.

However, it is still important to realize that first-generation, low-income, and rural students from both countries faced some significant challenges during the pandemic. This finding aligns with existing findings highlighting how the pandemic has worsened the pre-existing inequalities among subgroups of students (e.g., Eagle and Tinto, 2008; Lee et al., 2021; Mlambo and Ndebele, 2021).

We had somewhat similar conclusions for within-country comparisons even though not all outcomes are significant. We found that in some outcomes, first-generation, rural, and low-income college students are more likely to experience financial distress, specifically struggling to access technology as well as experiencing limited access to the internet, as they navigated virtual learning during the pandemic when compared to their counterparts within their own country. It is then understandable that these students, particularly low-income students and students from rural areas, are also less likely to have had better learning experiences during the pandemic. These results resonate with the existing literature (e.g., Coman et al., 2020; Barrot et al., 2020; Djajadikerta et al., 2021; Ma et al., 2021; Trinh & Korinek, 2017; Vu et al., 2013).

POLICY IMPLICATIONS

Understanding how the COVID-19 pandemic has impacted higher education students unequally in these two countries may provide necessary guidance on how the higher education systems in Indonesia and Vietnam should navigate and address the widening gaps between these sub-groups. Some targeted assistance for these vulnerable sub-groups of students during the pandemic may have also helped these countries in the long run in maintaining a consistently good quality of the workforce which will be necessary for maximizing each country's potential for the demographic-bonus opportunities that they are both anticipating. Since higher education institutions are not merely entities for students to gain knowledge but are also entities designed to prepare their students to shape the complexity of their country's social fabric in the future, more open and comprehensive collaborations among central and local governments, higher education institutions, private sectors, and community members are necessary to address the inequalities and the learning losses that students may have endured during the pandemic. In addition, since the survey that we distributed was in the electronic form where the respondents can access it online through their technological device, we should still have a cautious interpretation when looking at the results. Will the results be different when we conduct a paper-based survey to include students who did not have any technological devices? How much change will we observe in the results when the responses are nationally representative? How do these governments see these results as a pressing issue to solve, especially during the COVID-19 pandemic? These are some of the questions we still have as we discuss the policy implications for both countries below.

Indonesia

We found that students in Indonesia experienced a higher level of burnout and limited access to technology during the pandemic. Among them, first-generation students, students from low-income families, and rural places were more likely to be affected. Even though the Indonesian government already had some aid packages targeting students, they should have specifically targeted this vulnerable

group to help them during the pandemic. The existing bills *Surat Edaran Kementerian Pendidikan dan Kebudayaan Nomor 4 Tahun 2020* and *Permendikbud* bill No. 25 2020 only offer limited financial support for a small number of students who are mainly from public institutions. Such financial support may help with the financial stress and the lack of technology, but it may not address nuanced concerns in well-being and support for burned-out students. We still witness stark differences among the different groups of students based on income and location.

The government should invest in its country's social infrastructure to address inequalities in the long term. Future policies should include technology, communication, and internet development in remote areas. At the same time, higher education institutions should address concerns about modes of teaching and learning because the pandemic has revealed that the current system is not flexible, adaptive, and supportive enough for students. Educators and policymakers should also be concerned about the quality of students' mental health during unexpected circumstances like the pandemic.

Vietnam

The pandemic has exposed and exacerbated many existing issues in higher education in Vietnam. Among them are unequal access to technology and a heavy focus on traditional in-person teaching and learning. The Vietnamese government should invest in infrastructure focusing on information and technology, innovating instruction and learning modes, and granting higher education institutions more autonomy, especially in uncertain situations. The most important policy is to include higher education in the next pandemic relief package, not only for institutions but also for individual students.

There is a stark difference in communication infrastructure between remote rural and urban areas. Rural and remote students, usually from low-income families, face many online learning and teaching challenges. These students may not have the necessary devices and sufficient internet connection to effectively navigate learning on an online platform, even though mobile internet service has rapidly developed in recent years. The quality, however, is still low and unstable in rural and remote areas. The government, specifically the Ministry of Information and Communications and its local authorities, need to develop policies that will improve access to technology and the internet in these areas. In addition, the government should have appropriate and prompt policies to support students from low-income families with needed devices and services at Community Learning Centers to assist with their education.

LIMITATIONS AND FUTURE RESEARCH

Our study faces certain limitations. First, our data were collected at one point in time. Even though we tried to collect as many responses from as many different levels and majors as we could in the two countries, we had limited success. We cannot say the sample is representative of all students in higher education in Indonesia or Vietnam, especially in the case of Vietnam, because our responses were mainly from the Northern part of the country. Second, our study does not imply causal inference. Interpretations from this study should be used with caution. Yet, correlational studies still provide meaningful insights when causal inferences are challenging.

We plan on three future approaches. First, we aim to broaden our study within Southeast Asia. This approach will cover a broader range of countries with differential economic development and distinguished cultural aspects. In the second approach, we plan to follow up with what the pandemic's aftermath will look like in Indonesia and Vietnam by conducting follow-up research on the same topic. This approach will provide a continuum of the pandemic's impact on the two countries. Lastly, we plan to conduct in-depth qualitative research into the impacts of the pandemic on first-generation and low-income students. This approach will provide meaningful insights and answers to our overarching research question: What have been the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic on students in higher education in Indonesia and Vietnam?

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Global Universities' Leadership during COVID-19: Synergistic Knowledge Production to Mitigate an Endemic Crisis

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ABSTRACT

The role universities play in advancing COVID-specific knowledge and long-term management of this global crisis is largely unknown. In this comparative perspective study, we document the ways in which members from universities in the US, New Zealand, Italy, South Korea, and China engage in activities to respond to the pandemic. We frame this study with consortium-style emergency management and continuity planning (Friedman et al., 2014; Mann, 2007) and apply the sensemaking knowledge management framework (Choo, 1998) to identify strategies that university members employ to generate new scientific knowledge on COVID-19. Our findings reveal that response to the pandemic varies by university stratification, specifically by size and research capacity. At the time of this study, we identified three distinct lenses by which university members position their leadership and research on COVID. Universities from China utilized a post-pandemic approach. Whereas universities in the US, Italy, New Zealand, and South Korea approach their COVID research activities using an evolving-pandemic anticipatory lens and focus on Synergistic Knowledge Production (SKP) on current and future pandemics by engaging in a range of collaborative and interdisciplinary research activities with members of regional universities. Findings also provide policy implications for university-led responses to global health challenges.

Keywords: *COVID-19, Collaborative research, Interdisciplinary Research, Synergistic knowledge production, Sensemaking*

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INTRODUCTION

The outbreak of COVID-19 has put the spotlight on medical professionals, engineers, pharmaceutical scientists, public health officials, and researchers to produce new knowledge that mitigates the global pandemic (Reimers, & Schleicher, 2020). After over two years of living with the consequences of the pandemic, it is apparent no one around the globe is spared by the devastation caused by the outbreak, which could become endemic (Phillips, 2021). Our social, health, economic, education and political spheres are forever changed. It is even more apparent that solutions to tackle this public health crisis require a concerted global effort. In other words, as the World Health Organization's (WHO) Director-General stated, "all countries can still change the course of this pandemic...detect, test, treat, isolate, trace, and mobilize their people in the response" (WHO, 2020b). In this study, we argue that global universities are central to generating new scientific knowledge about COVID-19 by engaging in a wide range of collaborative research efforts. We trace the ways by which university leaders make sense of crisis and in the ways they engage with each other to provide novel ways of thinking.

At the onset of the spread of COVID-19, leaders of educational institutions found themselves threatened by sudden disruptions, financial strains, and pressures to radically shift from regular operations and instead provide support to their students by flipping their in-person courses to online delivery methods (Briger, 2020). At the same time, members of universities have rapidly advanced the necessary innovation required to manage and contain COVID-19, such as developing "vaccines, personal protective equipment (PPE) and medical devices" (Wise, 2020). Moreover, global collaborations between universities and leading industry experts (such as biotech firms, policymakers, nonprofits, governmental and private sectors) have facilitated in developing new scientific knowledge about conducting COVID-19 related research by sharing resources, information, and data across the boundaries of organizations. Such global collaborations across fields of study have also led to the formation of interdisciplinary teams of experts to develop ethics and research guidelines that aid in difficult decision making during these unprecedented times (Shaker & Plater, 2020). Given the proactive stance by the WHO, different countries, such as China, Republic of Korea, New Zealand, Italy, and the United States, took divergent paths to prevent the COVID-19 infection rate from rising in their respective countries.

Through this study, we investigate cross-comparatively the various activities that members of universities in China, Republic of Korea, New Zealand, Italy, and the United States engage in to advance our collective scientific knowledge on COVID-19. As a field, we also aim to better understand higher education under an extreme crisis to ascertain what might be learned on how educational institutions may be better equipped to respond to crisis in the future. Framed by crisis-related literature (Barker & Yoder, 2012; Mann, 2007), our analysis is guided by applying and extending the framework of sensemaking (Choo, 2002) and the concept of consortium style management (Mann, 2007). These frameworks allow us to examine the processes and activities that institutions and its members engage in during complex times of crisis to produce knowledge. Next, the findings from this multi-case study are presented to inform cross-cultural, interdisciplinary, and collaborative strategies that members of institutions around the world engage in by combining sensemaking processes and knowledge production activities to arrive at decision making capabilities. Using our findings and conceptual frameworks, we coin the term Synergistic Knowledge Production (SKP) (Ghosh, Upcoming) to categorize a wide range of activities that universities engage in to make sense of a time of immense crisis and collect ways in which they inform their decisions. Through our discussion, we explain the range of processes and activities world universities engage in during crises that necessitates new epistemology. Further, we aim to understand the ways

university members make sense of existing processes, resources, networks, and knowledge to extend and develop new scientific knowledge that assists in COVID-19 response.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Institutions of Higher Education in Crisis

During times of crisis, colleges and universities face a broad array of evolving institutional challenges. There is a constant imperative to shorten the timeline on effective responses, such as bringing campus facilities back on-track; the successful recruitment of new and returning students; the evaluation of the current and future finances; and the ability to restore campus resources for students and the surrounding community (Mann, 2007). Some of these challenges related to the COVID-19 crisis included the forced transition to remote learning and working; campus-wide safety precautions and protocols; the deployment of advanced mental health support services; the evacuation of campus residences and dormitories; and the procurement of technology, personal protective equipment (PPE), and other sanitation/disinfectant materials. In fact, a failure to provide solutions to these challenges can potentially devastate colleges, universities, and the surrounding community (Kapucu & Van Wart, 2008; Koehn, 2019).

Given the imperative to remedy a crisis on campus, it is important to recognize (as the crisis unfolds) broader themes concerning advanced emergency planning (Barker & Yoder, 2012; Coombs, 2007). These themes might include the viability of campus emergency communication systems, the evaluation processes for moving towards emergency precautions, and the execution capabilities relative to shutting down a campus to transition to remote operations (Mann, 2007). Moving from thematic conceptions to implementing emergency planning and preparedness is yet another hurdle. Time constraints, training limitations, a lack of personnel and resources and budgetary concerns seem to outweigh this emergency planning (Coombs, 2007; Mann, 2007). However, it is imperative for institutions of higher education to initiate this strategic emergency planning because at the core of every campus mission is the safety and well-being of its students, staff, faculty, and surrounding community. Identifying themes that emerge during crisis allows for greater leadership foresight to manage future challenges as well.

Consortium-Style Emergency Management and Collaboration on Campuses

Crises in institutions of higher education bring a unique set of challenges. The vulnerability of the student body is of the greatest risk to the institution and jeopardizes the totality of organization (Barker & Yoder, 2012; Koehn, 2019). Some scholars argue that institutions should adopt a consortium-style emergency management and continuity plan in an effort to protect their students, administrators, faculty, and staff. The consortium-style emergency management style allows for "greater geographic coverage, inclusion of technical coverage and sectoral strengths from multiple organizations" (Friedman et al., 2014, p. 1). In broad terms, this model focuses on creating emergency planning organizations that have a shared mission to support and develop emergency management and campus continuity planning for a cohort of institutions" (Mann, 2007, p. 59). According to Barker and Yoder (2012), the four stages of emergency institutional actions are: (1) emergency planning, (2) emergency response, (3) emergency management, and (4) campus continuity and recovery.

Emergency planning entails the identification of risks and the draft of procedures which serve as an institutional response using a broad-based, consortium-style approach (Barker & Yoder, 2012; Mann, 2007). Along with training and equipment assessments, it is integral for the institution of higher education to coordinate with both internal and external stakeholders in order to prepare a more cohesive emergency responses with increased resources (Barker & Yoder, 2012). As consortium-style emergency management plans are highly collaborative, centralized, and resource-based, diverse stakeholders assist in all areas of the emergency management program (Mann, 2007). Similar to a "brain trust," participating colleges and universities focus on extensive emergency planning, both monitor and assess these programs, and plan activities going beyond the campus to include community, regional, and global perspectives. This

"synergy of collaboration" also produces higher level of accountability and participation in managing response to a common objective (Friedman et al., 2014, p. 21).

The first priority during the emergency response stage is the health and safety of the college or university community (Yoder & Barker, 2012). A significant challenge at this point is timely communication with all stakeholders. Leaders in crisis must also be aware of the language they use to communicate during these challenging times. According to Hutson and Johnson (2016), "when leaders say they are in charge of the situations that we perceive to be out of control, we know we're being protected or played. Your words matter and your implicit messages matter even more" (p. 19). For leaders, it is important to deliver both clear and consistent messaging to their constituencies in order to reduce the stress and anxiety associated with crisis (DeMartino & Weiser, 2021). As an assessment of campus safety is resolved and/or an evaluation of the impact is conducted, the institution can then plan to move to the emergency management phase.

In the emergency management stage, the focus is on reports, such as health, safety, and facility readiness, and remaining risk assessments (Yoder & Barker, 2012). After collecting these reports, an additional coordinated communication push to all constituencies is necessary. In these communications, an overview of what activities the college is engaged in and in what approximate time frame these plans will launch and be sustained is presented.

Finally, during campus continuity and recovery, the development of both short-term and long-term plans to get operations back up and running (Barker & Yoder, 2012). The goal is to get back to operational and program normalcy in the safest and shortest amount of time. Given the vast amount of resources used for collaborative emergency management planning, colleges and universities benefit greatly from consortium-style management planning.

Benefits of Consortium-Style Emergency Management

The benefits of consortium-style emergency management are well-suited for local, national, and international institutional environments. Universities are encouraged to develop consortiums based on mutual interests. Like so, grouping institutions of higher education into similar categories, expedites consensus when an emergency necessitates swift actions. Then, the shared leadership embedded within the consortium design "engages in the regular development, refinement, and assessment of appropriate protocols crafted to address incidents that have a significant impact on the health, safety, and operations of the consortium colleges" (Mann, 2007, p. 62). These united consortium protocols address continuity planning, such as mission-critical operations, institutional forecasting, and effective communication.

Preplanning is established to move from institutional crisis to normalcy. With this preplanning, the consortium is able to support a distributed and collaborative approach to crisis management by bringing mission-critical operations back online, including utility services, safety, and communication (Mann, 2007; Rocha et al., 2005). At the same time, the consortium leadership team forecasts when the institution can resume both modified and regular operations and collaboratively develops a unified front for both the present and future crises. Through the development of a unified communication strategy, the team practices effective communication to their constituents by eliminating conflicting messaging and redundancy (Mann, 2007). Finally, while individual campuses may build a personal inventory of basic supplies (e.g., emergency generators), most resources are shared through the consortium through the power of collective capacity, creating an abundance of shared assets for member organizations. Alongside consortium-style emergency planning, institutions of higher education should assess the wellness of their community in times of crisis.

A Need for Novel Research During Crises

Aside from navigating and arranging for critical messaging to manage a crisis, it is equally important for university leaders to respond to societal need by facilitating novel research that fosters unique ways of thinking, scientific knowledge and/or innovation that mitigates the wide range of never-before-experienced, ambiguous challenges such as the COVID-19 pandemic (Dumulescu & Muţiu, 2021). Governments around the world highlighted the need to make COVID-19 response a common public good

by pooling knowledge that would result in equitable solutions for recovery from the pandemic (WHO, 2020, UNGA-76, 2021). Similarly, the International Chamber of Commerce also called for the international community to engage in multilateral and multistakeholder cooperation to generate scientific collaboration that is crucial to delivering equitable access to critical medical services, ensuring business continuity and to be better prepared to manage future epidemics (ICC, 2020).

While these unanticipated and urgent calls resulted in an "unprecedented explosion" of scientific research on the pandemic, a recent study from the biomedical field finds that scientific knowledge production may have been mismanaged during COVID-19. Researchers record that there were duplications of clinical trials and a lack of exposure to resources that hindered immediate collaborative research engagement at the institutional level; these conditions resulted in poor quality of research output (Perillat, & Baigrie, 202; Silberner, 2021). These scholars also state that the rapid need to respond through science resulted in wasteful and poorly executed methodological studies leading to immense public disservice. It could be argued that the onus of facilitating collaborative research falls on leaders to first establish and then maintain a research agenda in higher education and infrastructure that stimulates and supports research activities. Facilitating collaborative research should also be an effort initiated by stakeholders from cross-sectors. Through this study, we examine the ways that university leaders respond to a crisis by facilitating scientific research output. As we analyze the range of activities university leaders put forth to expand scientific research on COVID-19, we utilize the theoretical framework of the sensemaking model and apply the consortium-style of emergency management to examine our qualitative data.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Sensemaking and Consortium-Style Emergency Management

The framework of sensemaking is utilized to better understand the consortium-style emergency management that institutions in this study engage in to preserve their overall well-being. Sensemaking is particularly evident in environments that are undergoing change or "discontinuity in the flow of experience'" (Weick, 1995 as in Choo, 2002, p. 80). Weick (1995) further argues that individuals within an organization engage in a reflective process to create plans in anticipation of the future. Choo extends the concept further by adding that sensemaking involves members negotiating their beliefs to reach shared goals and this, he points out, is the "outcome of sensemaking" (Choo, 2002, p. 85). In times of turbulence, like the COVID-19 crisis, Choo's (2002) findings on environmental scanning are important to include as part of sensemaking. Choo (2001) finds that information seekers engage in environmental "scanning" by using infrastructure of the organization and the resources that it provides. Further, he argues that sensemaking processes are the initial steps that lead to decision-making and knowledge creation (Choo, 2002; 2001; 1996). In this way, we argue that sensemaking enhances the legitimacy of consortium-style emergency management system in order to effectively navigate and facilitate world colleges and universities in extreme crisis, like the COVID-19 pandemic. In order to present our claim, we present our methodology, including our data collection, sample selection, and analysis.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Over a thirteen month data collection period, to understand the ways by which universities produce new knowledge about COVID-19, we examined a variety of institutional resources derived from university web pages, such as messages from university top-level administrators and/or country Prime minister/ Presidential decrees, health authority announcements, research- faculty specific web pages, COVID-19 related images, meeting documents, webinars, university research agendas that detail current and future research plans of faculty to increase knowledge on COVID-19, as well as documents that serve as campus guidelines for managing the pandemic. In this study, we apply qualitative thematic text analysis (Kuckartz, 2014) to answer the following research questions:

1. In what ways do universities members commit to producing knowledge about COVID-19?
2. In what ways do university members engage in collaborate efforts to generate new COVID19 related knowledge?

Data Collection

Based on where (countries) the pandemic outbreak was first recorded, the authors identified a list of five countries. For instance, given the outbreak began in China, we rationalized that universities in China would have a head start on producing COVID-19 related information. Other countries included in this study are New Zealand, Italy, South Korea, and the United States. These countries were selected based on the rate of the outbreak at the onset of the pandemic and the implications gathered from their projected recovery rate (i.e., How soon/or not they would flatten the curve of COVID-19?). Universities selected from all five countries needed to appear on at least two of the top three ranking lists such as the 2020 TIMES, American Ranking of World Universities (ARWU) and ShangHai JiaoTong (QS) Ranking lists. While we remain critical of rankings and agree with the criticisms of their methodology (See Hazelkorn, 2019), all attempts were taken to include universities of different characteristics from each country. For instance, for each country, we include a variety of universities that have an average rank (taken by calculating the average ranking across the ranking lists) that we then categorize as Tier 1 (top 200), tier 2(201-400) and tier 3 (all institutions 401 and below).

Sample Selection

The final sample included a total of 30 global universities in this study (New Zealand (3), Italy (5), South Korea (6), China (6) and the United States (10). Previous studies where world universities were the unit of analysis also informed the sample selection procedure (Lee, Vance, Stensaker & Ghosh, 2020; Stensaker, Lee, Rhoades, Ghosh, Castiello, 2017). Particularly in this study, we began with a large pool of universities and narrowed the sample pool down to include only institutions that had website content revealing the ways by which their leaders were facilitating and engaging in sensemaking activities. The majority of the universities included in this study are described as public or national and only 7 out of the 30 universities are private institutions. A total of fourteen tier 1, nine tier 2 and seven tier 3 ranked institutions were included (see Appendix 1 for full list of institutions). Our country selection was based off the highest rate of media interest at the onset of COVID-19. For example, in addition to collecting institutional-level data, we also relied on global news outlets' reporting of the pandemic. The selected nations at the start of our study had high infection rates and/or had unique national mandates to mitigate the pandemic. Although the infection rates are still in flux and the national mandates are still in transition, we believe that the snapshot provided by these data reveals nuanced ways of how leaders from various world institutions navigate a time of evolving crisis.

Analysis

First, we collected text data from all university documents[1] that were available via institutional websites. We systematically sorted out these texts based on authority. For instance, when the texts were authored by the university leadership, we labeled it as such in our database and when messages were from national government officials, we also separated those texts in our database. Upon data collection, each researcher independently identified patterns and processes that were both similar and different across the five countries and 30 institutions. The authors then coded the data based on predetermined themes that were both informed through the literature on crisis management and sensemaking procedures and based on emerging patterns from the textual data. To triangulate our data, we each then inter-coded our data to avoid any researcher biases to the best of our ability.

RESULTS

[1] University documents include web pages which contained messages from university top level administrator and/or country government officials/ President decree, health authority announcements, research faculty specific web pages, COVID related images, meeting documents, webinars and university research agendas

We present our findings by applying them to our sensemaking framework coupled with text analysis that reveals the phases in which university leaders are in accordance with a consortium management style framework. Moreover, we provide texts from the websites and other documents collected to trace behaviors, processes, activities, initiatives, and commitments institutional leaders make that lead to knowledge production and navigation at the institutional level during the COVID-19 pandemic.

First, our text analysis reveals a collection of activities ranging from *decision making* (e.g., deciding campus closures, translating courses, the addition of new online platforms, or training staff to navigate an online system due to the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic) to *knowledge-creating* (e.g., encouraging more collaborative research crossing institutional and fields of study boundaries, webinars/dialogs with medical professionals and other STEM field experts from different regions to exchange knowledge on innovative ways to manage the outbreak of COVID-19 and its long term effects).

Within each of these processes, we found that decisions were made collaboratively both within and outside the institutional level, including external members, such as government officials, health experts, and other local authorities. The evidence collected for knowledge-creating within the sensemaking framework revealed leaders' efforts to encourage greater collaboration in terms of experts coming together to exchange knowledge to develop new technologies and/or innovation about COVID-19 and interdisciplinary research knowledge production (where researchers combined knowledge from two or more fields to produce new knowledge). The coming together of both people and fields/domains of study was an overarching finding from our text analysis. Instances of multistakeholder collaborations stemming from geostrategic partnerships resulted in more novel knowledge production activities. Our study revealed that efforts to curb the pandemic needs to be a collaborative global effort that synergizes knowledge from distinct or separate organizations, people and/or fields of study. The newly coined term, Synergistic Knowledge Production (SKP) (Ghosh, Upcoming) is used to describe this process, wherein we acknowledge both institutions at the organizational level, people within organizations and outside of organizations coming together to produce novel, improved ways of thinking. Included in this term is also the practice of interdisciplinary studies where one (or more) researcher combines knowledge from separate fields/domains of study to develop new knowledge and/or innovation.

When these criteria are satisfied, which was a major finding of our study, we recommend that university leaders are indeed facilitating synergistic methods of knowledge production given that the needs of the current climate cannot be addressed by a single entity/person alone. Given our space, place, and time, it is important to discuss the crucial necessity of building an institutional infrastructure grounded in SKP. That is, intentional collaborative global efforts that synergizes knowledge from distinct or separate organizations, people and/or fields of study. Therefore, we highlight that SKP echo the calls made by the Global Inclusivity Report to increase diversity in academic research for more creativity and inclusive ways of thinking, as well (Global Inclusivity Report, 2020).

We found that synergistic knowledge production decreased down tiers, with tier 1, providing evidence of the highest SKP and tier 3 engaging in lower levels of SKP. Next, we provide text evidence to further understand university leader's sensemaking processes that harness the most out of synergistic knowledge production.

Our text analysis revealed numerous themes (see table1) that map onto the sensemaking framework of decision making and knowledge-creating. Specifically, we found that across all institutions, leaders engaged in decision-making by utilizing knowledge disseminated by government and public health experts, particularly at the onset of the pandemic. During this time, universities also grappled with rapid closures for an uncertain period of time, and text evidence revealed ways institutions were planning to operate moving forward by using the HyFlex model of learning, where their courses would be offered via face-to-face or online at the same time by the same faculty member. However, even though this specific decision was common among all institutions, the reality of implementing a new teaching infrastructure differed by tier. For instance, tier 1 and 2 institutions were well equipped to seamlessly translate courses onto online infrastructures, whereas tier 3 institutions experienced longer periods of disruption before establishing online teaching mechanisms. Tier 1 and 2 institutions also initiated remote

learning trainings for faculty who did not have prior experience translating their courses to an online platform. For instance, at the University of Cincinnati, leaders released a video to provide students with guidance on the transition to remote learning and stated "we have planned an approach with a combination of online, hybrid, HyFlex and face-to-face course offerings, along with an adjusted calendar as well as enhanced health and safety measures." Another U.S based institution, Emory University stated that "Graduate and professional programs are being addressed on a case-by-case basis" where online options were provided if the nature of the subject did not necessitate in-person teaching.

Aside from discussions of forming decisions on how and when degree offerings could continue, several universities, particularly those from Asia, revealed the urgent need for more knowledge to be developed about the COVID-19 virus but explicitly expressed that efforts needed to be collaborative, cross-institutional within the country, region, and at the international level. This urgency for greater knowledge production is evidenced by a number of efforts taken by universities. First, we find that to develop more international research collaborations, university members are engaging in cross-institutional dialog (webinars) and research collaborations that are both drawn from multiple disciplines as well as researchers coming together from distinct disciplines to develop new knowledge. Second, universities have dedicated websites to their members` collective efforts in developing and collecting knowledge specifically to mitigate the outbreak of COVID-19.

For instance, in a Korean tier 1 institution's (Seoul National University) homepage, a dedicated university COVID-19 response website was created to document and track all pandemic related announcements, initiatives, and procedures. This website can now be thought of as a library of pandemic specific information that was generated through several activities, ranging from publications, interdisciplinary dialog (experts from health fields coming together with researchers from different fields of study to develop novel approaches to target and respond to various needs and aspects of the pandemic), and national, regional, and international collaborative research projects that share intel on ways countries are combating the current wave of the pandemic and anticipated waves that could be far more contagious. University leaders (top-tier leaders) relied on their faculty experts and local government to base decisions on fresh knowledge that was being generated through their sensemaking efforts. In one tier 3 institution from China, a scholarship was set up by faculty who are expert respiratory specialists to encourage further research on COVID-related infections. This effort was an extension of their goal to also encourage "the integration and interdisciplinary development involving the relevant disciplines of medicine, science, and engineering as well as the construction of emerging medical education."

Table 1

Themes

Decision Making	**Knowledge Creating**
Government and Public Health Expert guidance	Community Collaborations
FLEX model of learning	Online/Remote learning strategies
	Faculty training
Medical Health and Mental Health support	
Collaborative research on COVID19	

Our data also revealed country level differences in both knowledge creation and decision making processes. South Korean universities, regardless of tier, followed government provided protocols to tackle COVID-19 as a singular commitment through robust university coordination with local, state, and national governments. Our findings align with the UNESCO, 2020 report on South Korea's efforts to curb the spread of COVID and engage in new knowledge production to spread greater scientifically based evidence about the evolving pandemic. Both China and South Korea shared several similarities in terms of their efforts to generate more research around COVID related knowledge. We find that both countries' university leaders were at the last phase of consortium style of management where their goals were to plan for the future, in the event of another outbreak. Institutions from China were quick to harness the research capacity of their institutional experts in STEM fields to develop collaborative projects that crossed both university, state, and international boundaries. Interestingly, the language used on website from institutions in China revealed a positive outlook that geared toward a post-pandemic life. In numerous instances, we saw evidence of institutional websites, regardless of university tier, describing a sense of looking to the future as they have already passed a crisis and a critical health consequential time. For Chinese university leaders, the aftermath of COVID-19 meant taking stock of lessons learned in the medical field by engaging medical professionals with young medical students in discussions to learn not only from them but their counterparts as well. For instance, one such discussion involved medical professionals and scientists from China and Mexico who discussed challenges associated with the lack of medical inventory during peaks of the pandemic. The knowledge generated through such international collaboration allowed medical experts, as well as university leaders, to plan for similar future circumstances.

Similar to China and South Korea, several instances of geostrategic alliances were found to pool knowledge on procedures to move forward from the challenges of the pandemic. Institutional leaders from the United States also expressed a need for greater research collaborations to gather innovation and knowledge about COVID and similar such viral infections. However, one difference was that the majority of the textual analysis revealed that the decision making and knowledge creating processes were dedicated to understanding what the future would look like for institutions and in which ways they could best support students and faculty transition to remote learning under extreme crisis. While research output regarding COVID-19 remains high, our study reveals lesser efforts were taken, regardless of tier, to facilitate and stimulate research collaborations that lead to the development of research on COVID-19. This finding aligns with issues raised by Perillat and Baigrie (2021), as their study reveals duplicate research studies during the pandemic owing to a lack of communication from their institutional leaders. While institutional leaders may have little control over what studies get funded, they can set research agendas that detail strategies to stimulate collaboration between disciplines (i.e: interdisciplinary research) and faculty researchers from all levels of their career. In this study, we find that senior level researcher faculty led initiatives resulted in collaborative research outputs that sought to make sense of challenges faced during the pandemic.

The vast majority of the discussions presented were about the ways by which technology can be leveraged to teach students and stay on track during the pandemic. For instance, one U.S institution's leader stated that "Here you will learn how each school will be operating this fall and find the information you need to prepare; Students living on campus will be put into residential cohorts, ranging from 6 to 12 students.. The emphasis was on procedural decision making to remain in operation during the pandemic. Here we also see traces of "emergency planning" and "emergency response" and lesser of other elements of the consortium management style.

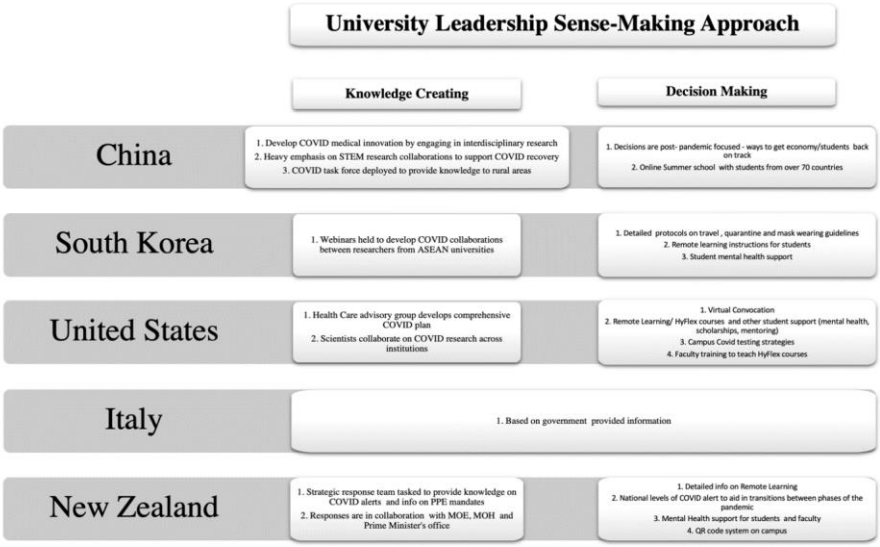
Two nations, New Zealand and Italy were distinct in their approaches to managing the pandemic. Institutions from New Zealand had thorough, nuanced plans for stage 1 and 2 of the consortium style of management. Decisions were disseminated in collaboration with public health experts and the government. They also embraced innovative technology to trace and tackle cluster outbreaks of COVID-19 as they occurred. Text analysis also revealed that institutions from New Zealand differed from others by first educating the public with scientific facts about the outbreak and then mitigating the outcome of COVID-19 using a highly concerted and collaborative country-wide effort to keep everyone on the same

page with respect to COVID-19 related information. Their efforts were to focus on controlling the narrative, like nipping misinformation in the bud in favor of spreading medical facts so that all of the citizens would respond positively to top level leadership decisions.

Institutions from Italy differentiated themselves from the rest of the data in many ways. For instance, our analysis reveals that the leaders across institutions from Italy struggled to move past phase 1 of the consortium style of management. Decision making was based on government-provided mandates. Owing to the severely high rate of infection at the time of this research in Italy, we find that their mitigation efforts were limited in scope as there was no discussion of stages 2 and 3 of the consortium style of management wherein they would build mechanisms to combat future such pandemics. One Italian institution stated that they were "implementing the protective measures issued by the Italian Health Authorities against the COVID-19 [and that a] a task force has been set up, composed of scientific experts and prevention office managers" to help manage the crisis. Across all Italian institutions included in this study, none provided evidence of participating in collaborative research efforts that would then lead them into the knowledge creating phase of sensemaking and stages two and three of the consortium style of management that would allow them to better navigate a now endemic virus. Below, we describe the text analysis at the country level in Table. 2.

Table 2

Sensemaking Model



Note: The text data is categorized within the sensemaking model and identifies boundary spanning activities that members of universities across the five countries engage in during the pandemic to produce new COVID-19 focused scientific knowledge

Limitations

Despite several efforts to have equal representation across all countries in this study, the criteria of having publicly available data on university websites with respect to COVID-19 leadership decisions meant that we had to remove institutions that had no acknowledgement of ways they would mitigate issues with COVID-19. This resulted in an uneven sample. While we wanted to understand the strategies used by university leaders to engage in more collaborative research especially during a time of global health crisis, our methodology limited us to online materials only. This meant that we were limited in scope should there be more collaborations that were only internally documented. On the other hand, it

was also impossible to identify if collaborations actively excluded key experts or stakeholders due to resources that institutions relied on. In other words, we were unable to identify the influence of politics on institutional decision-making. We also want to acknowledge that every effort was taken to produce a wide range of universities from each country. The sample included in our study is by no means representative of entire countries, but their institutional characteristics were carefully sorted to include a variety of institutional characteristics from each country.

DISCUSSION AND IMPLICATIONS

This study sought to understand the various processes and activities university leaders undertook during a global crisis to both mitigate immediate challenges and produce solutions for long-term management of grand challenges such as the COVID-19 pandemic. Our study findings highlight how leaders spearheaded new ways of producing knowledge in an increasing complex world given the ramifications of a global crisis. We trace their ways of knowledge production with Choo's (2002; 1996) sensemaking model and find elements of both decision-making and knowledge-creating across all 30 institutions. However, we find that when these processes are mapped onto the consortium style of management (Mann, 2007), each institution varied in phase level of management.

We found stratified differences, wherein institutions within tier 1 were greater poised to manage immediate critical operations, plan for long-term institutional strategies and provide clear communication that adhered to national and global crisis mitigation standards. Further, we find that institutions from China and the United States engaged in the highest amount and range of activities to generate COVID-related knowledge, whether it was procedural or the production of scientific knowledge that allowed better management of the pandemic. We recognize that both nations have historically been documented to have stronger infrastructures in place that allow for swift pivots when it comes to innovation capabilities during a crisis (Porter & Stern, 2001; Mani, 2005; Xiao, Du, & Wu, 2017). However, we found that institutions in China, South Korea and United States had high levels of *Synergistic Knowledge Production* efforts as evidenced by the various activities ranging from internal cross-college dialog between experts in various fields and exchange of knowledge across organization at the regional and national levels. We found that institutions in New Zealand also have high levels of SKP but relied more on internal and regional collaborations, as opposed to international collaborations. The magnitude of the challenges faced by Italy at the time of data collection revealed that their institutional leaders placed the highest dependence on government support and guidance and placed all other elements of SKP as secondary interests. Even though there were varying levels of participation expressed by university leaders at the country level to produce new knowledge to make-sense of the crisis, overall, our study supports that engaging in synergistic means of producing new knowledge remains an urgent method to combat the ongoing challenges associated with COVID-19.

Moreover, because this study introduces the term *Synergistic Knowledge Production*, we argue insular university research activity housed within a singular institution is both outdated and lacks the very innovation and creativity that forward-thinking research demands. Therefore, we emphasize the onus of initiating SKP does not lie with a single member of the university. Instead, in an effort to be proactive rather than reactive as we identified at the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic, we highlight that this type of university research activity needs to become a normative practice across colleges within institutions of higher education and in partnerships created externally, or in sectors outside of the realm of higher education. In other words, for SKP research to take place, its beginnings must also be rooted in the coming together of disciplines, people, organizations and industry experts to produce novel ways of thinking.

Given this key feature of SKP, our study provides a framework for global institutional leaders to consider when it comes to strategic planning and for setting research agendas – wherein a concerted effort in collaboration with multistakeholder experts across boundaries of organizations, international borders, and fields of study needs to be prioritized to stay abreast of unprecedented global challenges such as COVID-19 and future occurrences of other zoonotic virus transmissions.

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Appendix 1

Region	Country	University	Type	Tier
Asia	South Korea	Seoul National University	Public	1
		Sungkyunkwan University (SKKU)	Private (R)	1
		Korea University	Private (R)	2
		Ulsan National Institute of Science and Technology	Public	3
		Yonsei University	Private (R)	2
		Hanyang University	Private Research	3
Asia	China	Sun Yat-sen University	Public	2
		Tianjin University	Public	3
		Tsinghua University	Public	1
		Peking University	Public	1
		Shanghai Jiao Tong University	Public	1
		Beijing Normal University	Public	3
Europe	Italy	Sapienza University Of Rome	Public	2
		University Of Bologna	Public	2
		University of Padua	Public	2
		University of Milan	Public	3
		Sant'Anna School of Advanced Studies –	Public	1

		Pisa		
North America	United States	Case Western Reserve University	Private (R)	1
		University Of Cincinnati	Public	2
		Brown University	Private (R)	1
		University Of Pittsburgh	Public	1
		Emory University	Private (R)	1
		Rutgers, The State University Of New Jersey	Public	2
		Texas A&M University, College Station	Public	1
		Tufts University	Private (R)	1
		University Of Florida	Public	1
		University Of Kentucky	Public	3
Oceania	New Zealand	University of Auckland	Public	1
		University of Canterbury	Public	2
		University of Waikato	Public	3
Totals	5	30		

Empirical Article

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When Experts Become Novices: A Mixed-Methods Exploration of International Scholars' Experiences at a US University

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ABSTRACT

The experiences of international scholars in the United States who are part of short-term or exchange programs remain vastly under-investigated compared to their full-time, tenure-track, and tenured peers. Guided by Blau's (1964) social exchange theory, this study investigated professional and social experiences of exchange scholars at a large public research university in the southeast United States. A mixed-method exploration was conducted through surveys and interviews with international scholars who participated in an exchange program in the spring of 2020. The results revealed that exchange scholars were most satisfied with work conditions and their research experience, but least satisfied with professional development opportunities and cultural exchange. Further, participants' research experience was significantly correlated with their cultural exchange, while their professional development was significantly correlated with work conditions and support. Additional implications were drawn from the results revealing the unmet needs of program participants regarding the different areas of their exchange experiences.

Keywords: international faculty, international scholars, internationalization, J-1 exchange programs

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INTRODUCTION

For decades, international scholars have served as an important partner in globalizing United States (U.S.) higher education, advancing its research and teaching, and creating international collaborations. Over the past two decades, the number of international scholars in U.S. colleges and universities has almost doubled. As a comparison, between 1999 and 2000, the United States welcomed approximately 75,500 faculty and researchers from around the world, while between 2018 and 2019, that number reached 123,500. Unfortunately, the global pandemic interrupted the stable rate of annual increase as worldwide travel and visa restrictions resulted in a 9.6% decrease in the number of international scholars in the United States between 2019 and 2020 (Institute of International Education [IIE], 2021].

The term *international scholars* is inclusive of all international professionals in U.S. colleges and universities who engage in research, teaching, or clinical work and may include, but is not limited to, visiting faculty of different ranks, post-doctoral scholars, researchers, and specialists (IIE, 2020). These scholars predominantly support science, technology, engineering, and math (STEM) programs with more than 77% representation in these fields between 2018-2019. Others are engaged in the social sciences (8%), humanities (4%), business and management (3%), education (2%), and fine and applied arts (2%). Comparable to international students, global scholars are mainly represented by professionals from China (35%), India (10%), and South Korea (5%), followed by smaller representation from Germany, Canada, Brazil, France, Japan, Italy, Spain, and the United Kingdom (IIE, 2021).

Higher education research, both international and within the United States, has predominantly focused on exploring the experiences of international students while much less attention has been dedicated to internationally mobile faculty and scholars. Over the past decade, more than 300 peer-reviewed research articles were published on issues related to international students in the United States (Krsmanovic, 2021). However, much less research investigated the experiences of international scholars in the United States and, among those that did, the focus was mainly placed on the perceptions of domestic students about their international faculty. The few studies that involved international scholars mainly centered on immigrant or foreign-born faculty who made long-term commitments to their educational institutions in the United States (see Lawless & Chen, 2017; Mamiseishvili & Lee, 2018; Murad & Samples, 2015; Phillips et al., 2016).

Consequently, the experiences of international scholars in the United States who are part of short-term or exchange programs (J-1 visa programs) remain vastly under-investigated. Understanding the experiences of these scholars is of critical importance for higher education as upon the return of these scholars to their home countries, they not only apply the experience obtained during the exchange program, but also maintain international partnerships between the two countries and foster potential future exchanges and collaborations. To overcome this limitation, this study investigated the experiences of short-term exchange scholars (J-1 visa scholars) at a large public research university in the southeast United States. Through mixed-methods exploration, this study sought to answer the following research questions:

1. How do international exchange scholars describe their professional experience during their time at the U.S. university?
2. How do international exchange scholars describe their cultural exchange experience during their time at the U.S. university?
3. What are the unmet needs of international exchange scholars that can be better addressed during their time at the U.S. university?

LITERATURE REVIEW

Despite the importance of international scholars in U.S. higher education, there remains a paucity of evidence on their professional and other experiences as the overwhelming body of literature in this domain has focused on portraying international scholars through the perceptions of domestic students or colleagues. Among the studies that involved international scholars as participants, for the most part, researchers have focused only on full-time international faculty and investigated either their research

productivity (Lawless & Chen, 2017; Webber, 2012) or workplace satisfaction (Lawrence et al., 2014; Mamiseishvili & Lee, 2018). Only a few studies attempted to explore the transition and professional development of international scholars (Murad & Samples, 2015; Phillips et al., 2016), but this research, as well, remains limited to full-time, tenure track, or tenured faculty. To date, the experiences of short-term exchange scholars on U.S. campuses have received scant attention in the research literature.

Transition and Professional Development

Evidence exists to show that an international faculty member's transition to a new professional and academic setting is not without challenges. In some cases, the transitional challenges stem from a continuous pressure encountered by faculty trying to secure permanent residence by proving they are more productive than their American peers, or from experiencing racism and xenophobia (Lawless & Chen, 2017). Other examples include difficulties in communication, establishing rapport with students, and pedagogical challenges (Murad & Samples, 2015). Consequently, international scholars often resorted to self-isolation partially due to their perceptions that professional accomplishments are the most important attribute for successful integration and partially because they lacked cultural and other resources to integrate within professional and social groups.

Several attempts have been made to understand the factors contributing to a successful transition of international faculty to U.S. higher education, their professional development, and retention at host institutions. In that regard, mentoring programs, whether individual or group, were found to lead to higher retention rates of tenure-earning international faculty (Phillips et al., 2016). Similarly, the alignment of international scholars' individual motivations with institutional interests led to implementing more successful exchange programs that resulted in multiple benefits for their participants in the areas of teaching and research (Patricio et al., 2018).

Productivity

Central to understanding their transition and professional experience has been assessing international faculty research productivity, mainly in comparison to their domestic peers. The previously reported pressure of international faculty to outperform their American colleagues in order to secure permanent residency has been confirmed by several studies documenting that international scholars produce significantly more scholarly presentations, articles, patents, and other works than U.S. peers (Lawless & Chen, 2017; Webber, 2012).

Prior research further shows that non-domestic faculty are significantly more productive in research, but less productive in teaching and service than their domestic colleagues, thus corroborating the previously presented challenges related to international faculty teaching, socialization, and other non-research experiences. While U.S. faculty exceeded their international peers in undergraduate teaching and service contributions, they underperformed in research and other scholarly work (Mamiseishvili & Rosser, 2009). Documenting the experiences of female immigrant faculty, Lawless and Chen (2017) presented faculty perspectives such that, in order to stay in the country and achieve academic success, female immigrant faculty cannot only strive to meet standards set by American peers, but rather, must exceed such standards.

Work Satisfaction

The third group of studies involving international faculty on U.S. campuses centered on their workplace satisfaction. There is a consensus among researchers that international faculty are, on average, less satisfied professionally than their domestic colleagues (Mamiseishvili & Lee, 2018). While international faculty report higher satisfaction with research equipment and facilities, U.S. faculty are more content overall and with respect to decision-making authority, salary and benefits (Webber, 2012). The significant differences in faculty members' satisfaction with autonomy were corroborated by Mamiseishvili and Lee (2018) who also noted that, compared to their international peers, U.S. faculty were more satisfied with independence and autonomy but significantly less satisfied with perceived recognition.

Several lines of evidence illustrated the importance of understanding and fostering international faculty work satisfaction by suggesting that their performance and retention are dependent on this variable. For instance, the intention of Asian international faculty members to stay in U.S. research universities is conditional on their positive workplace perceptions, greater work satisfaction, and organizational commitment, as well as the time available for research, fairness of work evaluations, and merit-based tenure decisions (Lawrence et al., 2014). Data from other studies suggested that mentoring opportunities, both individual and for groups, can lead to self-validation among new international faculty and their higher retention rates (Phillips et al., 2016).

Overall, the literature on international faculty experiences has identified the most critical factors related to their transition, professional development, productivity, and work satisfaction. Much of the current literature in this domain paid particular attention to the relationship between scholars' professional satisfaction and productivity or their workplace satisfaction and retention. Such investigations, however, have failed to include short-term international scholars who have been increasingly present on U.S. campuses. In contrast to their full-time, tenure earning, or tenured peers, the experiences of exchange scholars have not received much research interest. Consequently, there is limited knowledge about possible factors that promote or hinder their transition, professional development, or workplace satisfaction in the host culture. This study sought to obtain the knowledge that can help address these research gaps and unveil the experiences of an under-investigated group of international scholars.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

This study was theoretically grounded in Blau's (1964) social exchange theory according to which "the character of the relationship between exchange partners" might "affect the process of social exchange" (p. 97). Advancing the premise that social relations unite not only individuals in groups but also groups in wider societies, Blau postulated that individual relationships ultimately influence the type of social exchange that will take place. Therefore, social exchange theory suggests that actions within social relations have the potential to create, nurture, and maintain long-term and far-ranging social relationships.

In the context of this study, social exchange theory served as the foundation for studying professional and cultural interactions that take place within exchange scholar programs and the resulting social structures that evolve from such interactions. Specifically, this framework allowed for exploring the ways in which international scholars perceived their professional, cultural, and overall development to have been nurtured by social relations in their new settings, as well as the resulting social (international) relationships that may be formed and maintained because of these relations. In line with the objectives of social relations investigation, this study sought to analyze whether and how social relationships can be formed from the exchange interactions, the forms such relationships may attain, and the barriers to their successful development (Blau, 1964).

RESEARCH METHOD

Designing this study as mixed-method research (MMR) allowed to examine participants' experiences from multiple perspectives drawn from quantitative and qualitative sources of data. Specifically, this study utilized a two-stage explanatory sequential research design. In the first phase, quantitative data were collected using a survey instrument that explored participants' exchange experiences. In the second phase, qualitative data were gathered through individual interviews with participants. The ultimate objective in combining the two methods was to provide comprehensive and thorough responses to the main research questions stated for this study (Creswell & Clark, 2017). below.

Setting and Population

This research was conducted in the spring of 2020 at a large, public research university in the southeast United States. According to the institutional data, the faculty body is predominantly white (69%), followed by Asian (14%) Hispanic (7%), Black (4%), and international (4%). These demographic

data exclude short-term J-1 exchange scholars who, at the time of this research, counted 191. The university is classified as R1 doctoral institution with very high research activity.

Participants were recruited from the population of 191 exchange scholars hailing from 36 countries. Comparable to national trends, the greatest representation was from China, India, and Korea, but the institution also hosted representative numbers of scholars from Brazil, Turkey, Italy, and Canada. All scholars had the Exchange Visitor (J-1) non-immigrant visa that is awarded to individuals approved to participate in work-and study-based exchange visitor programs (U.S. Department of State, 2021). The length of their stay at the institution ranged from three months to one year.

Data Collection

In the first phase of the research, a non-experimental survey research design was used to collect descriptive data about participants' attitudes about the exchange program in the areas of research and cultural experience, professional development, and program satisfaction. The demographic questions were designed to elicit descriptive information about participants' discipline, highest degree earned, exchange program concentration, and home country. The four sets of Likert-scale questions were composed to measure the respondents' level of agreement or disagreement with multiple items within each of the four categories – (a) research experience, (b) cultural exchange experience, (c) professional development, and (d) work conditions and support. The questions followed the traditional 5-point Likert scale with "strongly agree"/"strongly disagree" as endpoints and "neither agree nor disagree" as the midpoint. The free-response item asked participants to share any additional comments they may have about their exchange experience.

Upon securing the approval from the Institutional Review Board (IRB), the researcher contacted the Office of International Student and Scholar Services to obtain the list of all J-1 exchange scholars at the university. In January 2020, the link to the online questionnaire was emailed to all 191 exchange scholars. From this list, 54 scholars completed the questionnaire for a 28.3% response rate.

The second phase of the study involved identifying quantitative results that call for additional explanation and using these results to develop a qualitative data collection tool (Creswell & Clark, 2017). Interview questions were developed to focus on participants' professional, cultural, and overall exchange experience. Specifically, the questions asked international scholars to share rationales behind their survey responses, such as benefits of and barriers to successful professional development and cultural exchange. Due to the large size of the international scholars' program, interview participants were selected by purposeful sampling. They were recruited in collaboration with the university's faculty development center which, at the time of this study, led a professional development cohort for international exchange scholars. As these scholars independently sought and engaged in professional development opportunities, they were selected as potential participants who may offer rich insights into the research questions examined.

Before scheduling the interviews, the researcher confirmed with all interested scholars that they had completed the online questionnaire which was distributed in the first phase of this study. In early March 2020, individual, face-to-face, in-depth interviews were conducted with 10 exchange scholars. Interviews lasted approximately one hour and were audio recorded and transcribed verbatim. Qualitative responses recorded for the free-response question in the survey were added to this data.

Data Analysis

Quantitative data were analyzed using the Statistical Product and Service Solutions (SPSS) software. Means and standard deviations were produced for participants' responses rating the four aspects of their J-1 exchange experience: research, cultural exchange, professional development, and work satisfaction and support. Pearson's correlation was used to test the correlation between participants' overall satisfaction with their research, cultural, professional development, and work conditions experience.

Among the 54 survey respondents, 35 had the doctorate as their highest degree, 13 had a master's degree, and six a bachelor's degree. For the discipline, 46 respondents were from STEM fields with

electrical engineering, computer science, and physics accounting for the majority percentages. Non-STEM scholars represented the fields of education, speech pathology, hospitality, and health sciences. For the exchange program concentration, 51 scholars focused solely on research while the remaining three engaged in observation (n=2) or teaching and research simultaneously (n=1). China was the main country represented in the sample (n=13), followed by Brazil (n=9), Italy (n=6), Pakistan (n=4), India (n=4), South Korea (n=2), Mexico (n=2), and nine more countries each represented by one scholar.

Qualitative data were analyzed using *NVivo* software combined with thematic data analysis. Specifically, participant narratives were examined through Saldana's (2012) values coding which reflects on participant values, attitudes, and beliefs that lie behind their perspectives. Given that interviews served as a tool for explaining participant attitudes reported in the survey, values coding allowed the researcher to uncover the importance that international scholars attributed to different aspects of their exchange experience. Additionally, values coding is particularly recommended for studies that explore cultural values, identity, and interpersonal and intrapersonal experiences in a particular case or setting (Saldana, 2012).

Interview transcripts were transcribed verbatim and coded by distinguishing all responses that reveal participant values, attitudes, and beliefs about different aspects of their exchange program experience (e.g., statements such as "It is important for me", "I need to", "I feel that", "I liked that", etc.). In the next step, these responses were categorized based on the constructs investigated in the research questions (professional experience, cultural experience, and overall experience). Then, a collective meaning was derived for each set of responses under the premise that they are all part of an interconnected experience revealed in the survey responses.

The 10 interview participants were representative of the J-1 population at the university in terms of home countries – Brazil (n=4), China (n=4), the Czech Republic (n=1), and Pakistan (n=1) and academic fields – computer science (n=3), engineering (n=3), physics (n=1), optics (n=1), hospitality (n=1), and education (n=1). The sample included seven female participants and three males. The duration of their exchange programs at the institution ranged from four months to one year.

RESULTS

The results obtained from the questionnaire are reported in the quantitative results section and the data collected from the interview instrument are reported in the qualitative data findings section. Following Creswell and Clark's (2017) recommendation, study findings are reported for quantitative and qualitative results respectively and distinguished from inferences and interpretations reported in the discussion section.

Quantitative Results

Overall, international scholars were most satisfied with their work conditions and support at host institutions (*M=4.42, SD=.59*), followed by satisfaction with their research experience (*M=4.39, SD=47*). On average, scholars were less satisfied with their cultural exchange experience (*M=4.06, SD=.79*) and least satisfied with professional development experience (*M=4.04, SD=.69).* Table 1 presents means and standard deviations for four different aspects of participants' exchange experience – research, cultural exchange, professional development, and work conditions.

Table 1:
Descriptive Statistics for Participants' Exchange Experience (N=54)

Survey Item	***M***	***SD***
Overall research experience	4.39	.47
I understand U.S. scholarship and research culture	4.37	.78
I feel confident to conduct or present my research in the U.S.	4.46	.74
I establish relationships with my U.S. colleagues through research	4.54	.63
My exchange department and/or institution support my research	4.59	.71

My exchange department and/or institution support me to produce innovativeand high-impact research	4.50	.77
I have had to adjust my approach to research because of cultural or academic expectations in the exchange program	3.96	1.22
I am overall confident in my research skills while in the exchange program	4.37	.68
Overall cultural experience	4.06	.79
I understand U.S. culture	3.93	1.00
I feel welcomed by my exchange department and/or institution	4.41	1.05
I feel connected with people from my exchange department and/or institution	4.22	1.04
My exchange department and/or institution are genuinely interested in learning about my culture	3.44	1.09
My exchange department and/or institution have a genuine commitment to cultural diversity	4.22	.81
My exchange department and/or institution make genuine efforts to recruit international scholars	4.17	1.06
Overall professional development	4.04	.69
I actively seek out professional development opportunities	4.31	.86
I am aware of professional development opportunities available to me	3.76	1.11
I am provided with resources and support I need to grow professionally	4.06	.87
I am provided with resources and support to advance my research	4.39	.78
I am provided with resources and support to aid my cultural exchange	3.70	1.05
Overall satisfaction with work conditions	4.42	.59
I am satisfied with my office space	4.26	.99
I am satisfied with my lab or other research space	4.54	.81
I am satisfied with technology and computer resources	4.37	.85
I am satisfied with clerical and administrative support	4.43	.81
I am satisfied with my J-1 status-related support	4.56	.83

Pearson correlation analysis was conducted to determine the relationship between the four aspects of participants' exchange experience – research, cultural exchange, professional development, and work conditions. As presented in Table 2, participants' cultural exchange experience was significantly correlated with their research experience ($r=36$, $p<.01$), suggesting that satisfaction with research experience improves participants' overall cultural exchange. Additionally, professional development was significantly correlated with work conditions and support ($r=.41$, $p<.01$), implying that satisfactory work conditions and increased support can aid participants' professional development.

Table 2

Pearson Correlation for Participants' Exchange Experience (N=54)

Variables	1	2	3	4
1 – Culture	1	.358**	.337*	.329*
2 – Research		1	.338*	.182
3 – Professional Development			1	.414**
4 – Work Conditions and Support				1

** Correlation is significant at the .01 level

* Correlation is significant at the .05 level

Qualitative Findings

The analysis of interview transcripts and responses to the open survey question revealed three themes. In line with the study research questions and interview questions, the themes portrayed scholars' reflections and insights about their professional, cultural, and overall exchange experience. These

narratives led to a deeper understanding of participants' quantitative responses and helped interpret the benefits of and barriers to their successful professional and cultural exchange.

Professional Experience

Three sub-themes emerged from the scholars' narratives about their professional experience – program benefits to participants, program benefits to the host departments, and university-wide professional development opportunities. A common view amongst interviewees was that the biggest benefit from the exchange program was enjoying the availability of a wide range of professional resources, mainly free access to online databases and published scholarship. As one scholar shared:

> In Brazil, I wrote my dissertation searching the papers, and then I had to go to Research Gate and ask the authors to give me the paper because we don't have access to good journals. Here, I always tell my research friends from Brazil that this is my Disney [laughs] because I can find everything I need.

Another positive experience expressed was the freedom and autonomy in conducting research and seeking external funding. Scholars voiced their admiration with the grant funding systems in the United States which they perceived as having very few or no restrictions compared to those in their home countries. Other professional benefits reported included strengthening critical thinking skills, learning new ways to analyze and synthesize knowledge, and engaging in higher-order thinking.

Participants also agreed that their presence was beneficial for their domestic colleagues who had the opportunity to obtain varied professional and cultural insights. Most commonly, international scholars familiarized their colleagues with different teaching and research approaches in their countries and shared cultural customs. Several participants had the opportunity to share these insights not only with their colleagues, but also with students. A scholar from China used his work in the lab to teach undergraduate and graduate students about research, teaching, and other professional development structures in her country, while a hospitality scholar from Brazil served as a guest lecturer in one undergraduate class:

> I talked to them [students] about my work experience and about my research in Brazil and asked them if they had any questions. And they had many questions, so we spent the entire class answering them. And in the end, I was like - Oh my gosh, it was the worst class in my whole life. And I was ashamed. And my English was getting worse because I was nervous. But then the professor told me that students loved it because I talked about my work, and I gave them a lot of new information. And they said they loved it!

When discussing professional development experiences outside of their host departments, participants were unanimous in the view that it was quite challenging to discover such opportunities. As a scholar from Brazil explained: "There is a lot of communication I don't receive. I'm not a staff here. I'm not a faculty here. I'm not a student here. So, I'm not in the communication [loop]". Her colleague from China elaborated on this sentiment by saying:

> We [J-1 scholars] are different from graduate students or postdocs. Graduate students have many chances to know everything about the campus. But we don't. I think if there's an opportunity, maybe someone can organize our departments to introduce something about the campus, like how to use the library. Unfortunately, we don't know very much about it.

Among the opportunities that international scholars independently sought, the faculty development center was the most utilized resource as, each semester, the center engages in international scholar outreach. Therefore, most participants reported attending workshops and programs offered by the center, mainly focused on teaching and learning. These venues allowed them to interact with other faculty at the institution, including other international scholars, and to learn different pedagogies, active learning approaches, and student engagement techniques – all of which they reported as experiences they did not have at their home institutions.

Cultural Experience

Two recurrent sub-themes related to cultural exchange experiences were perceptions amongst interviewees about establishing short-term and long-term relationships with the members of their host culture. Building social relationships with their colleagues or other members of their academic

communities proved to be particularly hard for exchange scholars. The majority expressed that their programs focused solely on research with little opportunity for cultural enhancement. A scholar from Pakistan described this experience by saying:

> Here everyone is busy with their own job, with technology. When you meet with them, they will say "Hey, how are you" in a good manner, but not so much with feelings for one another. In Pakistan, you will sit with people, and you will share every difficulty with them. But here it's not like that. I think people are very busy. One recommendation for the university would be to gather American people and international people for a gathering or an event where they would interact.

Among those who were successful in building cross-cultural relationships, such experiences occurred outside of academic settings, mainly by going to local churches or, for those who came with children, through schools. As one scholar explained: "Through the PTA in my son's school, I met many people and had the opportunity for social engagement and volunteering."

Despite these obstacles in establishing short-term relationships, a common view amongst interviewees was that they will continue collaborations and partnerships with their colleagues upon returning to their home countries. Several revealed that they already planned collaborative research projects between the two countries, while others intended to develop intercultural programs – "After my return to the Czech Republic, I'll meet with the vice-dean for internationalization at my university. I am convinced that having a similar program for international faculty at our university could be extremely beneficial. Thank you for the inspiration!" Some scholars explained that lasting effects of the exchange program will primarily be maintained through deconstructing cross-cultural biases and bringing nations together:

> People of Pakistan and the media have a negative image of America, that they are anti-Muslim. But no such type of situation occurred to me. I have not seen that from anybody. When I go back, I will spread that in Pakistan. If I had the ability, I would send my whole university here for one month so that they can see with their own eyes and experience how good the people here are. Every day I am talking to my family. And initially, they were concerned that I was coming to America. And now I tell them – they [Americans] are kindhearted, they are educated, they are professional, and they are really helpful.

All scholars approaching the end of their exchange programs expressed desire to participate in the program again and regret for not having enough time to experience as many cultural and other events as they would like to. These long-term collaborations, they hope, would allow them to make up for those missed opportunities.

Overall Experience and Unmet Needs

Even though international scholars shared that they benefited from the exchange program professionally and personally, they disclosed its limitations and offered recommendations for improvement. The three main development areas included increasing mentorship and peer support, offering a short orientation, and providing social engagement opportunities. The most widespread concern among the participants was that their exchange mainly involved isolated lab work with little to no training, mentorship, or teamwork. Even though scholars enjoyed advancing their research through state-of-the-art facilities and resources, their work was the only exposure to their host institutions and societies. As one scholar described "I expected more of a supervisor–supervisee kind of exchange and collaboration between research groups, not to be alone all the time". In that regard, participants suggested offering either more frequent meetings and ongoing collaborations with mentors and colleagues or providing opportunities for social and professional connections outside of academic departments. As a researcher from China explained:

> Our experience here is very lonely. I only communicate with my PI, my lab mates, and my roommates. But the social aspect is very limited for exchange scholars. This doesn't have to be an entire course or a program, even small gathering events would be great.

Some participants disclosed that they attempted to initiate connections with other faculty in the program, but such attempts turned to be unsuccessful as, they shared, "everyone is locked in their office, and we can't find anyone to talk to." A recommendation presented by several scholars was to enhance the exchange program by offering guest lecture or class audit opportunities. These venues, they argued, would allow for much-needed social connections and would introduce participants to different pedagogical and student engagement techniques and help them learn more about the students in the United States. As one participant reflected: "One thing I missed is to attend one class before I left so that I can see faculty lecture style, how they teach, how they react to students, how students ask questions, and how faculty are answering." Their colleague elaborated on this sentiment by saying: "Maybe you can find a class and a professor, maybe someone who is very popular with students, and invite J-1 scholars to visit that class and to listen. After that, we can discuss that class and what we learned."

Closely related to the perceived lack of social engagement and to excessive work autonomy was the realization that, upon their arrival to the host institutions, exchange scholars get lost in the system. As many of them shared, the unique classification of exchange visitors excludes them from orientation programs offered to faculty or teaching assistants. Still, no such alternatives are offered to them, and they are placed in their departments without being oriented to the academic system, professional or other customs, available resources, or any other aspects of their exchange programs. As one scholar described:

> For a while, I felt a bit lost. Usually, when you start with a new company, HR would send you some papers, documents, or some guides about the company or your role. And I had to discover everything about the university as I worked here. I didn't know that I could have an ID. I didn't know that I could use the library. It's things like this. I thought maybe there would be more procedures when someone is joining the university.

The exchange scholars' needs in this regard varied from learning HR and administrative procedures to being familiarized with available resources, to understanding the academic system and their role in the host culture. As a participant from Czech Republic noted:

> Being an international scholar at the US campus, it is not easy to understand the American university life on your own. It took me some time to learn more about the American educational system and what are all the challenges that students here face. My major is Education so, thanks to my background, I met great teachers and talked with students, which helped me to gain some understanding. Nevertheless, it was not enough to answer all my questions.

Many scholars felt like they "did not belong anywhere" as the International Student and Scholars' Office is only in charge of their immigration and onboarding status and does not include them in international student programming. But at the same time, no other campus unit includes them in their programming either as they do not have the status of faculty, staff, teaching assistants, or graduate students. Overall, participants concluded that a short orientation, whether by their departments or other campus units, along with promoting opportunities for social engagement and collaborations, would have greatly enhanced their exchange experience.

Limitations and Future Research

While this study provided valuable insights into the experiences of exchange scholars, an under-researched group of international faculty in the United States, it is not without its limitations. On one hand, combining quantitative and qualitative research designs helped alleviate the shortcomings of utilizing a single research design. On the other hand, the quantitative portion of this study remains limited by self-reported data which cannot be used as an objective measure of the program's effects on the participants' ability to apply the skills, competencies, and experiences obtained in the program in their home settings. To fully evaluate the quality of the exchange program, future studies need to investigate professional, cultural, and other contributions that exchange faculty make upon their return to home counties and academic institutions.

While the sample from this study was highly diverse in terms of participants' academic fields, nine out of ten interview participants were from China, Brazil, and Pakistan – the three countries that were overwhelmingly represented in the institutional population of exchange scholars. Therefore,

gathering qualitative data that would portray the experiences of exchange scholars from other countries, especially those from developed and English-speaking countries, warrants further investigation. This research is also limited by a single setting, so the experiences of international scholars were limited to only one region of the United States and one institutional culture. International faculty whose exchange programs were based in other regions and institutional settings may yield different notions and insights, particularly regarding their cultural experiences. Therefore, future research should not only include exchange scholars from other regions of the United Studies but also employ multi-setting research and compare potential moderating effects of participants' location or institution on their exchange experience.

Lastly, this study gave voice to international scholars and, consequently, recommendations and implications presented were drawn from their perspectives and insights. To achieve balanced and objective recommendations it is critical to engage other stakeholders involved in these programs, mainly International Student and Scholar Services, faculty development offices, and the representatives from academic departments hosting international scholars. Hearing from multiple parties involved in constructing these exchange experiences can lead to more feasible and sustainable program improvements.

DISCUSSION AND IMPLICATIONS

This study set out with the aim of understanding the experiences of short-term exchange scholars in a new academic, professional, and cultural setting. With respect to the first research question and participants' professional experience, it was found that international scholars were, on average, most satisfied with work conditions and research experience, but least satisfied with professional development opportunities. Further, participants' research experience was significantly correlated with their cultural exchange, while their professional development was significantly correlated with work conditions and support. Interview data provided additional insights by revealing specific benefits of the program to international scholars and their host departments, as well as hurdles in seeking professional development opportunities.

The exploration of the second research question demonstrated that scholars were less satisfied with their cultural enhancement than work conditions and research experience, but more satisfied than with professional development opportunities. Additionally, their cultural exchange experience was significantly correlated with their research experience. Qualitative findings helped explain these attitudes by identifying specific barriers that participants experienced in attempting to establish social relationships in their host communities, as well as their desire for maintaining professional and long-term collaborations.

Lastly, the results for the third research question identified unmet needs of program participants concerning different areas of their exchange experiences. On that question, scholars suggested three main development areas for the J-1 scholar program – increasing mentorship and peer support, offering a short orientation, and providing social engagement opportunities.

Overall, the unique contribution of this study is that it explored the experiences of short-term exchange scholars, thus addressing the critical limitation of contemporary research which has overwhelmingly focused on full-time, tenure-track, or tenured international faculty. Consequently, the results of this research can only be interpreted in relation to the dominant literature on the experiences of full-time faculty who made long-term commitments to their higher education institutions.

Regarding participants' professional experience, the comparison of the findings with those of other studies confirms that international scholars often feel excluded from their host settings or unsupported in their efforts to achieve integration and sense of belonging. While prior research attributed this phenomenon to experiencing racism, sexism, xenophobia, or disdain for foreign accents (Lawless & Chen, 2017), this study revealed a different set of challenges that led to the feelings of isolation among short-term exchange scholars. In accordance with the present results, past studies have also demonstrated that mentoring programs for international scholars can improve their satisfaction and retention at host institutions (Phillips et al., 2016). Consistent with the literature, the participants in this study suggested that increased mentorship and peer support could help reduce feelings of isolation and establish social relationships.

This research broadly supports the work of other studies in this field by linking the existing evidence on international scholars' workplace productivity with possible reasons behind such a phenomenon. Namely, it is already well-known that international faculty outperform their US peers in research and scholarship productivity, but lag in teaching and service accomplishments (Webber, 2012). The existing knowledge, however, failed to explain the rationale behind such trends. The participants in this study made the first step in that direction by sharing that their undivided focus on research felt imposed as they were provided with little to no opportunities for cultural enhancement. Unsurprisingly, this study identified research experience as one of the highest-ranked aspects of participants' exchange and revealed its significant correlation with cultural experience, thus showing a unique relationship between the two constructs that has not yet been reported in prior studies. Moreover, the qualitative data of this research presented unique factors behind scholars' satisfaction with their research experience, mainly the availability of open access resources and grant-seeking opportunities.

While prior research examined international faculty workplace satisfaction only in comparison to their domestic colleagues (Mamiseishvili & Lee, 2018), this research helped explain the factors influencing exchange scholar workplace satisfaction. For instance, prior findings demonstrated that international faculty reported high satisfaction with research conditions at U.S. institutions (Webber, 2012). This study advanced such knowledge by comparing participants' workplace satisfaction with other aspects of their exchange experience and noting a significant correlation between satisfaction with work conditions and professional development. Given the dependent nature between these two aspects of scholars' experiences, more efforts need to be invested in developing professional development opportunities for international scholars or introducing them to those that are already in place.

With respect to participants' cultural exchange, this research corroborated prior knowledge in some respects while offering novel insights in others. Namely, in accord with recent studies, communication, socialization, establishing rapport with the members of the host culture, and other non-research experiences emerged as the main transitional challenges for participants in this study (Murad & Samples, 2015). The unique contribution of this research, however, was that it identified the root causes of such challenges for exchange scholars and noted that their unique J-1 classification excluded them from social, cultural, and other programs in the host institution, thus leaving them siloed throughout their time in the program.

These findings become particularly critical when examined through the lenses of Blau's (1964) social exchange theory, the theoretical framework guiding this research. Overall, this study supported Blau's postulation that individual relationships ultimately influence the type of social exchange that will take place. As many participants shared, building social relationships with the members of their academic communities proved to be particularly hard for exchange scholars. Consequently, they were less satisfied with their social exchange compared to their professional or research experience.

Of particular interest for future studies would be to revisit exchange scholars' expectations for maintaining long-term professional collaborations with their host institutions upon return to their home countries. Even though this goal emerged as an overarching theme from participants' narratives, it is contrary to the social exchange theory which postulates that social relations between individuals in groups serve as a prerequisite for creating and maintaining long-term exchanges between groups in wider societies. Given the volume of obstacles that prevented participants from building within-group (short-term) relationships, their intended between-group (long-term) collaborations should be approached with reservation.

As most universities around the world are working hard to strengthen their internationalization strategies, and as international faculty mobility continues to increase, it is critical for U.S. institutions to engage in deliberate efforts to continue attracting and retaining international scholars. The importance of international faculty on U.S. campuses must not be overlooked and institutions must engage in ongoing efforts to understand the experiences of their exchange scholars and the ways in which these experiences may impact future international partnerships and collaborations. In that regard, the main implication of this research is that academic departments hosting international scholars and the administrative offices behind these exchange programs must not work in isolation. Instead, they must combine efforts and

initiatives to ensure that exchange faculty have a meaningful experience from start to finish. This approach includes ensuring that international faculty are oriented to their host institutions and that their time in the program meaningfully connects academic/research experience and social/cultural exchange.

Knowing that international scholars in this study were most satisfied with work conditions and research experience, but least satisfied with professional development and cultural exchange provides support for the conceptual premise that their professional and cultural experiences must be perceive as inseparable. Thus, for academic departments to be able to truly benefit from international scholars' presence, they first must provide opportunities for scholars' professional growth to take place in unison with their cultural development. Strategically focusing on the unmet needs of program participants, such as mentorship and peer support, orientation programs, and social engagement opportunities, can help all stakeholders streamline their efforts to ensure that program benefits are maximized for all parties involved – international scholars, academic departments, and host institutions.

Ultimately, this study contributes to the growing body of research raising an intriguing question regarding the extent to which the United States can maintain its leading position in international student and scholar mobility in the time when other countries are engaging in an accelerated, if not aggressive, battle for global supremacy. As this research concludes, being a "magnet" for international students and scholars is no longer sufficient if such phenomenon are not accompanied by deliberate and evidence-based strategies for ensuring the professional and cultural growth, development, and satisfaction of international students and scholars.

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Pre-Service International Teaching Assistant's (ITA's) investments in their ITA Training Course: A Multiple Case Study

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ABSTRACT

Research has focused almost exclusively on International Teaching Assistants'(ITA) experiences as instructors, overlooking the ITA training class. This has led to the marginalization of Pre-Service ITAs in the literature. The locus of potentially important learning, a descriptive, multiple case study examined the investment (Darvin & Norton, 2015) of three Pre-Service ITA's in their ITA training class over one semester at a large US university. Data included ITA's weekly journals, individual interviews/ stimulated recalls, class assignments, and field notes from classroom observations. Findings are presented as portraits of real, multifaceted ITA's, then from cross-case analyses. Participants experienced the same course very differently, impacted most prominently by their ITA educators' teaching approach, their exposure to teaching role models, and their home department structures. Recognizing the incredible diversity ITA's represent, pedagogical implications suggest an "intense exposure experience" or teaching-training focused pedagogy be implemented -instead of test-centric pedagogies, situating ITA's learning within un-simulated spaces with real undergraduates.

Keywords: ESL, experience, ITA, identity, International Teaching Assistant, investment, Pre-Service ITA, second language acquisition

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INTRODUCTION

International Teaching Assistants (ITAs) are graduate students admitted to study in the US and Canada (Gorsuch, 2016) who are often employed in various teaching roles (Gorsuch, 2012a). To this end, ITAs needing support in their instructional English often enroll in an English language class (Gorsuch, 2014). Sustaining the motivation of ITAs is of critical importance to ITA educators (Gorsuch, 2016). Their motivation cannot be assumed a priori: ITAs have diverse, complex, and evolving identities and relationships to teaching and thus to such courses. Moreover, research has marginalized ITAs who are not

yet teaching, here referred to as "Pre-Service ITAs", and generally has overlooked, the ITA training class, a space for potentially crucial learning.

LITERATURE REVIEW

The ITA Training Class

In the late 1980's, the number of ITAs in North American universities rose (Gorsuch, 2016), prompting legislation in US states to mandate ITAs` spoken English proficiencies (Hoekje & Linnell, 1994). This was the advent of ITA training classes, which resist simple categorization: they are sometimes classified as English for Academic Purposes (Myles & Cheng, 2003) or English for Specific Purposes (Byrd & Constantinides, 1988; Papajohn et al., 2002). Despite the variation, programs typically focus on instructional communication, involving grammatical, sociolinguistic, discourse, and strategic competence (Hoekje & Williams, 1994), most importantly focusing on discipline-specific discourse (Gorsuch, 2006; Wennerstrom, 1992). Some programs seek to develop ITAs` overall speaking fluency (Mishima & Cheng ; Stevens, 1989; Papajohn, 2006; Gorsuch, 2011). Other programs target ITAs of specific fields or instructional settings (Cousins et al., 1988), such as math classrooms (Rounds, 1987), and office hours/labs (Tanner et al., 1993; Axelson & Madden, 1994).

Within the ITA Training Class

Studies within ITA training programs have analyzed many topics, including ITA's development of specific linguistic aspects, such as speaking fluency (Papajohn, 2006; Gorsuch, 2011); intonation (Gorsuch, 2013), discourse in simulations of situations (Reinhardt, 2010), and oral language vis-à-vis written language (Levis et al., 2012). Other studies have examined the programs' use of technology (Crumley, 2010; Stenson et al., 1992; Zha, 2006). Examining socio-affective aspects of the ITA training class, research has examined the development of ITA's confidence using English to teach (Salinas et al., 1999) and their intercultural competence and instructional practices (LeGros & Faez, 2012), their willingness to communicate (Compton, 2007) and learning strategies (Wallace, 2015). Notwithstanding, few studies have examined ITA's experience with such courses.

ITA's Experiences of the ITA Training Class

One focus of recent work is ITA's experiences as instructors of undergraduate students (Adebayo & Allen, 2020; Ashavskaya, 2015; Ates & Eslami, 2012; Hebbani & Hendrix, 2014; Numrich, 1993; Smith & Simpson, 1993; Williams & Case, 2015; Zhou, 2014), including autoethnographic work (Hao, 2009; Mutua, 2014). Studies also examined ITA's social lives beyond the classroom (Myles & Cheng, 2003). Few studies have examined ITA's experience of the ITA training class, most of which evaluated a pedagogical intervention (Stevenson & Jenkins, 1994; Zha, 2006). Jia and Bergerson's (2008) study investigated ITA's experiences with a one week-long training program at the start of their doctoral programs. The study found the program to have aided participants in orienting them on campus and building their networks, improving their presentation and teaching skills, and developing their awareness of cultural differences. Nonetheless, ITA participants expressed mixed feelings towards the structure of the orientation program (Jia & Bergerson, 2008). Similarly, Stevenson & Jenkins (1994) examined the impact of ITA's weekly journal-writing during a ten-week long ITA training class with 17 Pre-Service ITA's and three In-Service ITA's. The study examined journaling's efficacy in improving language proficiencies, teaching skills, cross-cultural communication, and stress management. Learners found journaling beneficial but were using it as a tool for stress relief rather than reflexivity.

THEORETICAL CONSTRUCT

Investment in Language Learning

One scholar posited, "the term 'motivation' is too weak to cover the strong feelings of attraction and rejection" (Kramsch, 2009, p. 205). To complement this psychological construct, Bonny Norton developed investment, which is situated at the nexus of ideologies, identities, and access to cultural capital (Darvin & Norton, 2015). This model aligns with calls for conceptual frameworks that embrace

rather than gloss over the messy nature of identity work (Leung et al., 1997). A review of the investment literature found the concept used both as an exploratory and explanatory tool for research findings (Norton & Toohey, 2011). Within this research, investment was used to explore Pre-Service ITA's experience in their ITA training class. As described in the methods section, it informed data collection by providing the basis for interview protocols.

Scant Work on Pre-Service ITA's

By focusing almost exclusively on beyond the ITA training class, research has overlooked Pre-Service ITAs. Within ITA training classes, Pre-Service ITAs were studied in relation to the development of their self-confidence as instructors (Salinas et al., 1999) and to their language learning strategies, learner autonomy, and uses of technology (Wallace, 2015). Beyond the ITA Training class, only a single, outdated study of ITA's personality types, was done with Pre-Service ITAs (Smith & Logan, 1995). As such, our understanding of Pre-Service ITA's development is woefully under informed, particularly around their "motivation" vis-à-vis their language development. This sub-group may receive fewer pedagogical opportunities (Hoekje & Williams, 1994) because In-Service ITA's engage in un-simulated, discipline-specific practica fields (Gorsuch, 2006). As such, research should focus more discerningly.

RESEARCH METHOD

Research Design

Based on previous work using Darvin & Norton's (2015) model, the present study is a case study, an "intensive, holistic description and analysis of a single entity" and are "particularistic, descriptive, and heuristic and rely heavily on inductive reasoning in handling multiple data sources" (Merriam, 1998, p. 16) ". More specifically, as a descriptive case study, its goal was to produce a *thick description*, or the "complete, literal description of the incident or entity being investigated" (Merriam, 2009, p. 43). Case study research affords a depth of analysis, readability, and may produce new understandings about processes when done longitudinally (Duff, 2008, p. 43). While some scholars see even a singular-case design as 'eminently justifiable,' a study involving two or more cases can be viewed as incorporating a form of replication (Duff, 2008, p. 113).

Participants

As part of IRB-approved dissertation research, three Pre-Service ITAs volunteered for this project during Autumn 2018, all of whom had tested into and were enrolled in an ITA training course (ESL 9999). Paw Paw State University (PPSU) [pseudonym] is a large Midwestern university, that annually enrolls thousands of international students. Enrolled in three different sections of ESL 9999 taught by three different instructors, participants were recruited within ESL 9999 classrooms at the start of the semester. Sampling was considered, "purposive," which is appropriate within studies involving, "hard to find populations" (ibid, p. 145), here being Pre-Service ITAs. All three were serving as graders, which required no or much less oral communication with undergraduate students compared with ITAs leading labs, recitations, or student-teacher supervisions, based on *in situ* observations.

ESL 9999 was taught by four white, American men, one of whom was the researcher. No study participants were the researcher's students. All but the researcher also served as raters on the I-/ VA-TEACH Tests. Being deeply familiar with the research context, being of a similar age, and being a fellow GTA/ graduate student afforded the researcher keener insight into the ITA's experiences with no believed negative consequences.

In accordance with state law, all international graduate students employed as instructors must take and become certified via the ESL department's assessments. The I-TEACH Test assesses ITA's English intelligibility/comprehensibility when explaining field-specific concepts. Some ITAs become certified for all instructional roles, yet others become certified for less communicatively demanding roles while required to take ESL coursework, after which their skills are re-assessed on the VA-TEACH Test. Once per semester -untethered to ESL 9999, ITAs were entitled to take the I-TEACH Test to become certified.

Data Collection

This article reports only on the portion of dissertation research pertaining to Pre-Service ITAs. Collected data for this exploration included ITA's weekly journal entries (40), class assignments (40), Pre-Service ITA interviews (19 hours), ITA educator interviews (10 hours), home department interviews (3), and classroom observations of ESL 9999 (7 hours) and within home department courses (6 hours). Observations and home department interviews of Anne's department were unavailable as administrators declined participation. Interviews were semi-structured, two rounds of which were stimulated recall sessions, utilizing class assignments and field notes' observations. Interviews occurred towards the start, middle, and end of the ESL 9999, and at next semester's start, following the VA-TEACH Test. Interview protocols were designed using Darvin and Norton's (2015) model of investment, specifically eight statements theorizing identity, ideology, and capital within the process of language learning (see Appendix A). From them, interview protocols were produced and utilized in non-stimulated recall interviews. Altogether, the variety of data sources provided the study depth and triangulation, or "the use of multiple sources of data, or approaches, can bring greater plausibility to the interpretation of results" (Hyland, 2010, p. 195).

Analysis

All data was indexed then uploaded into Transana Professional 3.32c, a qualitative analysis software. This included all interviews, which were recorded and transcribed verbatim. Coding of all data (field notes, journals, class assignments) was done using qualitative content analysis, which is interested in the communication of meanings, done by coding raw data, and constructing categories of interest (Merriam, 2009, p. 205). A priori categories initially guide the study, however additional categories are anticipated to emerge. Cross-case analysis was used, which involves the analysis of individual cases before conducting a comparative analysis of cases (Duff, 2008, p. 164). When reporting findings, categories often need to be woven into an argument or an interpretation (Merriam, 2009, p. 189). To portray participants as multidimensional learners, findings are first presented as narratives, followed by those from cross-case analyses.

RESULTS

Rodney

A first-year, first-semester Chinese doctoral student of pharmacy, Rodney was 25 years old and experiencing his first time abroad. Pharmacy graduate students receive full funding for the duration of their studies. As a grader, Rodney attended the workshop portion of a course for professional degree students, an area in which he had no expertise or interest. Rodney only assisted in distributing materials during the workshop and grading.

Optimistic for ESL 9999

Rodney came to PPSU believing his English was deficient in specific ways. First, his own expertise in his field, medicinal chemistry, was developed using Chinese terminology, not English. To remedy this, he enrolled in an undergraduate-level Biochemistry course, even if not required to do so. Secondly, he perceived his lack of English fluency to inhibit his social life in Ohio, as did limitations of time. As such, he was open to ESL 9999, believing he had language difficulties he could improve.

Teaching, a New Career Possibility

At the onset of the semester, Rodney envisioned himself working for a big American pharmacy company post-graduation. He found his current role as a grader to be "useless," and he was not excited about teaching PPSU undergrads, but was "willing" to do so. As the semester progressed, Rodney's visions of his future, and his views on teaching, evolved due to his "amazing" experience within the undergraduate class he enrolled in. The instructor, Dr. Bluebird (pseudonym) used effective, interactive pedagogies that ignited Rodney's interest in a teaching career. Particularly, the concern she demonstrated

for students' understanding and active learning strategies which employed technology. This left Rodney inspired. In his journaling, Rodney wrote of one ESL 9999 session:

> The discussion on ways to handle misbehaving students is also informative and helpful. When talking about teaching strategies, I keep thinking of Dr. Bluebird. I'm sure she employs at least 40 of those strategies. No wonder her teaching is so amazing. (Journal 8)

Rodney also found the accompanying workshops to be engaging, useful, and entirely new. His education in China had not included a workshop-formatted class.

Wanting to be a Fluent, Helpful Instructor

Entering ESL 9999, Rodney most desired fluency of thought and speech, rooted in negative experiences he had within Chinese universities. There, he reported lecturers seemed totally unprepared or unfamiliar with their lecture's content. Moreover, he held negative views of the "broken" English of Chinese scholars whom he had encountered in the U.S. Consequently, Rodney feared that as a future workshop leader, his students would not understand him. Worse, he feared he would not be "helpful" to them, which was central to his view of good teaching.

Making Gains through ESL 9999, Frustrated by Classmates

Through ESL 9999, Rodney reported gaining a variety of skills. He found important linguistic - particularly suprasegmental features- and classroom management strategies. Moreover, Rodney found microteachings and subsequent tutorials to benefit his language development, particularly his fluency. Also facilitated by ESL 9999 were Rodney's observations of others' strong teaching practices. He noticed instructors' use of eye contact and calling on students by name. Moreover, he became sensitized to the centrality of visual aids within a lesson, and the learners' (in)ability to clearly view the visual aid. Through these and other assignments, Rodney was connecting ESL 9999 skills with those he observed in his effectively-taught undergraduate pharmacy lectures and workshops. He also saw ESL 9999 skills as useful for his future teaching, including positive interactions with undergrads, as required by ESL 9999.

Rodney became frustrated giving microteachings to ESL 9999 peers and to ESL testing raters because they were incapable of understanding even basic concepts from his field. In this way, the heterogeneity of ESL 9999's participants became an obstacle to his progress. Furthermore, Rodney grew frustrated with the weak commitment of his ESL 9999 classmates to ESL 9999. Peer feedback left him puzzled or was not offered to him, as assigned. Some classmates' microteachings exceeded their allotted time. The accents of some left him not understanding and even irritated, particularly Indian-accented English.

After ESL 9999, Rodney took the VA-TEACH Test and did not receive a certifying score, about which he was not upset. Instead, he saw his results as identifying his areas for growth. He continued his work as a grader but also was assigned to assist undergraduate labs. Rodney took the I-TEACH Test in Spring 2019 and received a certifying score. One year later, Rodney was serving as a grader for the exemplary course and instructor he so admired, whose material was within his interest.

Chanel

A 25-year-old doctoral student of Sociology, Chanel was Chinese but had spent six years of her childhood in England where her parents were employed. She earned a bachelor's degree in Sociology and Math from a private, prestigious American college, having spent one year in Australia. PPSU's Sociology department identified itself as a top-tier U.S. program, fully funding its graduate students for six years of study. This included a first-year fellowship which allowed incoming students to acclimatize without fulfilling any departmental service. The majority of its cohorts are American students. Now in her second year, Chanel was serving as a grader for a large introductory course, in which she graded essays, held office hours, and attended lectures.

A "Cultural Outlier"

Having grown up in two different cultures, Chanel initially saw herself as a cultural "outlier," not really belonging to either culture, which was isolating. This identity implicated her language skills, which she also recognized to be complex. She was confident in her Spoken English -despite not sounding native. Her self-perception as a competent, fluent English speaker was reinforced by peer's feedback on her teaching demonstrations: in one assignment, she summarized peer feedback she received in class, writing, "Average percentage understood: 88.75. Strength: good metaphor to introduce the topic; good examples; comprehension check; fluent" (Homework Clip #16). In another assignment, in response to a self-assessment of another in-class teaching demonstration, she wrote: "I don't think any of my errors hindered their understanding" (Homework Clip #27).

Rather than fluency, it was her shyness that hindered her speech. To her, uniqueness, and defying stereotypes, were valuable, making her impervious to ESL 9999's goals as she saw initially them: inculcating ITAs into ideologies of native *speakerism*. Within her department, Chanel had found a "family" amongst her peers and enjoyed a vibrant social life. Chanel shunned teaching, nor did she find benefit in being a grader. She preferred to be a graduate research assistant. After graduation, Chanel had no aspirations to teach, believing she lacked the patience needed to teach.

Positively Oriented to ESL 9999

Even if Chanel viewed the prospect of teaching unfavorably, her initial orientation to ESL 9999 was overwhelmingly positive. She believed it could strengthen her presenting skills and make her unique in her department: ESL 9999 could offer knowledge that she could share with her departmental colleagues. However, "failing" the VA-TEACH TEST would have been a blow to her self-perception. Strengthening her academic skills, ESL 9999 would by extension give her more of a voice within her family. Having highly accomplished, bilingual parents, Chanel's professional success was required to be deserving of a place within her family. And yet, Chanel felt torn between emulating her mother -a bilingual, well-published, physician/scholar, and Chanel's grandmother, whose many hobbies and active social life defied "old lady" stereotypes. These two women represented a choice between professional success and enjoying life.

Chanel`s Evolving Work Ethnic in ESL 9999

Initially, Chanel reported spending little energy on ESL 9999, hastily completing assignments. Yet she found specific activities and aspects of her instructor's teaching to be particularly effective or enjoyable. His attentiveness to her speech impressed her, and she began to feel guilty for the meagerness of her efforts compared to his. Chanel sensed her peers put little effort into ESL 999 since it was "just a language class", yet their instructor continued to leave detailed, individualized feedback. Chanel interpreted this as exemplary of good teaching, and she became grateful. She adopted a new approach with new rigor, even if it was much more time-consuming. She also noticed in her peers' microteaching major progress, in addition to her own, which she saw as evidence of the course's effectiveness.

ESL 9999, Ultimately meeting Chanel`s needs

Chanel reported positive developments in her communication skills through course assignments. She viewed her shortcomings as congruent with what ESL 9999 offered. Believing herself to have strong pronunciation, Chanel realized that it was her own personality that was problematic. A self-identified "slacker-introvert," Chanel initially designed the activities she led in ESL 9999 to intentionally minimize her amount of speaking and admitted her own laziness was impacting her work. During the class, Chanel realized that the course was not merely a "language class," but rather a communication class, having associated "language [English] class" as disdainful. Instead, communication class was something she needed. When ESL 9999 focused on pronunciation, she tuned out, feeling it was meant for her peers, not her. Her communication challenges then did not flow from her deficient English, but rather from her psychology, which she felt she could control.

Chanel benefitted from ESL 9999 assignments that tasked her with observing herself, her peers, and her sociology professor *in situ*. She realized what she appreciated in others' teachings, and in her own presentations. Particularly, observing the professor for whose Sociology class she was grading, but observing him through the ethnographic lens assigned by ESL 9999, drew her attention to specific traits of his exemplary teaching. Gradually, her awareness of these traits, particularly his humor, transferred into her own successful uses of humor, both in her microteaching and within the I-TEACH Test. For Chanel, he was her teaching role model.

Outside ESL 9999, Chanel was finding applicability in her scholarly activities beyond the classroom. That semester, Chanel attended conferences, gave round-table discussions, and planned poster sessions, all of which utilized skills she developed in ESL 9999. By the end of the semester, Chanel reported more comfort in watching recordings of herself and was becoming a confident public speaker. No longer a "cultural outlier," she began to describe herself as a "cultural in-betweener". In December 2018, Chanel received a certifying score on the VA-TEACH Test, yet the following semester, Chanel was serving as a Graduate Research Assistant, as she had hoped.

Anne

A 30-year-old doctoral student, Anne was in her third year of studying economics. She earned a bachelor's degree in her native China in Electrical Engineering before completing a master's degree in PPSU's economics department, totaling five years of being a PPSU student. The department's website portrays the program as top-tier within the U.S. Anne was and had been serving as a grader for three years in various economics courses. Anne was not required to attend lectures and performed only minimal grading duties, describing them as "meaningless". She had finished her own coursework.

A Robust (Chinese) Community; Infrequent Interactions with Americans

Anne's doctoral cohort was all international students, and her advisor was a native Chinese speaker. This meant communication most often occurred in Chinese. She was not speaking English in her home or neighborhood: her husband, and her closest friends/ neighbors were also fellow doctoral students of economics and Chinese nationals. Interestingly, Anne avoided joining a Chinese-language church, preferring an English-language one, based on her distrust in Chinese translations of religious texts.

In English, Anne had previously experienced some negative interactions with American colleagues and within the department. Through misunderstanding, miscommunication, or duplicity, Anne's academic trajectory at PPSU had been impacted negatively. She enrolled in an algorithm course for which she believed she was qualified but found it too advanced. She similarly misestimated or misunderstood the number of credit hours needed to complete a graduate specialization in computer science, which left her one credit short. As a grader, she reported negative experiences with her supervising American professor, who once chastised her for leaving inappropriate feedback on a student's assignment, and again later for offering what she felt was constructive criticism of a professor's teaching.

Spoken English as an Asset

Recognizing her misunderstanding with Americans, Anne devalued her interactions with fellow international students in ESL 9999. She also recognized that her exposure to and use of Spoken English was limited to ESL 9999. As such, she saw English speaking skills as an asset that must be maintained, which was shared by those closest to her, her husband, her family in China, and her academic advisor. For this reason, her advisor formed a group -all international students - to discuss economics primarily to maintain their oral English, including his own.

Pursuing Higher- Life-Priorities

Beyond graduation, Anne's first choice was to be an economics professor, yet she was skeptical this would happen. Not only a competitive job market would hinder her, but Anne remained skeptical of economics research generally. Additionally, Anne saw obtaining a Ph.D. as something others valued for

her, and not necessarily something she valued, admitting she would have quit but for her family's recommendations. As an alternative to academia, she envisioned finding work as a computer programmer, her husband's profession, which she had studied.

Mid-semester, her husband accepted a job on the U.S. West Coast, and Anne decided that she would join him within twelve months. Anne's moving would require her to become a GRA rather than a GTA, which would require no instructional responsibilities. This obviated certification via ESL Testing, and thus ESL 9999. Moreover, Anne was planning her pregnancy. The previous academic year, Anne took a medical leave from her academics. Upon return, Anne approached her academics in a laxer way, which constituted a departure from her prior excellence-driven approach. Anne would inform her advisor towards the end of the semester of her move and felt empowered to decide for herself the type of departmental duty she would perform. She felt no fear in telling her advisor her decision.

Approaching ESL 9999 Shrewdly/ Cynically

These developments did not diminish her efforts in ESL 9999, which were already meager. Anne felt comfortable teaching undergraduates, should she ever need to, because teaching basic economics would be simple. Moreover, Anne viewed the language used in her field to be quotidian, contrary to the technical language used in other fields. What's more, Anne saw language learning as easy, not difficult like learning math. Learning language required no intelligence to be mastered, only practice. In this view, she described ESL 9999 as not being "a professional class," unlike her algorithm class. These binary views of ease and difficulty contributed to her lukewarm efforts in ESL 9999. Anne's journaling, which elicited reflection on her learning through ESL 9999 routinely veered off to this algorithm class:

> *I have a really hard computer science class to work on. I did not take such a hard class before. I also want to spend more time on my research, but there is an exam coming next week... Since the English class only meet at Thursday this week, it did not take a lot of time."* (Journal 3)

The following week her reflection started on ESL 9999 then again veered: "Mini lectures went well and already finished the PPTs of the major lectures. The exam is very difficult. The hardest exam in CS classes I have ever had" (Journal 4). For these reasons, little of Anne's time during the semester was devoted to ESL 999.

Anne's ESL 9999 instructor was the only one among them who structured his sections of the class in a particular way. Rather than orienting the course towards the various skills and knowledge that ITAs need to successfully lead undergraduate classrooms, Anne's instructor structured his sections as a workshop exclusively practicing for the VA-TEACH Test with no other assignments or content. In his second year of teaching ESL 9999, he explained that he was asked by the department to develop an approach to teaching to the test and took pride in his design. To him, ESL 9999 is a burden on ITA's that distracts their energies away from their disciplinary research. Because they only care about the test, he saw his workshop approach as more effective and ethical for ITAs.

Over the course of ESL 9999, Anne adopted much of her instructor's views. She saw ESL 9999 only as a course intended to prepare her for certification on the VA-TEACH Test. She reported that the course did not assist in her language learning but would have had she been teaching. Anne came to appreciate her instructor a great deal, particularly that he avoided wasting her time with extraneous assignments. Consistently throughout the semester, Anne evaluated ESL 9999 assignments by how much time or energy it required of her: if little, it was beneficial. Likewise, Anne's sense of improvement was based on his confidence in her passing the VA-TEACH Test, communicated in feedback on her microteachings. In these ways, Anne and her instructor approached ESL 9999 with a shared cynicism or shrewdness.

Nonetheless, Anne reported deriving some benefits from ESL 9999 regarding giving microteachings. ESL 9999 diminished her nervousness giving them and appreciated receiving feedback. Taking the VA-TEACH Test, Anne did not receive a certifying score. However, the following semester, Anne was no longer serving as a grader, but as a Graduate Research Assistant and had not yet moved to the West Coast. Readying herself for entering the job market, Anne reported undertaking her own language-developing activities, consuming economists' videos, and podcasts in English.

Cross-case Comparison Findings

Comparing cases revealed the following insights into Pre-Service ITA's experiences. Each participant oriented idiosyncratically towards ESL assessment. None were excited at the possibility of teaching, and all enjoyed the security of being funded, yet each was oriented differently towards ESL testing. Confident, "cultural in-betweener" Chanel would have been damaged by a non-certifying score even if her funding for her studies would not be threatened. Conversely, Rodney saw his negative results as instructive for self-improvement. Uniquely, Anne had no use for the test, either practically or affectively. Her ability to choose her own role within her department permitted her to dismiss the exam's import entirely.

Comparing cases revealed that the trajectory of each participant included a change in roles. Partly because of this reality, participants sought different objectives in the ITA training class. Anne sought nothing more than passing ESL testing within ESL 9999, in part, because her short-term and longer-term future would not involve teaching. Conversely, Rodney, wanting to be a helpful instructor, sought to develop his fluency and suprasegmental features, whereas Chanel eschewed pedagogies to develop her pronunciation. Rather, she realized she needed to overcome psychological factors inhibiting her communication.

Relatedly, participants developed their language in ways that were relevant to their current and future needs, inside or outside ESL 9999. Rodney took an undergraduate course to build his vocabulary, and Chanel applied her ESL 9999 skills to conference presentations. Anne, not teaching yet developing teaching skills in ESL 9999, did not find relevance. Only the immediacy of future job interviews sparked her language learning. For these reasons, it is clear that the ITA training class, and its pedagogical goals of developing ITA's instructional communication for undergraduate teaching, do not align with the various linguistic needs that ITAs develop over the span of their doctoral careers.

Comparing cases revealed that two participants appreciated their ESL 9999 instructor for distinct reasons and absorbed their contradictory ideologies. Chanel appreciated Mr. Sam's commitment to her learning through his sustained practice of leaving detailed, individualized feedback, which was making her a better future instructor. Anne however appreciated her instructor's structuring of ESL 9999 as test prep for the VA-TEACH test. She appreciated his not wasting her time and his cynical/ shrew views of language testing. Both women's views mirrored their respective instructors' regarding the purpose of ESL 9999, demonstrating the power to shape learners' perceptions of the learning and its ultimate objective.

Within non-test-centric sections, it was found that teaching role models and familiarity with undergraduate classes were powerfully influential. Through their ESL 9999 assignments, Rodney and Chanel found inspiration from exemplary instructors within their fields. This even led Rodney to consider teaching as a career! Rodney was not just observing an undergraduate course but was experiencing one. Conversely, Anne had no such observation assignments in her test-centric ESL 9999 course. Nor did she had she ever attend an undergraduate economics course within the university or the U.S. As such, her perceptions of teaching such courses were not based on experience.

Another grouping of findings centered on the importance of others. Belonging to various communities was salient to the experience of each. Chanel felt well-integrated into her cohort "family," most of whom were Americans. Conversely, Rodney was in the midst of his first experience living and studying among Americans. This was an epiphanic experience. Again unique, Anne had been living in the U.S. comfortably, within zones of Chinese people, without utilizing English much or interacting with Americans much. Understanding their present social networks, each ITA valued their ESL 9999 peers in disparate ways. Rodney, anticipating their contributions to his development, grew frustrated with his peers because they were not as invested as he was in ESL 9999. He also demonstrated unease with unfamiliar accents of English. Confident in herself, Chanel used her peers as a metric for the development of her own skills. Anne devalued her interactions with her ESL 9999 peers since it was Americans with whom she had previous troubles. Interestingly, this awareness did not lead her to seek out more interactions with Americans. It is clear that participants' social networks, their personal goals for ESL 9999, and their perceptions of their ESL 9999 peers were all interwoven.

DISCUSSION

This examination focused on an important sub-population of ITAs within an under-studied space. It revealed important conceptual and pedagogical insights regarding participants' heterogeneous views of the ITA Training course, teaching, and testing. Studying their investments offered a more precise, and contextualized understanding of their identities as being, "multiple, changing, and a site of struggle" (Norton, 2019, p. 303). While other, deep analyses of international students' identities found them to be 'otherized' by inflexible, monocultural educational environments (Tavares, 2021, p. 93), these three Pre-Service ITA's identities were found to be expanding and evolving in relation to their educational environment. Despite being Pre-Service ITAs enrolled in an ITA training class, teaching was not their "singular mission" (Mutua, 2014). Pedagogy must recognize and accommodate this complexity.

Research on language learners must "[take] into account forces beyond individual learners" (Douglas Fir Group, 2016, p. 20). For ITA's, such forces include departmental service /funding models as well as the ESL 9999 course itself. Two starkly different versions of the same course were found to be operating, one preparing ITA's for undergraduate classroom-teaching broadly and one for the certification test. Each format determined the cultural capital -the knowledge, appreciation of cultural forms, and credentials (Bourdieu, 1986)- that ITAs could acquire through the course. As such, the impact of ESL 9999 instructors cannot be overstated. It remains critical to understand the practices, perspectives, and experiences of ITA educators (Gorsuch, 2003).

One Pre-Service ITA had no experience or interaction with U.S. undergraduates. If ITA educators ensure that course materials are relevant to ITA's future communication needs (Gorsuch, 2012b), pedagogy must facilitate ITA's interactions with real undergraduate learners (Ashavskaya, 2015). Assigning quasi-ethnographic field observations (Sequiera, 1988; Althen, 1991) proved impactful for Rodney and Chanel, and would have brought Anne into a U.S. undergraduate economics classroom for the first time. Educators must be aware of cases like Anne's and facilitate the critical learning opportunities that she is missing. Also beneficial would be the facilitation of their interactions with expert/ In-Service ITAs, and even teaching demonstrations by expert instructors from their fields (Ashavskaya, 2015). Through such interactions, ITAs could gain cultural insights, which scholars have found ITAs needing (Ates, Burcu & Eslami, 2012; Jenkins, 1997; Kang & Rubin, 2012).

Contrasting the cases of Anne and Chanel is informative for additional reasons. Anne's five years living in the U.S., within her near-exclusively Chinese-speaking communities (home, neighborhood, cohort, and department), juxtaposed with her infrequent and troubled interactions with Americans lends support to the view that an ITA's length of stay within the U.S. is not a heuristic of their cultural knowledge. It is their exposure to culture that matters (Adebayo & Allen, 2020). For her part, Chanel's self-perception evolved over the course of ESL 9999. A confident English user who enjoyed family cultural capital (Li, 2007), Chanel was not ashamed of her accent. Chanel viewed herself as a "cultural outlier" but, over the course of ESL 9999 this view changed to a "cultural in-betweener." As such, Chanel represents the embodiment of the power of global 'Englishes', tied to bicultural identities (Ashavskaya, 2015, p. 65).

Findings from this study support a package of pedagogies for Pre-Service ITAs that expose them to key stakeholders and actors within their individualized contexts. This package is akin to, "Intensive Exposure Experiences in Second Language Learning," to which Gorsuch likened ITA training courses in Canada (Gorsuch, 2014). All but one section of ESL 9999 was incorporating such exposure, which did not comport with an exclusively test-centric ITA training class. Microteachings are grounded in scholarship, having been connected to deliberate practice theory (Gorsuch, 2016, p. 286), and cycles of oral production and repetition have even been favored in ITA programs (Byrd & Constantinides, 1995; Gorsuch, 2012b; Papajohn et al., 2002). Notwithstanding, scholars have long called on pedagogy to focus "beyond microteaching" (Ross & Dunphy, 2007). Research has documented ITA's teaching frustrations resulting from pedagogical competencies (Zhou, 2009), particularly from lacking skills to facilitate discussions (Zhou, 2014, p. 189). Other skills important to ITAs are knowledge of the U.S. education system and classroom cultures, classroom management, and student-teacher relationships (Zhang, 2015),

and particularly of differences in educational systems (Salomone, 1998, p. 563). Moreover, what counts as respectful across cultures has been raised as a flashpoint for ITAs (Adebayo & Allen, 2020).

For these reasons, this case study offers initial evidence of the efficacy of bringing Pre-Service ITAs into actual learning spaces, a practice of situated learning (Lave & Wenger, 1991). Such an "Intensive Exposure Experiences" approach would afford ITA's much richer, wider investments in their development versus a teaching-to-the-test approach. It would also fit within a teacher training approach (Tapper & Kidder, 2006), which may mitigate the stigmatizing views like Chanel's that courses are only remediation of ITA's deficient English (Gorsuch, 2012b). The published account of one ITA who reportedly benefitted from her ITA training program cited the course's focus on cultural and classroom management practices (Mutua, 2014). Conversely, one scholar criticized ITA training classes for, "Americaniz[ing] [ITA's] into the predetermined American classroom model," which, "disrespects the culturally enriching perspectives that ITA's can bring to American students" (Zhou, 2014, p. 188). This latter view seems too polarizing: appreciating ITA's enriching insights and preparing ITAs for teaching within the existing American classroom models need not be mutually exclusive.

Limitations

Case studies do not offer generalizable knowledge, but rather provide a richness of description that is highly contextualized (Duff, 2008, p. 59). Admittedly, they constitute "a small step towards grand generalization" (Stake, 2005, p. 448). With case study research, it is incumbent upon scholars, rather than the researcher, to assess the transferability of one case to another, judging their congruence for themselves (Duff, 2008, p. 51). Such scholars must remember the specifics of each Pre-Service ITA's case, being first-, second-, and third-year doctoral students.

IMPLICATIONS AND CONCLUSION

This study demonstrated that Pre-Service ITA's desires vis-à-vis their linguistic and teaching abilities are not necessarily congruous with the goals set forth in the ITA training class nor by language teaching. Measures such as pre-/post-test or interviewing could be implemented to elicit an understanding of what Pre-Service ITAs want for themselves, which could be used to better craft pedagogy. Notwithstanding, such measures would require additional staffing or support for instructors. Within ITA training, the stakes are high: instructors are not only responsible for ITA's learning, but for the learning of ITA's undergraduate students (Gorsuch, 2016, p. 287-8). ITA training cannot be a panacea for all needs of all ITA's: there is even doubt that a semester-long ITA training course can sufficiently facilitate ITA's development of crucial communication skills (Gorsuch, 2016, p. 285). Yet the even modest modifications suggested may be particularly impactful on this subset of ITAs.

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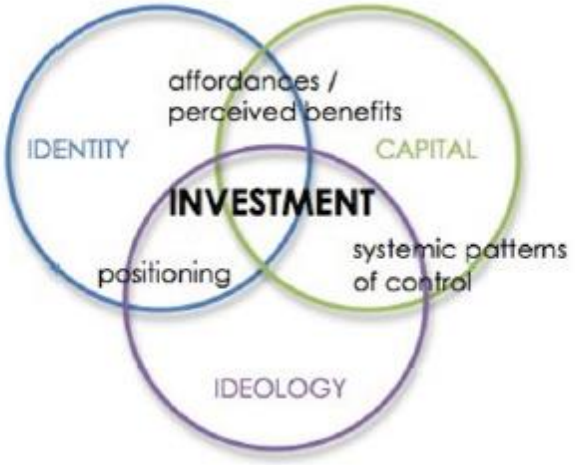
Appendix A

Figure 0.1 Darvin and Norton's (2015) Model of Investment



Learners invest in particular practices because:

1. they desire the symbolic and material capital that will result;
2. because the capital they possess may afford them more learning;
3. because the ways their capital is valued affirms (denies) their identity;
4. also, ideologies value (or don't) their capital;
5. and/ or the capital learners desire is difficult to obtain because of "systematic patterns of control";
6. ideologies shape practices and institutions, and how learners are positioned/ position others within these institutions;
7. (/imagined) identities allow learners to utilize or resist these positions;
8. and learners negotiate capital and ideologies to claim their right to speak.

Appendix B
Interview Protocol for ITA participants

Identities

Describe yourself as an ELL.
Describe yourself as a grad student.
Describe yourself as an international grad student.
Describe yourself as an ESL 9999 participant.
Describe yourself as a (future) instructor.

Describe the person who you want to be next year, after graduation, in twenty years.

How are you seen right now by undergrads?
How are you seen right now by other ITA's?
How are you seen right now by domestic TA's?
How are you seen right now by your professors?
How are you seen right now by your ESL 9999 instructor?

Ideologies

What do you want to be able to do with your English?
How does ESL 9999 help you do this? What outside ESL 9999 helps you do this?
What do you do to build your language? Your teaching skills? Your cultural knowledge?
Who are your professional role models?
Who are your personal role models?
How does ESL 9999 help you become like these role models?
What do you need to become like these role models? Do you have what you need/ can you get what you need?

Describe your experience in ESL 9999.
Describe the I-TEACH Test / VA-TEACH Test exams.

Describe your experience in your graduate studies.
Describe your experience on campus as an international student.
Describe your view of teaching American undergraduates.
Describe a good instructor.

Describe the English spoken by good instructors.
Describe the English spoken by undergraduate students.
Describe the English spoken by your ESL 9999 teacher.
Describe the English spoken by your classmates.
Describe the English spoken in American news/ movies/ television.
Describe the English spoken by people from your country.

Are some types of English better than others? Which? Who speaks this type of English? What do you think of when you think of these speakers?

Are some types of English worse than others? Which? Who speaks this type of English? What do you think of when you think of these speakers?

Capital

How will/ is/ did ESL 9999 helping you?
How will/ is/ did ESL 9999 helping you culturally?
How will/ is/ did ESL 9999 helping you socially?
How will/ is/ did ESL 9999 helping you economically?

What are you able to do with your English right now?
What are you not able to do with your English right now?

Is your intelligence being valued in ESL 9999? How?
Are your abilities being valued in ESL 9999? How?

How would you be able to make money using the languages you speak right now?
How would you be able to be appreciated using the languages you speak?
Do you have access to the social networks you want to right now? Why/ why not? Does language play a role in getting access to these networks?

Empirical Article

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English language: the subtle force behind the demise of Mozambican higher education academic's aspirations.

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ABSTRACT

It is contended that Lusophone universities are to a certain degree deprived access to American and European scholarships in the 21st century. We examine the validity of this statement, focusing on the barriers scholars often face when accessing scholarships using English. To explore the constraints English language imposes on Mozambican lecturers pursuing international scholarships, the study employed qualitative research methods using structured interviews. The sample of interviewees included university lecturers from Eduardo Mondlane University. The discussions of the study were guided by two dominant themes: language coloniality and academic oppression (Lack of accessibility). Participants had their unique experiences while attempting scholarship applications and this study also captured their challenges. Eighty percent of participants could not express themselves fluently in English and the researcher had to switch to Portuguese to get quality responses. The study contributes to International comparative higher education language policy development by presenting the impediments posed by the English language to Mozambican universities seeking European and American scholarships.

Keywords: English language barrier, coloniality, oppression, European university, American university, scholarship, Mozambique

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INTRODUCTION

English is an important tool for communication in academia worldwide. Globally, there is a need to address challenges associated with English language practices across institutions. This has become imperative in order to improve the use of English in higher education especially among non-English

speaking countries and for accessing scholarship opportunities for further studies (Maringe & Mourad, 2012; Robson & Wihlborg, 2019). The challenge often unfolds when lecturers are due for academic career progression where English language competence is deemed a pre-requisite for scholarship applications in European and American universities. Some of the identified challenges in scholarship application processes experienced by lecturers include the financial expenses associated with English language translators during the application processes (Andrade, 2006; Hyland, 2016). It has been observed that the majority of these academics are in need of a structured support system from the university as a solution mechanism to address the English language phenomenon (Al Shobaki & Abu-Naser, 2017; Altbach, 2008; Baker, 2017; Hu & McGrath, 2011). In essence, University support systems are designed to ensure the success of the mandatory language proficiency requirement. In related studies for China scholarship, it is mandatory for recipients of scholarships to learn only the basics of the Chinese language for a specified duration (Wang & Curdt-Christiansen, 2016).

Research on English in higher education seems to focus more on teaching and the learning process, with less emphasis placed on the value-added opportunities especially within the Mozambican education sector (Lopes, 1998). Previous research mostly focused on English language requirements for scholarship applications. In most cases these studies have reported on English language proficiency (ELP) for admission procedures (Oliver et al., 2012); relationship between levels of English language proficiency and academic performance (Cloate, 2016; Grant & Li, 2019; Thorpe et al., 2017). In addition, some studies have indicated the importance of teaching resources and the need for English language support especially as it is relevant for non-native English language speakers (Lee & Buxton, 2013; Liu, 2009). However, studies investigating Mozambican university lecturers' experiences with English language usage are limited (Altbach, 2013; Benzie, 2010). The most prevalent challenge of English language as a teaching resource is often at the undergraduate level. This is because at the undergraduate level, teaching and educational support from the university lecturers are mostly held in Portuguese thus limiting English language comprehension and the pace of intake (Liphola, 1989; Lopes, 2004).

Also, other additional challenges include lack of up-to-date learning material and limited conducive environment for English language practice and adoption (Mohan et al., 2014). The contributing factor to the aforementioned challenges has been attributed to the interactions of university lectures and their departmental supervisors mostly when seeking academic support and guidance because interactions are often in Portuguese (Langa, 2014; Lopes, 2004). This implies that in the informal environment, the propagation or usage of English has not been adequately encouraged. English as a dominant international language in academia proves to be pervasive on historical African Lusophone (Portuguese-speaking African countries) higher education institutions, as evidenced by compulsory English proficiency as a pre-requisite for the scholarship application (Abimbola et al., 2016; Altbach, 2013; Bordean & Borza, 2013; Ding & Bruce, 2017; Hultgren, 2014). Although the demand for English as a pre-requisite for these scholarships is reasonable, it poses a degree of pressure on Mozambican applicants who then do not persevere with the process. To my knowledge, there has never been a similar study that explores the university lecturers' English language experiences during their scholarship application process in Mozambique. In the backdrop of the English language usage, the study aims to explore Mozambican lecturers' English language experiences on their international scholarship applications to European and American Universities.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Various authors have discussed language barriers extensively and few definitions have been proposed. Some authors state that language barrier is a form of communication border, deficit, and opportunities prejudice toward foreigners (Kim & Mattila, 2011; Pudelko & Tenzer, 2019). It generates negative emotional and cognitive responses, and prevents English as second language (ESL) customers from taking certain actions such as seeking necessary information or complaining about service failures (Tenzer & Pudelko, 2013; Tenzer et al. 2014). Similarly, language barrier is associated with notions of

colonialism and language power, both of which are characterized by belief in the superiority of one's language over others, which is often interpreted as a symbol of language violence (Ibrahim, 2011; Veronelli, 2015, 2016). Coloniality does not only refer to racial categorization but to a global bias that fills all and every feature and situation of social existence to allow the distribution of hierarchies, places, and social roles are thoroughly racialized and geographically distinguished (Hsu, 2015; Veronelli, 2016). According to Feng (2020), coloniality is seen as the inequality of the power dimension, which generates language classifications and political construct instrumental for the control of diversity. It often results in implications regarding the relations between language and power (Veronelli, 2016). Equally, the use of language as a tool to exercise power over academics has been interpreted as a linguistic academic oppression (Mullet, 2018). Departing from critical discourse analysis approach (CDA) by Mullet (2018), it can be expressed through educational practices and social contexts.

According to Rosche (2019) and Kubota (2020), linguistic academic oppression is also portrayed as the intersection between language and race in multifaceted authority relations, affecting the professional experiences of scholars and students. In essence, this intersection is defined as discourse, knowledge, and social practices that, by means of inferiorization and exclusion, create and propagate imbalanced links of authority among groups of people distinct by professed ideology variance. In Mozambique, this perception is predominantly evident in both academic spaces and everyday interactions of professionals in their work places. Of interest to this study is the ascribed status to English Language teaching and assessment tools such as the international English language teaching system (IELTS) and testing of English as a foreign language (TOEFL). These tools have been discussed by various authors on the basis of assessing individual competence in English Language. The teaching and assessment tools are formal and structured system and mandatory to be undertaken for evaluation (Dickinson, 2013). As a result, the divergent views on the standardization of English through IELTS and TOEFL tests. For instance, the role of IELTS and TOEFL tests has been commended because they have enhanced students' vocabulary and have helped students develop oral skills in English (Yang & Badger, 2015). On the contrary, there are some concerns that IELTS and TOEFL tests are simply taken by people who are interested in passing the exams, and who are not necessarily enthusiastic about the language, thus they represent superiority of the native speakers (Hamid, 2014).

In Lusophone countries such as Mozambique, these tests have been considered as revolutionary and language neo-coloniality (Le, 2016; Suraweera, 2020). With high failure rates among Mozambican academic, the mandatory pre-requisite of the IELTS and TOEFL tests is construed as the imposition of English as a colonial language (Dell'Olio, 2019; Veronelli, 2015). This is because the English language does not enjoy the status of Mozambican heritage hence resulting in the difficulties on access to European and American universities. Although the relationship between the sponsor (European and American universities) and the recipient (Mozambican universities) has been robust, conflict of interest and divergent goals of partners have been reported as one of the inherent challenges (Kajevska, 2020). For example, the requirement and benchmark to pass IELTS is determined by the sponsor without the inputs of recipients or beneficiaries. In Lusophone countries, such conditional offers with minimal consultation from recipients is considered an English language trap (Yahya, 2015). This is because sponsored countries often feel constrained and less autonomous in their pursuit for their academic identity because they have to comply and satisfy the sponsors and other associated power dynamics (Clare & Sivil, 2014; Tran, 2014). These imbalances create some bias towards sponsors who seem to be extensively represented in various publications while the recipients have limited coverage. This presents an ideal case for a language policy that would balance the relationship and the expectations between the sponsors and the recipients (Davis, 2014; Davis & Phyak, 2016).

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

International scholarship and human capability theories (HCT) guides this inquiry (Campbell & Mawer, 2018). Scholarship theory (ST) as defined by the United Nation (UN) is focused on commitment towards enabling the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) by targeting developing countries in order to promote education (United Nations, 2015). However, the tenets of scholarship theory as propounded by

the UN are limited in its level of consensus especially on the beneficiaries of scholarship programs. For instance, the scholarship theory or ST embraces engagement and participations of international higher education stakeholders in a sustainable future. Unlike the Scholarship theory, the human capabilities theory embraces education as the central anchor for individuals to understand their roles within a society and overall participation in a sustainable planet (Walker, 2012).The alignment of scholarship theory with human capability theory is such that both have the potential to facilitate individualized experience, harness resources within government structure through policies, technological innovation and conservation science (Perna et al., 2015). Wilson (2015) suggests that expanding an individual's capabilities through education is a prelude to increasing capabilities for a wider population. Based on human capability frames, the SDGs can be enhanced through an integrated higher education scholarship mechanism. In essence, the beneficiaries could serve as change agents for the purpose of global connectedness, dynamisms, solidarity and addressing future global challenges (Tan, 2014).

The pressures of global achievements through international scholarship application have been responsible for higher education institutions to modify their academic languages. This has resulted in higher education dependence on European and American higher education institutions in order to foster collaboration and avoid nonconformity which may threaten their acceptability and promote global relevance through continued existence (Altbach, 2007; Campbell & Mawer, 2018). The concept of institutional dependence arises from coercive and linguistic normative forces to access International scholarships including coercive forces stanch from political/legal power and the longing for acceptability (Altbach, 2007). One of the tools of coercion adopted by sponsor institutions such as European and American universities include condition of scholarship acceptance which may often compromise the ethics of recipient institutions as in this case to receive benefits such as achievement of scholarships and consequently offer them acceptability (Altbach, 2004).

European and American higher education encourages professionals, such as foreign academics, to cope with the use of English to access scholarship from European and American public universities labelled to offer quality education (Luke, 2017). Non-English speaking foreign higher education institutions such as Mozambique, which experience these language challenges, seem to model themselves to resemble public European and American universities to enhance their acceptability. Standard power on the other hand relates to competence. Competence, as explained by Ansah and Swanzy (2019) means members of a particular profession cooperatively setting values and opportunities for practice. These practices, rules and principles are carried to academic fellows via deliberate practices such as the demand of IELTS or TOEFEL proficiency tests as a pre-requisite for the European and American scholarship application (Dickinson, 2013). Fellows of this community, such as university lecturers in Mozambique, are required to undertake similar exams in order to increase acceptability (Dickinson, 2013). This has influence on the higher education institutions these academics work for since their qualifications and experiences can prove or not, the reliability of the organization (Mustapha & Zakaria, 2013). This theoretical alignment has been used as an interpretive structure to explain the international scholarship regime implemented in the Mozambican public higher education institutions.

RESEARCH METHOD

This study seeks to explore the impact of English language on international scholarship applications, with particular interest on lecturers' experiences at High School of Hospitality and Tourism of Inhambane, a branch of Eduardo Mondlane University (EMU). The university under study presents an ideal site for the study, often admired for its cultural diversity and languages; the home of lecturers and students from various tribes across Mozambique, and has more than 20 Bantu (native) languages (Liphola, 1989). Since the establishment of Eduardo Mondlane University (EMU) in 1968 by the Portuguese rulers, the medium of instruction at the university has been Portuguese, and to a large degree that has not changed because, Portuguese remains the official language of Mozambique (Lopes, 1998). The administered questionnaires used in this study are attached in the Appendix 1.

Design

In order to achieve the aim of the study, a qualitative research approach was chosen (Creswell & Poth, 2018; Rahman, 2017) and inductive content analysis was used to interpret the data (Bengtsson, 2016). This allowed the researcher to concentrate on the selected issues of meaning which relate to the overall research questions, and to build data from specific to general themes (Granehein et al., 2017). The study employed in-depth interviews with open-ended questions as the study looked for rich and more extensive information (Low, 2013; Rahman, 2017). The interviews helped describe and reveal the role of English and how EMU lecturers perceive it within the International scholarship application. The study was conducted under a constructive research tradition; data is seen as being constructed through interaction between the researcher and the interviewed participants, and analysis is regarded as a process informed by the researcher's a priori knowledge and experiences (Piirainen & Gonzalez, 2014, 2013; Rautiainen et al., 2017). A constructive research methodology is appropriate where the aim of the study is to understand the meaning-making of individuals, and their experiences or view points toward a specific situation (Oyekoke, 2011). Two major research questions were addressed:

1. In what ways do Mozambican lectures experience English Language on European and American scholarship applications?
2. In what ways does Mozambican lecturers' English language proficiency assist them in pursuing European and American scholarships?

Sample

The target participants for this study were Mozambican lecturers at the High School of Hospitality and Tourism of Inhambane, who have applied for international scholarships to pursue Master and PhD degrees. In total, 19 participants were identified based on selected eligibility such as permanent EMU lecturers and scholarship applicants. From twenty-six volunteers, fifteen lecturers were randomly selected to reflect on their experiences in applying for international scholarship to American and European Universities. Another group of four lecturers participated in a group interview. The two groups varied in terms of gender, being (four women and fifteen men), age (30-64) and race (black African Portuguese language-speakers), this was to ensure the diversity of their scholarship application experiences. An important remark is that all the participants are from primary, secondary and tertiary Portuguese language education backgrounds.

Besides this, no additional explanation to the IELTS or TOEFL test procedure was available. Given lecturers challenges especially on readings, grammar interpretation and listening skills, most lectures could not comprehend the language to respond accordingly to the test, in most cases, they spent considerable time navigating the structure, trying to understand the content, in turn they could not even finish the assigned tasks. Despite the fact that IELTS or TOEFL evaluation is a critical part of the learning process, which has a significant impact on the lecturers, especially on the scholarship acceptance, there seems to be an unattended gap in literature focusing on the subject matter, hence this study seeks to fill the gap and enhance the understanding of lecturers' views and experiences.

The lecturers' experiences were observed at various time frames; from first attempt to fourth attempt. The application process observed at the end of the third year, linked basic English language competence and several learning activities were applied, e.g. formal intensive training and assessments (Bak et al., 2016; Rahman, 2017) and workshop they attended which provided a platform for lecturers to discuss their views of English language over the international scholarship application process (Fakeye , 2010). Of interest to the study is the intensive English language training courses that lecturers attended to overcome the challenges they faced while using English language for scholarship application. An average of two assessments was conducted as a routine language learning procedure by the English language teachers at the affiliated English language private schools and the lecturers were individually assessed. The first assessment entails written and oral activities diagnosis. To prepare the lecturers for their second assessment, an English teacher explained the motivation and course of action of assessments in an English language intensive training. The teacher also allowed lecturers to pose questions and present any concern they might have had.

Data Collection

Data collected for the research focused on the lecturers' English language lived experiences during their scholarship applications to European and American Universities. The application process involved: access to information from the websites, online application forms, writing the proposals, document translations and proficiency tests such as IELTS (International English Language Testing System) or TOEFL (Test of English as a Foreign Language). Data collection was conducted at High School of Hospitality and Tourism of Inhambane and it involved individual interview session and group interviews. The researcher considered two cohorts: (1) aspiring applicants and (2) those who have attempted applying for the scholarships once or twice with no success. The motivation for choosing these two groups was to explore the challenges encountered by those aspiring for scholarships as well as to get insights from those who had tried. Fifteen lecturers who had applied for scholarships for either first, second or third attempt and the researcher face to face at the university interviewed three aspirants. The additional group interview with four lecturers was conducted a week after their IELTS and TOEFL exams. The assessment tool was adapted from (Fan et al., 2018). Based on this tool, five participants revealed a fair level of English communicative competence (comprehensive contextual use of language), while fourteen revealed poor level of English communicative competence (unable to develop a conversation in English language). In table 1 below, the gender and age demography of participants is presented.

Participants

Table 1

Participants' characteristics

Characteristics		Number (19)	
Gender		Male(15)	Female (4)
Scholarship application		15	4
Attempt at English test (IELTS and TOEFL)		3	1
English communicative competence	Fair	4	1
	Poor	11	3
Age (years)	30 – 39	4	3
	40 – 49	9	1
	50 – 64	2	0

The rationale behind individuals and group interviews is to track consistent views and to observe collective tone. The key advantage of group interview is to allow for stimulation of the interaction among the participants (Creswell & Poth, 2018; Orfanos et al., 2020). The interviews were conducted in a safe and conducive environment and the respondents were encouraged to contribute freely to the discussion. Each Participant was given forty-five minutes to an hour to share their experiences in both individual and group interviews.The researcher employed the direct non-participant observation method (Ciesielska et al., 2018) to maintain a degree of independence during the data collection process. The choice of non-participant observation is such that it allows for non-bias from the researcher hence being objective both in the process of categorizations and evaluations (Ciesielska et al., 2018). The research was conducted through the national and international academic and research ethical guidelines, as it involved human subjects (research credential 936/ESHTI/2020, issued by the department of research and extension EMU, Mozambique). A written consent form was provided to all participating lecturers before data collection started. Finally, the entire interview were electronically recorded and transcribed accordingly.

Analysis

Data covering individual record and group interviews transcripts was examined using an interpretative and deductive approach (Morehouse, 2012; Soiferman, 2010). To counter the bias element the transcripts were exchanged amongst three readers to ensure that there is a common understanding of the respondents' articulations. The focal point of the interpretative analysis was on appreciating the explicit content shared by respondents during interviews and group discussions (Bengtsson, 2016). The interpretation of the records was stimulated by the analytical circle and during the analysis of the records, significance units (short paragraphs or sentences) were connected to the record set (Rowley, 2012; Silverman, 2015, 2019). The reliability of the analysis was validated by triangulation of the data collected (on two distinct moments and applying two procedures of data collection at each period) and investigator triangulation (with educational head of department and head of research and extension) (Carter et al., 2014). Moreover, a continuous comparison between the original data and the themes was part of the process to guarantee an appropriate fit between the records and findings. The themes presented below comprise the empirical findings of this research and represent the experiences of the English language impact on European and American scholarship application process.

FINDINGS

The findings indicate high levels of enthusiasm among all lecturers (participants), they appreciated the use of English as a means of communication in the context of international higher education. Participants seemed to have different experiences when responding to the issue of English language influence on the scholarship application. To elaborate on the gender and age demography of participants responses on the influence of English language in scholarship applications, 100 percent of participants expressed their struggles with scholarship application. This implies that for successful scholarship application, Mozambique scholars do not have the fundamental skills i.e. knowledge and understanding of English language. To put this in context, globally, a great number of universities deliver international study programs, and almost 80 percent of the scholarship opportunities require English language competence (de Wit, 2019). Also, the official academic language of communication in Mozambique is Portuguese because Mozambique is a former colony of Portugal. In addition, another contributing factor is the teaching and learning protocols. Participants were represented by male (79%) and female (21%). According to Bista (2015), the lack of women on international scholarship application should be related to gender, age, and academic performance in higher education (a high influencer in interest in English language proficiency learning). Also, psychological context in norms of communication is another factor (Horn, 2017).

Irrespective of IELTS and TOEFL application, from the total of 19 participants only 4 experienced the process being 75% male and 25% female respectively. According to Bista (2015), perhaps among other reasons the few experience in the proficiency tests should be related to the cognitive dimension including self-efficacy. The cognitive argument is justified on the fact that all the participants are surrounded by 20 bantu (native) languages including Portuguese which is rated as second and official language in the country (Liphola, 1989; Lopes, 2004). Finally, in the category of the proficiency tests experience, 15 participants (79%), did not apply for IELTS and TOEFL tests including both men and women. Based on their arguments individual and institutional financial support associated with the lack of English language proficiency contributed at large (Dang & Dang, 2021; Pearson, 2019). Concerning English communicative competence, the figures demonstrate less participation by women on the international scholarship application. The statistic reveal that in a group of 4 participants who applied for international scholarship only 1 woman showed fair English communicative competence representing 25% when compared to men who reveal 75% of fair English communicative competence.

Under English language communicative competence, 14 participants including 11 males (78.6%) and 3 females (21.4%) revealed poor level of English language communicative competence. However, one important aspect to state is that all 14 participants are aged 39-64 years old. According to DeKeyser (2013), age determines changes in cognitive functioning due to previous experience of individual variables such as motivation, attitude, identity and contextual variables such as quantity and quality of

input, including extent of schooling in the second language. Affective factors such as language shock, culture shock and ego permeability to second language acquisition are also related to the problem of age in second language learning styles and strategies (Ehrman, & Oxford, 1990; Schumann, 1975).

Two themes, which represent different experiences, were thus identified as linguistic academic oppression and linguistic coloniality. Those who expressed the experiences in linguistic oppression context shared that the demand of English language to qualify for a scholarship was a form of academic discrimination. On the other hand, those who seemed to be more inclined toward linguistic coloniality, their concerns were more about English language supremacy toward Portuguese language speaking countries. The difference between the two themes was to a certain degree determined by the level of perception and the decisions made by the participants regarding their involvement in the scholarship application process (see Table1). An appropriate introduction and simple guidance through the process on the websites were helpful for some lectures. This helped them concentrate on what each academic field requested for the scholarship application including those who needed to hire experienced translators and they could relate their previous background to different scholarship offers. Lack of thorough preparations for the proficiency tests contributed negatively to the lecturers experiences. A reasonable period of preparation, particularly with the help of experts in various streams of English language: Grammar, listening, writing and reading skills is highly recommended to boost the applicants' confidence as well as to identify areas of improvement before they sit for exams. It also appeared that lecturers became more accustomed to the challenges after they had dealt with various scholarship application processes. A detailed account of varied experiences shared by the participants is given below with original quotations.

Table 2

An overview of the themes representing different forms of experiencing the influence of English language on the scholarship application

Theme	**Focus**	**Perception towards role of English language**	**Scholars' reactions**	**Learning**	**Academic/linguistic utility**
English language as an academic Oppression tool	The complexity and the excruciating demands of the scholarship application process	Academic tool for linguistic oppression	Diminished interest in the European and American scholarship and diversion towards Portuguese scholarships	Intention of a scholarship	Academically appealing but linguistically unattractive

English language as a linguistic coloniality	English language as an expression of permanent colonial system	A discriminatory approach towards the Lusophone Portuguese countries	A sense of deprivation and frustration	Learning proficiency tests, scientific competence	Academically unattractive and linguistically unattractive

Linguistic Academic Oppression

Although some lectures perceived the scholarships as lifetime opportunity, their first attempt to qualify for the scholarship proved almost impossible due to the language barrier and to a certain degree, expectations were compromised. The linguistic academic oppression was more dominant among lecturers who were unsuccessful with their application due to their incompetence in English; they strongly felt that English was a form of oppression. Lecturers felt academically oppressed and helpless as their language limitations rendered their knowledge irrelevant, as they could not express themselves in English. For example, those who failed the IELTS test often felt crushed and ashamed to even share the results with their colleagues. Confronted with the complexity of the European and American scholarships application, some lecturers even doubted the quality of English that they were taught during their earlier classes. According to the themes generated from Table 2, English language was perceived as a convenient oppressive tool over the Lusophone Portuguese speaking countries. For example, some lectures used words like "slaves" to describe their experiences. Expressing their deepest frustrations, lecturers indicated that the demands of these scholarship applications were even beyond the competence of sworn translators, a reflection of academic torture.

For instance, in non-English speaking countries such as Japan, Malaysia and Turkey, lecturers seemed to have a better understanding of the scholarship application process. This is because of internal mechanisms such as capacity development that are readily available and utilized. However, the scholarship application successes were not significantly higher in these countries (Ishikawa, 2009; Mahamood & Ab Rahman, 2015). In the absence of guidelines and translation assistance, lecturers found it almost impossible to cope with the technicalities of English during the application process. Expressing their discontentment towards oppressive language used in the scholarship process, some participants expressed their views vehemently. One Participant stated:

> I could not comprehend the material provided on the website because I had difficulties with the language, hence I found it boring and I had to frequently consult teachers of English. However, I appreciate the generosity expressed through availing these scholarships to support African universities.

Another participant shared “English language deprived me an entry to scholarship and I felt humiliated and less intelligent than other African applicants from English speaking countries.″ And another stated ″I felt crushed but I found comfort in that this is not only oppressive to one but to all of us. My colleagues have equally been subjected to this torture; it is such a frustrating and heartbreaking experience.″

English as a Linguistic Coloniality

In this context, English is subtly used to reincarnate the colonial system through academia. In this theme, the focus is on linguistics as a colonial presence with the primary objective of setting English language supremacy in African Lusophone countries. The supremacy narrative has fully manifested through the barriers English has created in Mozambican higher education. The internationalization of English language in higher education dictates that Lusophone African countries should also conform to the standards; this is a form of coerced compliance. With numerous partnerships between African Lusophone universities and European universities, we observed that the sustainability of partnerships

thrives on the fact that English language remains a common medium of instruction, thus imposing an indirect colonial tone.

The linguistic colonialism is also reflected in higher education language policy that guides the interaction between the lecturers in African Lusophone universities and European universities. The language policy in higher education is mainly developed by European and American universities with minimal influence from the African Lusophone countries, the latter are merely recipients. We have observed that the language policy has little regard for the native languages, which are extensively embraced and understood by most lecturers. Imposing English language in non-English speaking countries is a form of exclusion especially to those from under-privileged background who cannot afford to cope with the demands of the scholarship. Though lecturers appreciated the value of English language, they perceived it as an exotic language beyond their comprehension. The lecturers described English as highly insensitive and irrelevant, as the Portuguese language, historical context was neglected, thus distancing most lecturers academically and economically. The other area of contention pertains to the scope of English which was perceived as limited as it focus mainly on the IELTS an TOEFL proficiency tests which tends to only evaluate technical competence. The quotations below describe how English was experienced as linguistic coloniality:

> Perhaps the first thing when European and American countries assign scholarships to Africa should recognize and acknowledge the historical official languages of the African countries, particularly those which were not colonized by Britain as they have unique language background. […] secondly, the scholarship providers should revise the selection criteria to ensure equal language rights or inclusive scholarship across all African universities without leaving behind non-English speaking universities such as those in Lusophone countries

DISCUSSION

The purpose of this paper was to explore the increased demand for English competence and scholarship access in Lusophone African countries, with a particular focus on public higher education institutions from non-English speaking countries and the implications on the less developed countries' future higher education situation, such as Mozambique. Our findings demonstrate that lecturers found English important for their lives though experienced it differently. One hundred percent of the lecturers interviewed found that English was a barrier on their scholarship applications, and the focus was on their feelings of anxiety to study abroad. These lectures described the whole process as overwhelming but on the other hand, others viewed it as a learning curve with an opportunity to improve from one application to another. A majority of lecturers found the English language challenge as a part of the profession, and realized its significance for their lives. These lecturers learned about the global value of English and how Universities in Mozambique have embraced it in their institutional architecture and policy framework. Most lecturers found English for further studies in America and Europe academically challenging, and some thought it was brutally demanding. The strong difficulties and challenges portrayed about the English language on the scholarship application process should be dealt with in order to address Mozambican academics and University support staff members training in European and American Universities. English language barrier, limited organizational support interchange and strong negative feelings, such as academic discrimination have been identified as stumbling blocks thus inhibiting learning and training (Gumbus & Grodzinsky, 2016).

The findings of the study also revealed that lecturers adapted English language challenges and designed personalized strategies to cope with the pressures associated with the scholarship application process (Darabi et al., 2017; Menken, 2010). Lecturers who experienced English as linguistic academic oppression seemed to shift their focus after their various attempts at scholarship applications. They perceived the scholarship application as a practical English exercise and realized how English influences their academic trajectory. As linguistic academic oppression, the process does not seem to have a relationship between the scholarship application and the English language practice, and at last as a part of the academic work of the University lecturers. It is more probable that lecturers' experiences of scholarship applications depend on what aspects they focus on (for example scholarship application

process or merely exercise the English Language usage). However, some issues became part of the foreground of their experiences, and other aspects remain in the background. Lecturers tend to contextualize the same situation in different angles and the facts they pay attention to influence their hermeneutics of the situation and their gain from the experiences. The themes described are actually different in terms of various aspects of scholarship application lecturers' focus on, and that these issues can change over time, though we do not see the themes at different developmental stages that lecturers go through.

The features of attractiveness and unattractiveness are present in all two themes, though in different forms. All the interviewed lecturers found the scholarship application process boring and challenging both academically and professionally. Seventy-five percent of the interviewed lecturers became reluctant and withdrew from the scholarship application process and the English language examination, consequently distancing themselves entirely from academic English. On a positive note, all the interviewed lecturers interpreted the scholarship as an opportunity for further studies. The lecturers who experienced the scholarship application as an English language engagement opportunity appeared to be academically inclined towards the scholarship application process. They focused on specific language skills and at the same time maintained a professional closeness based on the conviction of their objectives and will to succeed in the process. The same pattern of being professionally unattractive but academically attractive could be found with lecturers who experienced the scholarship application as an opportunity to see how English language works in higher education academia. Twenty-five percent of the lecturers who participated in this study struggled to manage their academic trajectory, but at the same time allowed themselves to invest on their English language skills.

English language barriers have a strong negative impact on the lecturers' appetite for further studies in higher education. Sadly, English language barriers and academic oppression remains an individual burden, without structured support from the University. Lack of institutional support has eroded most lecturers' confidence to explore scholarship opportunities, and in some instances, lecturers completely surrender and give up on pursuing further studies and thus compromise their progression and contribution in higher education (Pudelko & Tenzer, 2019). The persisting English language barriers have been the demotivating factor for most Mozambican lecturers who have almost lost interest in the European and American scholarships (Andrews & Okpanachi, 2012). Eighty percent of the interviewed lecturers perceived the application process as outright colonial disguised as empowerment for academics in Lusophone countries (Becerra, 2012). The participants of this study appreciate the virtues of international scholarship as it provides opportunities for further studies and help lecturers to improve their academic research and English language skills (Woldegiorgis & Doevenspeck, 2015). Moreover, the scholarship provides an incredible opportunity for the lecturers to learn about American and European systems as well as to appreciate the academic and scientific competence of American/European Universities.

In order for Mozambican lecturers to compete fairly for American and European scholarships, there is a need to consider the country's language context in the selection process (Makinda & Turner, 2013). We need to bear in mind that countries like Mozambique were not British colonies and hence English is a third or fourth language (Coleman, 2011; Plonski et al., 2013). Mozambican University or higher education institutions should assist the applicants through an English language skills training programs to prepare them for the application process (O'Meara et al., 2015; Renandya et al., 2018). In this research, some English lecturers and English to Portuguese Sworn translators assisted the applicant lecturers by guiding them during the scholarship application process and clarifying the purpose of each step. The support system proved invaluable as it enhanced participants understanding. They engaged constructively, shared notes among their peers and their level of motivation and optimism towards the international scholarship increased. There is a need for both parties (lectures and Mozambican Universities management) to discuss issues concerning the American and European scholarship application process, identify key challenges and propose relevant solutions. Fully engaging the lecturers in this process will ensure that the root causes of the challenges are constructively interrogated because lecturers have tremendous experiential knowledge of the issues.

Limitations of the Study

The limitation of the study is deliberate bias towards a selected number of the participants who command a certain level of understanding and relevant experience in the international scholarship application process. This bias is acceptable within the context of purposive sampling. To ensure the credibility of the study there was an attempt to include all lecturers with Honors and Master degrees and a minimum of five years lecturing experience across departments. During the data collection, it was apparent that participants could not express themselves fluently in English as most of them are not fluent and the researcher had to switch to Portuguese to ensure quality responses. Subsequently, the interview records were translated into English. However, there was conscious effort from the authors to ensure that inter-code textual data was preserved during the generation of the themes. This was a challenge because Portuguese spoken by participants was translated into English by the authors.

CONCLUSION

The overall challenge is such that both males and females do not benefit from successful scholarship application. The gender demography in this study showed that the ratio of female to male varies but females faced more scholarship challenges than males. Also, the financial implications of preparing for scholarships are beyond the affordability of participants irrespective of gender. The perception of English as an oppressive language was a critical factor among participants especially towards exploring scholarship opportunities.

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Appendix 1

Interview questions

Please your time and availability for this interview is highly acknowledged. The researcher will take all precautions to protect your confidentiality and anonymity.

1. Have you ever applied for an international scholarship? If yes, when and where to? If no, why not?
    a) What degree were you applying, Master degree or PhD degree?
    b) If you have applied for an international scholarship, what support did you receive from your department or University to stimulate your success on the application?

2. Tell me about the challenges encountered when applying for American and European scholarships.

3. What are your thoughts about English language selection criteria for the scholarships you applied?

a) Do you agree with the English Language proficiency tests' (IELTS & TOEFL) selection criteria by the European and American Universities to Mozambican applicants? If yes, Why? If not, why not?

4. What are your views regarding training Mozambican lecturers in European and American Universities?

5. What do you think English Language represents for Mozambican lecturers over the opportunities for further studies in European and American universities? Elaborate your answer.

In advance, I acknowledge your collaboration.

Empirical Article

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'Race' and Academic Performance in International Higher Education: Black Africans in the U.K.

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ABSTRACT

U.K. higher education research routinely pinpoints the racialized nature of academic performance, but it often fails to even consider if racism contributes to such a pervasive racial or ethnic disparity. While research in the area often focuses on comparing the attainment of home white and ethnic minority students, little attention is given to the experiences of black African international students (BAIS), particularly in U.K. higher education. Using semi-structured qualitative interviews, this study documents how "race" shapes academic performance and achievement by exploring the experiences of 21 BAIS undergraduates studying in ten universities in England. Factors identified, inter alia, include racism and discrimination, and the analysis challenges the narrative of assessment as neutral and objective technology that rewards merit, and lifts the voices of BAIS which are normally silent in the literature about international student experience. 'Race' and ethnicity jeopardize perception of BAIS's academic ability and judgment of their assessed work.

Keywords: academic performance, assessment, black Africans, international higher education, "race"

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INTRODUCTION

Sociological work on the assessment experience of ethnic minority students in U.K. higher education routinely points out the perennial problem of ethnic differences in attainment, identifying ethnicity as a significant predictor of achievement, even when other contributory factors such as entry qualifications and socio-economic status are controlled (Broecke and Nicholls, 2006; Connor et al., 2004; ECU, 2020; Richardson, 2018; Richardson et al., 2020). Despite this, however, assessment in U.K. higher education is conceptualized as an objective, color-blind practice that rewards merit (Gillborn, 2008), and U.K. studies continue to ignore the role of "race" and racism in the assessment experiences of black students (Smith, 2017; Sriprakash et al., 2019; Steventon et al., 2016). There seems to be a total silence, in particular, regarding research that explores how issues of race and ethnicity interact with the assessment experiences of black international students in U.K. higher education. This study is located in the tradition of research that explores the role of "race" and racism in the educational experiences of ethnic minority students (Alexander & Arday, 2015; Bunce et al., 2021; George Mwangi et al., 2019; Harper, 2012; Steventon et al., 2016), and it presents evidence that the pervasive attainment gap is also reflected in students' lived academic experiences by exploring the case of black African international undergraduates studying in ten English universities located in eight cities. The findings challenge the "unexplained gap" narrative in the literature (Broecke & Nicholls, 2006).

The study explored the following main research question:

1. To what extent, if any, have "race"/ethnicity and racism played a role in the lived academic experiences of black African international students (BAIS), in particular in their academic performance and achievement?

LITERATURE REVIEW

The paucity of research literature specifically on the assessment experiences of international students is surprising, considering the potential to produce evidence to guide the development of inclusive curriculum and assessment practices (Carroll, 2014). The limited research in the area looks at either international students' preferences between different assessment methods (Bartoli, 2011; De Vita, 2002; Kingston & Forland, 2008), or the attainment of international students (Iannelli & Huang, 2014; LSEU, 2017; Morrison et al., 2005).

Research on Preferences about Assessment Methods

Studies on preferences about assessment methods show contrasting results. While Kingston and Forland (2008) report that international students prefer what are collectively termed alternative forms of assessment (such as project work, coursework, and presentations), Bartoli (2011) reports preference for traditional forms of assessment, such as end-of-term written examinations. Kingston and Forland (2008), in a study of "gaps in expectation between teachers and East Asian international students," note that the large majority of these students preferred alternative forms of assessment to traditional examinations. The students argued that due to lack of proficiency in English, they preferred assessment methods that would not put them on the spot, and that would give them the opportunity for detailed written feedback from tutors, rather than just verbal feedback.

Research on Attainment

Research on attainment compared the performance of international and home students, and reported a mixed picture. While some earlier studies found no significant difference (Ackers, 2002; Marshall & Chilton, 1995), some reported that international students performed better (Pauley, 1988), and others discovered that U.K. home students performed better, measured by degree class awarded (Makepeace & Baxter, 1990). Later studies have all reported that

international students were consistently awarded fewer "good" degrees (2:1 and first class) (Iannelli & Huang, 2014; LSEU, 2017; Morrison et al., 2005). Most of these studies focused on a limited number of universities and specific courses, and only quantitatively analyzed differences of pre-entry attributes such as age, sex, mode of study, discipline of study, and the highest qualification on entry; they did not look at what happens once students are in their universities. In a highly racialized educational space such as the U.K. higher education system (Bhopal, 2018; Crozier et al., 2016), it is particularly important to look critically at students' experiences at universities, as student identity such as "race" and ethnicity interact with academic practices such as assessment.

Research on BAIS's Experiences

Despite the presence of African students in British education since the eighteenth century (Daley, 1998), and 1 in 16 international students in the U.K. at present being from Africa, there is little research on the experiences of BAIS in the U.K. (Hyams-Ssekasi et al., 2014). The few studies on black students' experiences in the U.K. reported poor academic experiences and outcomes (NUS, 2011; Van Dyke, 1998).

Van Dyke (1998) considers the progress and achievement of ethnic minority and white students in two London-based universities, finding considerable ethnic differences in both retention and graduation rates across the four courses investigated. They found that Eurocentric curricular content, low expectations due to teachers' stereotypical view of minorities, and limited contact with teachers outside of class also affected the academic achievement of ethnic minority students. Van Dyke (1998) further reports that the evidence "indicates that individual merit may not be the only defining variable that influences student progress and performance" (p. 132).

The African students in Van Dyke's (1998) study reported racist and discriminatory assessment experiences. The following quotations represent African students' voices on marking, the stereotypical views of staff about African students, and racist discrimination in marking. They provide evidence and insight that there is historically a palpable sense of being "Othered" and discriminated against, and also a sense of low trust pervading relations and/or interactions between African students and staff:

> On this particular course they have already chosen who will get the first class degree and it's a white person that I know … and the others will probably get 2.1s and the majority of black people, I feel, will get specially those who come from African continent, 2.2s or thirds and it seems like that [outcome] will be determined from the time you start your second year … And that's what I am finding with this particular college … But I do have a friend at another university that is experiencing a similar situation to this … And you know, there doesn't seem to be anything that you can do about it and you sort of go home in tears (Van Dyke, 1998, p. 130).

> So and so never gives black students above 55. I helped a white student with an assignment and when he got them back he asked me what I got. He got an A and I got a C. He couldn't believe it (Van Dyke, 1998, p. 121).

> One day I actually overheard X make racist comments about us to another lecturer. X said there were too many Africans in [the university] and that we were all dumb fools (Van Dyke, 1998, p. 131).

A study by the National Union of Students (NUS, 2011) reported that BAIS experienced specific difficulties, such as biased marking of their assignments, feelings of isolation and alienation with a direct bearing on their motivation and desire to stay on their courses, and low expectations both from teachers and their peers, which left them feeling that they were destined to fail or underachieve (NUS, 2011, pp. 5–6). Some African international students perceived their

educational environment as exclusionary and discriminatory. One BAIS lamented, "[International] students (especially those of color) often feel like outsiders and are probably not paid as much attention to than other students [*sic*]. There is often the perception that they are going to fail at whatever they try and therefore they aren't encouraged" (NUS, 2011, p. 48). Another BAIS in the NUS study expressed the view that assessment practices in their university did not consider differences in styles of writing that they were socialized into in their prior education, for example, U.S. versus U.K. English. In a more recent study, LSEU (2017) looked at five years of degree awards (2009/10–2013/14), and found that black and ethnic minority students (home and international alike) are less likely to be awarded "good" degrees (first class and 2:1) than white students.

This review shows that there are ethnic differences in assessment experience and attainment, that many U.K. studies continue to homogenize international students, and that very few include BAIS in their sample – evidence that they continue to be overlooked.

The limited research work on the assessment experiences of black international students mainly identifies and describes the racialized nature of assessment outcomes, and usually suggests various forms of support and compensatory work to ameliorate the challenges that they experience. Critics argue that such research remains stuck in deficit thinking, and fails to look critically at both the universities and assessment practices in higher education as a vehicle of cultural and social reproduction that legitimizes and reinforces existing racial differences (Bourdieu & Passeron, 1990; Gillborn, 2008; Ladson-Billings, 1998; Leathwood, 2005; Solórzano & Yosso, 2002). Most of this research is also atheoretical (Abdullah et al., 2014; Tight, 2004) and as result does not explain and theorize about the underlying causes of racial and/or ethnic differences in assessment in higher education. This study attempts to fill this lacuna by exploring BAIS's lived experiences.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

This study uses critical race theory (CRT), which focuses on the effects of "race" and racism on the lived experiences of black people and ethnic minorities. Initially developed by critical legal scholars (Bell, 1992; Delgado & Stefancic, 2017; Matsuda, 1987), CRT has increasingly been utilized by educational researchers to foreground race and racism in studies that explore lived experiences of black students (Dixson et al., 2006; Doharty et al., 2021; Ladson-Billings & Tate, 2016; Madriaga & McCaig, 2019).

CRT has five basic tenets which would help to unbury taken-for-granted assumptions, practices, and operations in educational institutions that perpetuate educational inequities: the permanence of racism, the centrality of experiential knowledge, the challenge to dominant ideology, the commitment to social justice, and the transdisciplinary perspective (DeCuir & Dixson, 2004). Thus, CRT asserts that "race" and racism are permanent and not aberrant in society, and acknowledges the experiential knowledge of people of color as a legitimate and valid knowledge base. CRT challenges claims of "objectivity", "meritocracy", "color blindness", and "race neutrality" made by institutions and dominant research paradigms that silence and ignore the voices of black and ethnic minority people. CRT is committed to social justice, and it offers methods and analysis that promote radical and transformative change. To explore how "race" and racism operate in education, CRT draws on many methods and analytic frameworks, and it transcends disciplinary boundaries (Solórzano & Yosso, 2002).

This study draws on the experiential knowledge of BAIS, explores the factors that they believe affect their academic performance, and generates narratives that challenge claims of a "post-racial" and meritocratic assessment practice in U.K. higher education. Predominantly white policy-makers in the sector often use a color-blind ideology to downplay or reject altogether critical examination of their policies and practices that are responsible for racialized assessment experiences and outcomes. A CRT-informed analysis of BAIS's assessment experiences in this

study enables them to name their reality and lift their voices, which are normally silent in the literature.

RESEARCH METHOD

This study was designed as a basic qualitative study (Merriam & Tisdell, 2015) with a constructionist stance that views lived experience as multiple and contested versions of reality (Schwandt, 1994).

DATA COLLECTION

A qualitative semi-structured in-depth interview research design was used to explore factors that affect the academic performance of BAIS. In-depth interviews provide researchers with the opportunity to listen to interviewees for longer, and to probe further and ask follow-up questions for clarification. Qualitative interviews allow the generation of stories that capture the complexities of BAIS's lived realities, and produce powerful data providing valuable insights into how they understand and make sense of their assessment experiences at university. However, traditional qualitative research in education is criticized for "epiphenomenizing or de-emphasizing race" (Parker & Lynn, 2002, p. 13). I therefore used qualitative interviews in conjunction with a CRT framework to foreground race and racism in my methods and analysis, since BAIS study in a culturally constructed (Crozier et al., 2016) and racialized (Bhopal, 2018) U.K. higher education field.

Questions were loosely structured, allowing greater freedom for interviewees to impose their own structure. The interview schedule included introductory icebreaker questions, some background questions, questions about motives for choosing to study in the U.K., academic experiences in their current universities, experiences of being an international student, and experiences of racism and discrimination. The interview questions addressed in this article are "What would you say are the factors that affect your academic performance or achievement at your university?", with the probes "Who do you think does well and who does less well?" and "To what extent, if any, have 'race' and racism played a role in your assessment experience?". In most cases, however, interviewees raised experiences of racism and discrimination in their assessment experiences before the probe questions were asked.

The Participants

The study participants were 21 BAIS (12 males and 9 females) from four sub-Saharan-African countries, who were studying on five different undergraduate courses at ten English universities located in eight cities (Table 1). The participants were recruited through emailing personal connections and a "call for research participants" advertisement. The call made no mention of "race" or experience of racism to avoid the tendency of recruiting only participants who have experienced racism. It simply asked if they were a BAIS and if they were willing to share their views about "what it is like for them to study at their current university."

Table 1

Participants' Profiles

Participant	Nationality	Gender	Age	University	Course and Year of Study
Tibu	Nigerian	Male	18	Canal	Accounting and finance, 2nd year
Bena	Nigerian	Female	19	Canal	Business management, 2nd year
Poni	Nigerian	Female	19	Canal	Law, 2nd year
Jaka	Kenyan	Male	20	Castle	Finance, 2nd year
Beku	Kenyan	Male	21	Castle	Philosophy, politics and economics, 2nd year

Astu	Kenyan	Female	21	Castle	Law, 3rd year
Baso	Serra-Leonean	Male	28	Downtown	Law (Hons), 2nd year
Domu	Serra-Leonean	Male	29	Chapel	Law, 3rd year
Rosa	Nigerian	Female	19	Hillside	Law, 3rd year
Lara	Nigerian	Female	19	Song	Law, 2nd year
Ruth	Nigerian	Female	19	Hillside	Law, 3rd year
Wasa	Nigerian	Male	22	Port	Biomedical sciences, 3rd year
Yomi	Nigerian	Female	19	Port	Biomedical sciences, 3rd year
Demba	Nigerian	Male	20	Woods	Aerospace engineering, 3rd year
Olu	Nigerian	Female	20	Woods	Bioengineering, 3rd year
Katu	Nigerian	Female	22	Canal-Great	Law, 3rd year
Pala	Serra-Leonean	Male	36	Canal-Great	Law, 3rd year
Mufti	Nigerian	Male	24	Canal-Great	Economics, 2nd year
Arno	South African	Male	26	Canal-Great	Acting, 3rd year
Ade	Nigerian	Male	19	Canal-Great	Law with criminology, 2nd year
Wanja	Kenyan	Male	31	Parkside, Business	Management, 3rd year

DATA ANALYSIS

After verbatim transcription of the interviews, I produced "thick descriptions" (Ponterotto, 2006) – a description of the demographic and other background information, along with a summary of the transcribed data for each participant. The process of producing the thick descriptions helped me to be even more familiar with individual data and, most importantly, helped me to organize and categorize my data in preparation for further analysis. I then transferred the verbatim transcriptions of all interview data into NVivo qualitative data analysis software (Version 11) for ease of retrieval, organizing and reorganizing, and multiple coding and recoding. I used the following procedure to identify a theme or themes from the transcribed data:

a) Indexing, which involves thoroughly reading the data set and identifying extracts that correspond to a particular category.
b) This was followed by creating brief memos stating my understanding and interpretations of the indexed data.
c) Further in-depth engagement with data and generating more robust analytic categories, looking across the data set for patterns and an overarching theme.

I used two methods of coding: a priori codes derived from my theoretical framework to create initial categories reflecting issues I was interested to explore, and data-driven coding to make connections across the participants' stories and to merge themes into final codes for analysis (Silverman, 2020). This research was conducted within UCL/IOE's ethical standards and guidelines, and ethical clearance was sought and obtained before commencing all research activities, including pilot work.

FINDINGS

This section presents the data and analysis from the interviews that demonstrate how the racialized context of the higher education sector produces misgivings, and negative perceptions of BAIS. I acknowledge that realities can be plural, and no claim is made that my participants'

experiences represent the only truth. There can be multiple versions of lived experiences of BAIS, depending on context and individual differences. The study participants also identified other factors affecting their academic performance, such as level of academic preparedness and unfamiliarity with newer assessment methods. However, over half of the 21 BAIS mentioned racism and discrimination as a factor affecting their academic performance and/or achievement while studying at their universities.

Analysis of BAIS's responses shows that there seem to be two main ways in which "race"/ethnicity mediate their academic performance and/or achievement. Their "race" and/or ethnicity as markers of their racial identity and cultural background jeopardize the perception of their academic ability or competence as legitimate and valid, and they believe that they could be marked down or harshly graded because of who they are. As their accounts below show, they could confront being marked down harshly, but they find being questioned, doubted, and unwelcome to be insidious and harder to dismantle.

Being Doubted, Questioned, and Feeling Unwelcome

A number of BAIS describe how daily experiences of racism could affect academic performance, as BAIS feel uncomfortable and hence disempowered:

> When you are not settled and you don't feel comfortable, or you just feel targeted, yes it could affect your academic performance. When you don't feel welcome, it just makes it difficult to perform at your best (Lara, female, 19, Song).
>
> In a learning environment, you want to feel welcome, you want to feel comfortable, but if every day or every two days, you are experiencing one racist comment or you are being discriminated by your lecturer or by your fellow students, definitely, it's going to thwart your chances of finishing with a better grade or finishing with a good result, because it is obviously going to affect you; so, yeah, I think discrimination would have an effect on someone's academic performance at this university (Ade, male, 19, Canal-Great).

Both Lara and Ade highlight that experiences of everyday racism (Essed, 1991) could have insidious effects and could "thwart … chances of finishing with a better grade" or make "it difficult to perform at your best." They believe that experiences of racism are part of the fabric of their university campuses, and that this affects BAIS's academic performance.

Arno, from the same university as Ade, believes that he needs to work a little bit harder because he is a black African:

> Definitely! It does affect my achievement. It just means that I have to work a little bit harder to get first [class], I have to do a little bit extra; that's what it is. I wouldn't have come to this country [if I didn't accept that]. It just means that on that basis I should be able to put myself on a par where I could be seen as black British. It's a big thing being black, especially African as well, there's accent, culture, that's, I mean [important] … (Arno, male, 26, Canal-Great).

Arno alludes to the often quoted American aphorism "You have got to work twice as hard …" to lament his racial disadvantage and that he needs to put in extra effort to get good grades. In a recent study, DeSante (2013) provides empirical evidence that supports this aphorism. Arno also appears to suggest a racial hierarchy between black British and black Africans, when he comments "I should be able to put myself on a par where I could be seen as black British." This is very important, as any racial categorization has meanings and is a manifestation of power relationships. As such, Arno says, "it's a big thing being black, especially African as well, there's accent, culture … ," indicating that he may be subject to greater oppression and marginalization as a black African than a black British person would be. Critical race theory expounds that there are intricate layers of racism and discrimination that a black person could experience, based not just on skin color, but also on accent, immigration status, surname, and phenotype (Solórzano &

Yosso, 2002). BAIS also suffer racism from black British people – and "race" as an organizing principle gets complicated across national lines.

Beku from Castle concedes that racial discrimination affects academic performance, but he sees it as an individual problem, rather an institutional one:

> Obviously, when you are being discriminated against, you feel less empowered. It's just the same feelings you get when you are being put down, so especially if a department puts you down, then you know that's obviously going to affect your performance, but I think the university has so many measures against institutional racism. When teachers are marking your paper, they don't have to know your name, they just know your student number, so there's really no way for them to discriminate. So it's [racism] not a systemic thing, it's not a systematized agent of oppression; it's very much individually biased, so you have, like, maybe one rotten administrator that would make things harder for you than the others, so it's not rampant and it's very individually skewed (Beku, male, 21, Castle).

Beku describes that racism and discrimination disempowers, and obviously affects academic performance, but he expresses confidence that anonymous marking protects him from institutional racism. But there is very little empirical evidence that teachers would not know the identity of their students during marking, in particular students such as BAIS, who have various markers, such as style of writing among many others. Beku asserts that racial discrimination at his university is not "rampant," but is the work of some racist individuals ("bad apples"). Beku buys into the narrative that racism is aberrational and not systemic. However, CRT tells us that racism is embedded in Western society and operates in taken-for-granted ways.

By contrast, Domu of Chapel shares an experience that suggests that low achievement of BAIS could be more systemic, and offers the most sinister of all explanations for the attainment gap that I have come across:

> Honestly speaking, for us from Africa, although we work very hard, it was very hard for anyone of us to get a first class. But home students, including those I do help sometimes and some who rely on me so much, they get first class. It could be based on their merit or luck, or I don't know exactly. But when we started, we the international students were really very committed, and we work so hard while most of them were partying, and we have had to assist them most of the time. I do not know how the gear changed at the final stage; I feel it is most of the home students who finish with higher class degrees. The problem is there is no evidence that can really point to that, to say this happened because of racism. So, you know this [racism] happens and it really deprive you of something, but at the same time, if you don't have evidence, you can't make a claim. But I will say this, if I was a white student, looking at how hard-working I am, I think I will have gotten a fantastic first. That is what I believe (Domu, male, 29, Chapel).

Domu describes how African students work hard, and show more commitment, but still find it difficult to achieve as well as home students, who party a lot and depend on internationals such as him to complete assignments. There is some research support for his claim. Andrade (2006) found that international students in general are more academically engaged than home students, particularly in their first year of study. Black students complaining about receiving lower grades than white peers whose assignments they helped to complete have been reported by Van Dyke (1998), who documented similar grievances by a black student in a London university: "So and so never gives black students above 55. I helped a white student with an assignment and when he got them back he asked me what I got. He got an A and I got a C. He couldn't believe it" (p. 121).

Domu believes that racism plays a role in how his academic work is judged when he says "you know this [racism] happens and it really deprive you of something." However, he explains the difficulty of securing evidence to prove racial discrimination in this regard. This is probably because the underlying cause of the problem is more structural and/or institutional than a

deliberate attempt by individual teachers to mark down a black African student (although that is not unheard of, as we will see later in this section). In her piece addressing white racism in the academy, Scheurich (1993) argues that:

> People of colour and those Whites who have concluded that White academics are racially biased are correct … the ways of the dominant group become universalized as measures of merit, hiring criteria, grading standards, predictors of success, correct grammar, appropriate behaviour, and so forth, all of which are said to be distributed as differences in individual effort, ability, or intelligence (Scheurich, 1993: p. 7).

Critical race theorists also point out that educational assessments standardized on past performances of the dominant cultural and racial groups not only unfairly discriminate against ethnic minorities, but also reproduce the historic inequality in attainment (Gillborn, 2008; Ladson-Billings, 1998). Professor Glynis Cousin has suggested that the BME attainment gap could be due to teachers' bias and/or prejudicial judgment associating BME students with a certain degree class. Like Domu, she ponders (in Steventon et al., 2016: p. 206), "When teachers behold BME, do they behold 2:2 students?"

Domu was so concerned and dissatisfied with the black/white attainment gap at his university that he raised the issue at a National Union of Students (NUS) conference, where they discussed, "Why minorities who work so hard can't get above 2:2?" After the NUS debate, Domu raised the issue with an official in the university. The response he said that he received is something that I have not heard or read about before, and it merits some attention. Domu explains:

> I even took up this matter with the administration once, and I was struck by what he said during our conversation, which he told me is strictly off the record. I just raised the issue by saying, "Why is it that international students are not getting first-class grades?" He said, "Well, this is off the record, Domu, but this is an institutional policy since the home students took loans, they are expected to have good results to get jobs so that they will repay their loans. But you, international students, you have a big advantage, you came here, you spend your money and maybe you have to go back. If you get jobs here, then that might disenfranchise the home student that may have to work and pay the debt they owe. So this is one incentive for them to get a first" (Domu, male, 29, Chapel).

As struck by what I heard as Domu himself had been, I asked him the following clarificatory question:

> **S:** Is he saying they work more/harder because of that incentive, or the university gives them an advantage to get a first?
>
> **D:** Well, I feel it is the latter. But I don't have the evidence to support what he said. But that was what he was trying to tell me. The guy is one of the key stakeholders at the university then (Domu, male, 29, Chapel).

As Domu explains, a "key stakeholder" at his university told him "off the record" that there is a surreptitious policy assisting home students to attain higher grades so that they can get an advantage in the labor market and repay their loans. This is very concerning and needs serious thought and investigation. I am not entirely sure whether such investigation is possible by academic researchers alone. However, the conversation is hardly "off the record," and it might well have spread and impacted BAIS's, and perhaps other international students', morale and confidence. This also raises issues about how effective whistleblowing is in universities since, if proved, this would be unlawful organized institutional discrimination.

Marked Down Because of My "Race"

Another theme that emerged from analysis of BAIS's responses to the factors that affect their academic performance is the perception that they have been marked down or harshly graded

because of their "race" and/or assumptions about lack of intelligence because they are from Africa. The literature identifies, *inter alia*, bias, prejudice, stereotyping (Brown & Knight, 2012), intellectual positions/values/personal taste (Bourdieu & de Saint Martin, 1974), and racism (Mahboob and Szenes, 2010; Scheurich, 1993) as reasons for subjectivity in marking student work in higher education. Although the practice of anonymous marking has been implemented as the main tool to ameliorate such problems in U.K. higher education (Bloxham et al., 2011), it would be very difficult to argue that assessors will not be able to identify foreign students such as BAIS due to writing style and/or language use, which may be distinctly identifiable. A previous U.K. study, albeit in school, reported that "black pupils are routinely marked down by teachers" (Asthana et al., 2010).

Astu, Wanja, Rosa, Baso, and Pala all share stories that "race"/ethnicity might play a part in the way they are assessed, how they perform, or the grades they are awarded for their work. Astu relates her experiences of chasing one of her teachers because she was dissatisfied with her grade:

> My last piece of work was an essay that I did last term last year. I had to chase my module tutor as I wanted to ask for some personal feedback because I didn't understand why somebody who had written a very similar essay, as we worked on it together, got a higher mark than me. I literally had to chase her for maybe two or three weeks just to get an appointment to go and see her. I sent her back all the materials and my transcript, and she sent a two-sentence explanation, which was not satisfactory to me. It was only when I chased her up again a lot that I got the chance to get that actual feedback. It turned out that she had to move up my grade. If I didn't persist and chased her up, my grades would have stayed the same. Then I wondered if I was marked down. That incident really made me question a lot of things. I wasn't given any reason why my marks changed and my grades moved up. It happened just because I chased her up, and my personal tutor, who was not also convinced by the marking, helped chase her up. And also, from the generic feedback, I now feel that I was marked a lot harsher than some other people. I think I was harshly marked. That kind of gave me the motivation to ask for a remarking of another essay but it didn't succeed (Astu, female, 21, Castle).

As Scheurich (1993) argues, white academics can be biased against black students, as their own ways of thinking and their values have been universalized as measures of grading and merit. It is not possible to determine from the evidence whether Astu's teacher intentionally marked her down. However, what is significant is that Astu's confidence in the system is dented, and she already believes that she is discriminated against because of her "race." The series of events in her account reinforces this belief. Astu, who had expressed confidence in the anonymous marking practice at her university, was not convinced with her grade on this occasion, as a friend who she says submitted a similar piece of work was awarded a higher grade. Her personal tutor was also not satisfied with her grade, which strengthened her doubt that she was given a fair grade. Although it is entirely possible that a student's grade can be changed after re-marking for any number of reasons, Astu was concerned that she had to chase her teacher for feedback, and by the fact that no explanation was given for increasing her grade. This seems to have eroded her confidence in the grading practice of her university, and made her question if she had always been marked down. That is why she applied for the re-marking of her other essay from the past, albeit unsuccessfully.

Francis et al. (2001) highlight how subjectivity in marking based on axes of social difference such as gender could also exacerbate such issues. They explored possible gender differences in achievement by analyzing undergraduate history students' essays from four London-based universities and found some evidence that "… male students who adopt a bold (masculine) style alongside a competent use of English, and conformity with academic conventions, may be particularly highly rewarded in assessment" (Francis et al., 2001, p. 324). The authors argue that this advantage to male students emanates from the norms of undergraduate academic writing style reflecting masculine values rather than feminine ones. This implies that

BAIS, who are not the norm in the white middle class dominated U.K. higher education culture (Crozier et al., 2016), could face an even greater disadvantage, among other things due to bias and prejudice which may position them as the deficient Other.

Objectivity in marking is also challenged by Bourdieu (1990), who argued that subjectivity is an inherent part of a social practice such as assessment, and that marking could not claim total objectivity. It is the combination of some subjective, tacitly held beliefs about learning and objective assessment measures that generates "the logic of practice" (Bourdieu, 1990) for assessment. While "objective" may refer to prescribed marking criterion standards, subjectivity includes epistemological positions, biases, prejudice, and racism. The experiential knowledge of BAIS in this study secured some evidence that would challenge the discourse of marking as "objective" and color-blind judgment of student work.

BAIS also shared their vicarious experiences of racism and discrimination. Wanja shared stories of his friends who believe that they have been marked down, or negatively assessed, because of their "race," English-language proficiency, and/or cultural background.

Wanja describes stories of two black peers at his university, a male BAIS and a female home black student who was assumed to be BAIS and who was judged accordingly:

> **Story one**
>
> One Ghanaian guy who studies with us together here had problem with one of the tutors; she is a white English woman. Basically, she doesn't like people from Pakistan, or black people, or if you have accent. But for this Ghanaian international student, he was marked as failed, and then it was marked by someone else and they said, no, it's good enough, he will pass. He was very broken and he was in tears; it was really bad for him.
>
> **Story two**
>
> I have also even seen a girl, who is born here, but she was told her English is not good in her feedback … "Your English is not good because I believe you are foreigner." She was completely angry. I think she is from Zimbabwe [but] she is born here, so basically this is her home. She was very angry. She went to the lecturer, and she asked "How can you tell me that my English is not good and I am born here just like you?" She complained. She was born here, but because of her name, someone just looks at her name and say, "Oh, this person is not from here, so I assume his/her English is not as good." But, to be honest, according to my academic experience, many people from abroad, they got a very good written English, you know, more than people from here. That's one thing I have noticed, but because of where you come from it's still there [racism] (Wanja, male, 31, Parkside).

The experience of Wanja's Ghanaian friend is similar to that of Astu: he applied for re-marking and his grade changed. It is Wanja's observation that the tutor involved does not like ethnic minorities and people who have accents. This is consistent with Lee and Rice (2007), who found that discrimination based on accent(s) pervades many aspects of international students' lived experiences. In his second account, Wanja shares a story of a female home black student whose assessment was negatively judged because the teacher believed her to be a foreigner, and therefore to have inferior English language proficiency. However, the student was born in the U.K., and she has a foreign surname because of her African heritage. The Equality and Human Rights Commission (EHRC, 2019) found evidence for a similar experience, where a home black British student related:

> Although I was not an international student but because I was black and dressed in religious garments he would assume I was an international student and often ask me and my fellow student questions like I'm not sure if they have things like this in your country (UK national postgraduate, Welsh university) (EHRC, 2019, p. 30).

These stories provide a further insight that "race" could trump citizenship in black students' experiences.

Previous research documented that BAIS believe that they are marked down because of their "race," both in the U.S. (Lee & Opio, 2011) and the U.K. (Maundeni, 2001). In a study of BAIS's experiences in a U.K. university, Maundeni (2001) reports the account of Lasisi, a female BAIS, of discrimination based on her skin color and accent:

> One of my lecturers has a negative attitude towards me just because of my colour and accent. […] I mean, he gives me low grades all the time no matter how much effort I put on my work. His course is the only one that I get low marks in. When I arrived, some African students told me that one way to survive academically is to work extra hard, to put double the effort that a white student puts in his/her work because some lecturers just assign grades on the basis of one's colour. I have experienced this (Lasisi, 21) (Maundeni, 2001, p. 270).

There is a 16-year gap between Wanja's and Lasisi's accounts, suggesting that the perception of being discriminated against in grading and assessment based on skin color and accent (the things that mark BAIS as visible minorities) is persistent. In a study of BAIS's lived experiences in a U.S. university, Lee and Opio (2011) reported that a Zambian student related that "Some professors, if you seem or feel like you are better from Africa, will not give the grade you deserve" (p. 639).

In this study too, BAIS seem to strongly believe that they suffer from low expectations and discrimination because of their racial identities. Baso and Pala related stories that allude to the strong suspicion and perception that they could be racially discriminated against in grading, and do not always get the grades they deserve because of their "race":

> It's very distressful sometimes, to see that you do your coursework properly, submit it and, at the end of the day, you don't get the grades you think you deserve. You look at it and say, "Is it because I am a black [person]?" Sometimes you don't get the help you think the other white students get from lecturers. You see that and say, "Is it because I am a black?" Sometimes the lecturers they do it [racism], but they do it professionally, because they know the codes of [conduct] of the university, so they try to do it in some kind of way that they would not be exposed (Baso, male, 28, Downtown).

> It's embedded, it's not clear. They pretend as if it [racism] is not there, but for you to get a first class, I think that one is discretional on the part of lecturers, for example, if you get 69 or 68 [marks], so you can see that to give you first class is discretional. So there, I think if they do [want to discriminate], there it comes. But, like, it's embedded, it's hidden, it is not conspicuous, you can't spot it, like, that easy, but you can see, like, their own kids easily get first class – the white British citizens and those who are born and bred here (Pala, male, 36, Canal-Great).

These two accounts reveal some serious misgivings and a lack of trust on the part of BAIS that they may not be earning the grades they deserve because of their "race". They also doubt if they are getting a similar level of help to that given to white students. They believe that lecturers may demonstrate racial discrimination that is "embedded," "hidden," and not conspicuous, so it cannot be spotted easily. According to Baso, this is because lecturers are cautious due to fear of retribution. Pala indicates that the discretionary power of lecturers in borderline grading between a first-class degree and a 2:1 is a space of possible racism. He believes that they exercise this discretionary power to award "their own kids" (white British students) a first-class grade. CRT asserts that racist beliefs can be part of the "normal" taken-for-granted practices of educational institutions such as universities, where assessment practices may be seen as neutral, and more often than not escape critical inquiry (Gillborn, 2008). CRT also acknowledges that "race" and racism are central, permanent, and fundamental parts of Western societies (Bell, 1992; Delgado & Stefancic, 2017), and that they should be seen as a central factor in defining and explaining individual experiences of minoritized people such as BAIS.

IMPLICATIONS AND CONCLUSION

This study reveals that some important challenges in negotiating academic performance in university are related to a deficit understanding of BAIS and their position as the racial other. As the analysis shows, these challenges range from being doubted and questioned, to outright perceived racial discrimination in marking and grading. This includes not receiving higher grades because they are black Africans, and, in some cases, experiences of being harshly graded and then having their grade increased through successful appeals. This finding is consistent with the literature that reports the prejudicial judgment of the performance of both home black students and BAIS (C. A. Lee et al., 2020; Steventon et al., 2016; Talley-Matthews et al., 2020). This study also unearthed (albeit from a single BAIS) what is, to my knowledge, the first story of a university being suspected of deliberately favoring home students to earn a first-class degree to help them secure employment and pay their debts, as opposed to international students, who leave after graduation.

The finding that perceived racism and discrimination is one factor shaping the academic performance of BAIS is significant in view of the fact that extant literature on the attainment gap in U.K. higher education routinely identifies "race"/ethnicity as an explanatory factor, but fails to investigate racism as a possible cause (Broecke and Nicholls, 2006; Connor et al., 2004; Leslie, 2005). This study has allowed the documentation and analysis of factors affecting academic performance from the perspective of BAIS, and has listened to the voices of those who experience the practice of educational assessment in U.K. higher education differently. BAIS's lived experiences of assessment detailed in this article demonstrate, as Delgado and Stefancic (2017) articulated, "what life is like for others" (p. 43) within a system that may be thought to be just and fair for all. By so doing, the study has also produced some evidence that the black/white attainment gap established in the literature is also reflected in the student experience.

There are several implications of this. First and foremost, there needs to be acknowledgment on the part of universities that "race" and racism affect BAIS's lived experiences. Currently, there seems to be a deafening silence around the centrality of "race" in the lived experiences of black students and, as Pilkington (2014) remarked: "… universities are extraordinarily complacent. They see themselves as liberal and believe existing policies ensure fairness; in the process, they ignore adverse outcomes and do not see combating racial/ethnic inequalities as a priority" (p. 207). This complacency is exacerbated since BAIS do not have the means to challenge their experiences of racism, which are deeply embedded in society and institutional cultures.

I hope that this study contributes to disrupting this complacency and silence. I recommend that higher education institutions and their staff be made aware of the views of BAIS, and of their responsibility to continuously critically examine their assessment practices. Given the diversity within the BAIS group, future research can consider whether experiences of racism and discrimination in assessment practice differ between male BAIS and female BAIS, or between BAIS of different socio-economic status, or between types of institution and course, as well as if, and in what ways, the profile of teaching staff correlates with experiences of racism and discrimination in assessment practice. This is significant, as BAIS underlined the positive impact on their academic experiences of being taught by a black academic. Another interesting study would be to look at the experiences of black African academics working in U.K. universities.

There are limitations to this study. My sample contains only students from universities in England, and had I included BAIS from the other three countries of the U.K., analysis of the influences of contextual differences would have been possible. I also did not include BAIS from French-speaking sub-Saharan African countries, whose experiences could have arguably been shaped even more by English-language problems and differences in colonial history and legacy. My analysis is also limited in its focus on gender. CRT does not prioritize gender as an analytic category, and if I had used a feminist theoretical lens, I would have been able to foreground gender.

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