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ADVANCED SOCIAL WORK STUDENTS' MOTIVATION AND PREPAREDNESS: COVID- 19 REMOTE LEARNING EXPERIENCE

Andrea Patricia Godinez

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ADVANCED SOCIAL WORK STUDENTS' MOTIVATION AND
PREPAREDNESS: COVID- 19 REMOTE LEARNING EXPERIENCE

A Project
Presented to the
Faculty of
California State University,
San Bernardino

In Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for the Degree
Master of Social Work

by
Andrea Patricia Godinez

May 2021

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ABSTRACT

The Coronavirus (COVID-19) outbreak impacted the Master of Social Work (MSW) graduate students' education and field instruction. Engagement in classes in remote or restricted field placements was a new and evolving form of learning. This study investigated social work students' level of motivation and preparedness entering the field after the novel form of learning during the COVID-19 pandemic. This comparative quantitative exploratory study surveyed 70 advanced-year social work students. This study was undertaken as a means to learn about the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic, to benefit future cohorts, and to facilitate preparedness of faculty and staff for remote learning.

The study's results suggest that most MSW students were impacted by the pandemic and the shift to remote learning and internship. Yet, the results indicated few differences in impact between the two groups of students this study examined: Title IV-E child welfare students and those students pursuing other social work specializations. The study hypothesized that Title IV-E students, who benefit from increased supports would report being more prepared to enter the field than their non-Title IV-E peers. The study's findings suggest that, in spite of the pandemic and the switch to online learning and internships, Title IV-E and non-Title IV-E students are equally prepared to enter the field, but that Title IV-E students might be more prepared to build rapid rapport with clients. Implications for social work education and training are discussed.

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Mom and Dad, there are no words to describe how grateful I am for all the sacrifices you've made for me, Natalie, Pamela, Jacqueline, and Damian. I am where I am today because of you both. Los quiero con todo mi corazón, y seguiré haciéndolos orgullosos de mi.

Perla and Krystal, your friendship is unmatched. You both keep me grounded. Thank you for always supporting my ideas and dreams without judgment.

Juan, thank you for your unconditional love, kindness, and support. You were always there to motivate me, lend an ear, remind me that I am capable, and show me that I deserve the world. I admire you, and you make me want to be a better person always. I love you.

DEDICATION

Quiero dedicar este proyecto a mi Tita, mi abuelita Teresa, y mi abuelito Javier. Los quiero y los extraño.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

ABSTRACT	iii
ACKNOWLEDGMENTS	iv
CHAPTER ONE: PROBLEM FORMULATION	1
Introduction	1
Purpose of this Study	2
Significance of the Project for Social Work Practice	3
CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW	5
Coronavirus Disease 2019	5
Symptoms	6
Prevention and Guidelines	7
Treatment	7
Defining Online Learning	7
Social Work Online Education	9
Training and Application of Knowledge	10
Theories Guiding Conceptualization	12
CHAPTER THREE: METHODS	14
Introduction	14
Study Design	14
Sampling	15
Data Collection and Instruments	16
Procedures	17
Protection of Human Subjects	18

Data Analysis.....	18
Summary	19
CHAPTER FOUR: RESULTS.....	20
Introduction	20
Participant Demographics.....	20
Inferential Statistics	21
Motivation to Pursue Social Work	21
Students' Preparedness to Enter Profession after Remote Learning	22
Independent Samples t-tests	24
CHAPTER FIVE: DISCUSSION	25
Introduction	25
Discussion	25
Strengths	27
Limitations.....	28
Implications for Research & Teaching	28
Conclusion	29
APPENDIX A: SURVEY	31
APPENDIX B: INFORMED CONSENT FORM.....	36
APPENDIX C: INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD APPROVAL LETTER	37
REFERENCES.....	41

CHAPTER ONE

PROBLEM FORMULATION

Introduction

Social workers dedicate themselves to advocate, support, and help improve the wellbeing of vulnerable individuals, groups, children, and families. The social work profession requires its workers to have an essential skill set and traits to do their job well such as resourcefulness, effective communication, critical thinking, active listening, and time management.

Ensuring the safety and overall wellbeing of others is the role of a social worker. A mixed-method study conducted by Detres, Lucio, Roberson, Campbell, and Senger (2020), sampled students who withdrew from their online social work courses. The findings of this study concluded that students are highly influenced in their academic success by both academic and non-academic factors. Some pressing academic factors can include heavy course work, stress, and field placement obligation and responsibilities. Some non-academic factors that impact graduate students can include home life, finances, work, or personal crisis.

An obstacle in which educators in schools of social work face is effectively communicating or conveying an important skill without face-to-face interaction. Lee, Hernandez, and Marshall (2019) argue that social work requires students to critically analyze in courses that focus on micro social work interactions and practicing that skill can be difficult to teach and demonstrate with online courses.

Although if the faculty and staff of these institutional departments are having a difficult time adjusting to virtual education students may be having a more difficult time comprehending and applying the material to their profession.

Lee et al, (2019), addressed that the traditional form of teaching and virtual teaching differs in the way the material is presented, it is more difficult to present the material without physical interaction between professor and student (Lee et al, 2019). Detres et al, (2020) claim that their finds concluded that students in online social work courses have lower than a 20% retention rate of material compared to students in the traditional classroom (Detres et al, 2020). It appears that students and faculty and staff equally need support for this evolving and modern form of learning. Lee, Hernandez, and Marshall's (2019) study mention that some institutions may not even provide their educators with the proper resources or training to undergo an online environment (Lee et al, 2019). Based on this information, it can be probable that students enrolled in online courses may be less supported than students that are attending courses in person.

Purpose of this Study

The purpose of this study is to analyze if advanced year social work students' motivation and preparedness to enter the field were impacted in any way due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Social workers hold great responsibility and can become highly stressed as new child welfare workers. How often something is practiced the more confident someone becomes in their ability and

competence. A study by Greeno et al, (2017) suggests that many contributing factors influence a student's skills in the child welfare workforce. The authors conclude that students with prior hands-on experience in child welfare have higher levels of perceived competence than their counterparts (Greeno et al, 2017). The COVID-19 pandemic has caused great uncertainty and drastic changes in all lives globally. This study should help provide more insight into how Title IV-E and Non-Title IV-E full time, part-time, and pathway advanced year students and professional experience during this crisis.

For example, traditionally the Title IV-E program provides ample opportunities to prepare students for the workforce with hands-on field experience and the assurance of completing their work commitment immediately after graduation. Although with the new preventive and safety measure in place for this disease the future has become uncertain.

Significance of the Project for Social Work Practice

This study is significant for social work practice because it will assist future social work graduate student cohorts to be more prepared in their field despite the crisis. And It will also allow faculty and staff at social work institutions to provide quality virtual education and support to their students.

Finally, this study will determine if the use of remote learning in the time of COVID-19 hindered graduate students' motivation and preparedness for their profession by answering the following questions: How has remote learning and COVID 19 pandemic affect Advanced MSW student's motivation and

preparedness entering the field? Are Title IV-E students more prepared than non-Title IV-E students to enter the field of social work? And finally, are students that are at in-person placements more prepared than students who do not have an in-person placement?

CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW

Coronavirus Disease 2019

According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), the emergence of COVID-19 originated in Wuhan, China in the year 2019.

Coronaviruses are part of large body viruses that can bring illness upon animals and respiratory infections amongst humans. (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 2020). For this study, the spread of COVID-19 between humans will only be discussed. Adamo, Yoshikawa, and Ouslander's (2020), study reported there has not been a globally spread disease since the influenza epidemic of 1918. The same study compares both the years 1918 and 2020 as a time where lives have been changed dramatically (Adamo, Yoshikawa, and Ouslander, 2020). This disease is deemed as a pandemic due to how quickly it spread amongst several countries affecting and killing numerous people. The CDC describes that the spread of this disease is transmitted by respiratory droplets that are released by coughing, sneezing, and/or talking between person to person (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 2020). Adamo, Yoshikawa, and Ouslander (2020) report that contaminated surfaces and objects can have a living virus for several hours or days. Individuals can become infected by inhaling and or touching then proceeding to be in close contact with another person or touching their nose, eyes, or face with the infection's droplets (Adamo et al, 2020). The facts about the spread of COVID-19 are very unsettling and can

become anxiety-provoking given that contact with people and common activities require individuals to pick things up and discuss amongst each other. Adamo, Yoshikawa, and Ouslander (2020) argue that although everyone is at risk from contracting this disease alike the influenza virus of 1918, there are more vulnerable populations such as the elderly and those individuals with preexisting conditions that can contract COVID-19 (Adamo et al, 2020). What makes this virus unique and potent is how it may or may not present itself within the human body.

Symptoms

Symptoms of this novel virus can be confused for cold or flu-like symptoms, can take up to 14 days to detect, or a person can carry the virus and present no symptoms at all. The CDC (2020), reports that the most common symptoms of the virus include fever or chills, cough, shortness of breath, fatigue, headaches, runny nose, sore throat, loss of taste or smell, and diarrhea. The same federal agency indicates that the growth of the virus once contracted by an individual can occur between a 2 to the 14-day timeframe that varies from person to person with a mild, severe, or critical case that could lead to serious respiratory problems and or organ failure. Also, those who are carrying the virus while presenting no symptoms or feeling unwell are considered asymptomatic (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 2020). It is thought-provoking that there are possibly individuals with this deadly virus and who may be unknowingly spreading it.

Prevention and Guidelines

Federal organizations such as the World Health Organization (WHO) have set in place preventative measures and guidelines to help slow the spread of COVID 19. Those guidelines include physical social distance, the use of face masks, avoid close contact with an individual who is sick, staying away from others if you are sick, frequent handwashing, clean/ disinfecting of surfaces and objects, and avoid touching the eyes, nose, and mouth (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 2020). Some of these guidelines can be perceived as bothersome to some but have been proven to reduce the spread.

Treatment

What is most uncertain and brings discomfort to the outbreak is the ongoing desperate search for the cure. As reported by the CDC (2020), there is no specific antiviral treatments or vaccine available to combat COVID-19. There is however treatment care that helps relieve the level of symptoms an individual may be presenting (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 2020).

Defining Online Learning

Advances in technology are occurring almost every day. Online courses are one of the concepts that are still fairly new that demonstrates a modern way of learning. Phelan (2015) discusses how the various form of technology education can be categorized into three groups, synchronous, asynchronous, and hybrid. The same study further described what the forms of educational technology looked like. Synchronous learning experience consists of class

sessions being done it live virtual instruction. The asynchronous learning experience is when the student can access the course materials and lecture at their time based on what the instructors have posted. Lastly, hybrid learning consists of a mix of live virtual instruction and in-person classroom education (Phelan, 2015). There is a division between favoring face to face or online course amongst college communities. O'Neill and Sai's (2014) study examined the possible reasons why students avoided enrolling in the full course load of online courses. Their survey results found that 80% of student participants strongly believed that they learned better in a face-to-face setting (O'Neill & Sai, 2014). At one-point students had the liberty to choose online or in-person courses. And before the pandemic hit a global level the existence of online courses was thriving and was appealing to a large group of students.

According to Stotzer, Fujikawa, Sur, and Arnsberger (2013), many schools of social work decided to create distance education courses to become more inclusive and accessible to students that are located in rural and remote areas (Stotzer, Fujikawa, Sur & Arnsberger, 2013). Online courses are also seen as appealing to many because of the outstanding benefits face to face classroom experiences do not offer. Heap (2017) from the University of Illinois argues that there are at least five benefits for taking an online course which are career advancements, flexibility, low cost, self-discipline, and more course choices (Heap, 2017). Students that take the online course may have time more readily available to them to participate in ideas and or hobbies that will help them in the

plans and success. The online course is also seen and flexible because students can create their schedule and select courses that they which to take with no limitations. This freedom to choose also requires an ample amount of self-discipline which is a skill all students can benefit from. Best of all these online courses are reported to be more affordable without the cost of housing on campus or transportation (Heap, 2017).

Based on the recommended preventative measures guidelines given by federal agencies such as CDC and WHO it has forced students at all levels to experience a drastic change in their education. Students are asked to participate in distance and or remote learning during this uncertain time, to help lower numbers of contraction and mortality.

Social Work Online Education

Social work is the work of the heart and people. Empathy and human connection are essential skills within the profession. Phelan (2015) emphasizes that the social work profession is built on human connection and the use of technology in substitution of direct human contact and connection could potentially become problematic (Phelan, 2015). Basic psychology tells us that humans are social creatures. Adamo et al. (2020), describes that serve psychological impact COVID-19 has on humans. This illness is unmatched to anything that has been seen before and also involves a great sense of uncertainty. The same study claims that the sudden switch to social distancing, travel and social restrictions, shortages of basic needs, and closures of all sorts

of activities and facilities is overwhelming and anxiety-provoking (Adamo et. al., 2020).

Lee, Hernandez, and Marshall's (2019) discuss in his study a few reasons as to why educators are often resistant to online courses. Online courses often require the user to be knowledgeable about how to access and use the programs properly. The same study further mentions that the new skills that are required to use these course programs properly demand more time and resources that educators may not have (Lee, Hernandez, and Marshall, 2019). The COVID-19 outbreak had most people around the globe in shock and forced everyone to adjust to a new normal with little to no time to think and reflect. Educators at all levels of education had to adjust their lesson plans and abide by the CDC guidelines to ensure safety.

Training and Application of Knowledge

Social work students gain their basic skills and knowledge from their educators. Detres et al. (2020), claims that four areas promote best practice amongst MSW students: academic staff, students themselves, course design, and the support of the institution (Detres et al, 2020). Staff is essential in the success of their students and should be equipped and knowledgeable with the new form of education taking place. Students also have the responsibility to practice self-care and remember what made them decide to get their master's degree. Most importantly the overall support of the institution on all its students, faculty, and staff across departments.

Every social worker carries an invaluable skill set utilized to engage, conduct crisis interventions, perform assessments, and collaborate with outside resources for their clients. Barth et al's (2017) study explain that social workers need to have an eclectic mix of skills at their disposal to effectively connect with clients and assess for essential, psychological, and emotional needs (Barth et al, 2017).

Social workers need support due to the high-stress environment and impact decisions that need to be made. It is important to build relationships with others in learning something new and process thoughts and concerns about a case. Although not much research was found on newly hired workers actively seeking the support of workers in this way. Radey and Stanley's, (2019) study revealed that newly hired workers expressed that simply observing and shadowing another worker does not prepare them to work independently with their caseload. Furthermore, it was more difficult for workers to participate in training that had too much diversity in field longevity because relevancy, individual needs, and different knowledge levels are not being met (Radey & Stanley, 2019). Information on the satisfaction of training can be easily accessible through surveys of participants. What is unclear is if more experienced workers go to training as an obligation or are it for mastering skills that they have tried repeatedly.

Training provides professional enrichment for all workers and supervisors combined. A few common training topics include assessment process, case

management, permanency, substance abuse, domestic violence, mental health, and cultural competence (Ausbrooks et al, 2014). The research gives the impression that former program recipients had surface-level exposure to these topics making them inadequately prepared for common contributing factors of their clients. Ausbrooks et al (2014), discusses that the purpose of training is for the client, so when everyone participates critical thinking and decision-making confidence is enhanced improving the wellbeing of populations affected (2014). Training should accommodate the different levels of workers to achieve higher comprehension and execution of skills in their practice. Adaptability is a quality that social workers have while building rapport, training methods should also have the quality of adaptability.

Theories Guiding Conceptualization

The Andragogy theory applies to this study because it provides a structural understanding of what motivates and allows an adult to comprehend what they are learning. It is safe to claim that everyone learns differently, especially when comparing children's' and adult's abilities. Merriam (2017), relays that Malcolm Knowles, founder of this theory, has key assumptions about adult learners. One, people mature their self-concept leading to becoming their self-directing person. An adult has real-life experience that can be used as a resource for future learning opportunities. Thirdly, an adult's role in life has a close correlation to their willingness to learn. Next, adults are problem-centered meaning they want to solve immediate problems right away. Lastly, adults prefer

to know the reason behind learning something and are more motivated internally. (Merriam, 2017). The understanding and application of Andragogy in schools of social work are beneficial to new workers entering the field.

A study by Aeby and Carpenter-Aeby (2016) claims that the elements of Andragogy have a direct correlation to the work that will be done in the field of child welfare. The study further mentions that an andragogic framework in the classroom positively increases motivation and self-sufficiency in one's learning (Aeby and Carpenter-Aeby, 2016). By applying this learning structure, it allows for social work students to meet their needs as an adult learner. Increases in self-direction, use of life experience applied in the classroom, ability to quickly apply knowledge, and problem-solving skills when given tasks. The study further suggests that having a learner-centered, understanding of the value of experience while respecting students' ability to learn their way; those skills will be transferred into their professional work. New workers will demonstrate a client-centered approach when providing services, will seek the context and history of the client to better understand their experience while being genuinely empathetic and allowing their self-determination (Aeby, 2013).

CHAPTER THREE

METHODS

Introduction

This study analyzed Master of Social Work students' perceptions of their motivation and preparedness for entering the field. This study attempted to determine if the use of remote learning in the time of COVID-19 had severely impacted their motivation and preparedness for their higher education. In this chapter, the design, sample, data collection, and procedures on the protection of confidentiality of the participants is discussed.

Study Design

This study examined the relationship between remote learning, due to COVID-19, and MSW students' motivation and preparedness for their profession. The comparative quantitative exploratory design of this study inquired how the COVID-19 outbreak had impacted MSW graduate students' education and field instruction. The researcher predicted that this study would provide more insight into the students' needs and success during these vulnerable times. The study further examined how remote learning has impacted students' motivation in class and classwork, and if they feel prepared to enter the field based on what they have been able to learn via remote learning and field, if applicable. The study has an exploratory quantitative approach comparing the perceptions of Title-IVE and Non-Title IV-E social work graduate students during their advanced year.

This exploratory study provides insight into the students' learning needs, as well as data on how remote learning could be better tailored for the University's community. Engaging in classes remotely, and in some cases engaging in field remotely, is a new and evolving form of learning. Surveying the students who experienced this rapid and novel change of learning, may benefit future cohorts with a more improved system. The weakness of using a quantitative study approach for this topic was that not every student was able to truly convey how difficult or simple the transition was for them. Further, students were not be able to speak about one occasion where they felt that remote learning provided them a positive or negative experience with elaboration. Instead, only an idea of how they felt about the components on a point scale.

Sampling

Ideally, this study would have been analyzing practicing social workers and how their courses influenced their motivation and preparedness. This is not practical for data collection purposes. Instead, MSW students were asked to participate in this voluntary study because they are the future workers entering the field after experiencing a new form of learning.

This study sampled current advanced year Master of Social Work Title IV-E and Non-Title IV-E students. The researcher of this study attempted to collect data from the full time, part-time, and pathway advanced year cohorts. The survey was voluntary and had no incentives promoted or distributed to complete

the survey amongst the desired population of participants, advanced year MSW students.

Data Collection and Instruments

To keep the researcher and participants socially distant and safe, the voluntary survey was administered electronically followed by an email inviting students to participate. To ensure that the survey was ethically responsible and relevant to the research question, it was reviewed and approved by the assigned research advisor for this study. The survey was divided into four sections: demographics, motivation, preparedness, and remote learning experience. The survey inquired about age, gender, ethnicity, cohort, and if the student was receiving the Title IV-E stipend. The motivation portion asked questions inquiring about the student's interest in social work and their course work. The preparedness inquired if the student's graduate courses, and field opportunities had helped them feel eclectic in their social work skillset. Lastly, the COVID-19 portion of the survey investigated briefly how the virus outbreak impacted the student's overall wellbeing and social work education.

For this study, the independent variable was the MSW advanced year students' status as Title IV-E or non-Title IV-E. The dependent variables included the impact COVID-19 had had on MSW student's motivation and preparedness for the field, as measured by their responses on a five-point scale. The questions that answered utilized a five-point scale which investigated how much students

agree or disagree with the statements dealing with their motivation and preparedness during the time of remote learning.

Procedures

The researcher received approval to conduct this study from the Director of the School of Social Work at California State University, San Bernardino and the Institution Review Board (IRB). The research engaged all voluntary participants via email to be surveyed using an online survey system.

Before participating in the survey students were provided information on the topic and the purpose of the data collection. Students had the opportunity to ask questions about the research before participating to ensure that they are aware of the entirety of the study. Students who participated signed a consent form that did not require any identifiable information. The survey had 22 questions total with a mix of scaling questions and two choice questions. The scaling questions ranged from strongly agree to strongly disagree. A scaling question from the survey was, "I experienced increased levels of stress, increased responsibilities, and lack of time management due to the COVID-19 pandemic." An example of the two choice questions included, "Was your internship placement during your last year mostly in person or mostly remote?" The survey took no longer than 10 minutes to complete. The student researcher compiled all completed surveys and keep in a password locked computer until the end of this research project.

Protection of Human Subjects

The student researcher of this study was ethically responsible when conducting the study and received research approval by the Institutional Review Board (IRB). The researcher ensured with an electronic informed consent form that the questions on the survey were easy to understand and did not ask for identifiable information of the participants to be disclosed. Consent forms were signed with the letter "X" and stored safely on a computer with a password to preserve the participants' privacy and confidentiality. Participants were reminded that participation was voluntary, and they had the liberty to decide at any time during the survey to skip a question or discontinue at any point without any repercussions.

Data Analysis

After the data was collected, quantitative analysis techniques were utilized. The analysis of demographic data utilized inferential statistics. Descriptive statistics were used and demonstrated by the measures of central tendency and variability.

This research study utilized an Independent Samples t-test to compare Title IV-E and Non-Title IV-E students' motivation and preparedness to enter the field after experiencing remote learning due to COVID-19. The t-test compared mean responses to questions 7-22 (see Appendix A) for the two groups of students. This test will determine statistically significant differences of the two groups of students.

Summary

This study examined the experiences of Master of Social Work students with remote learning due to the national health emergency. The study explored how the change to online learning has impacted their motivation and preparedness to enter their professional career. This study will provide beneficial data on the need of their students to the School of Social Work and the University as a whole. The study will also provide relevant information on how the federal health emergency has impacted future professionals.

CHAPTER FOUR

RESULTS

Introduction

This chapter discusses the results from the study, which measured advanced social work students' motivation and preparedness, as well as the impact COVID-19 and remote learning had on the participants. Demographics of the advanced social work student participants are discussed. In addition, the chapter provides the results from an independent samples t-test which compared Title I-VE and Non-Title IV-E students' motivation and preparedness after experiencing a year of remote learning.

Participant Demographics

In this quantitative study there were a total of 70 participants. 87.1% of participants identified as female, 11.4% identified as male, 2.9% identified as queer, and 1.4% declined to identify their gender. For ethnicity and race, 11.4% of participants reported as Black/African American, 11.4% reported to be White/European American, 60% reported to be Hispanic/Latino, 2% reported to be Asian/Pacific Islander, and 14.3% of participants reported to be other.

Participants of the study were asked to provide the number of years of experience they had in the field including their internship placement. The average years of experience amongst the population was 4.14 years of experience.

Participants were asked to also identify the location of their internship placements. 67.1% reported that their internship placement was mostly in person and the remaining 30% reported that their internship placement was mostly remote. A total of 71.4% of participants reported to not have Title-IVE status and the remaining 28.6% of participants reported to be receiving the Title IV-E stipend. Additionally, from the sample of participants 25.7% received their bachelor's in social work while the remaining 74.3% did not.

Inferential Statistics

Advanced year social work participants were given statements on a five-point scale inquiring their motivation, preparedness, and their experience of remote learning before in entering the field. 65.7% of respondents either strongly agreed or agreed, 28.6% reported neutral, and 5.7% disagreed with the statement, "I was deeply impacted by the COVID 19 pandemic."

Motivation to Pursue Social Work

The following statements were tailored to respondents' motivation on why they pursued a master's degree in social work. Responses to the following statement, "I want to be in a profession that helps individuals, families, and communities to enhance their well-being," 88.6% reported to strongly agreed and 11.4% agreed. The following statement, "I was taught to strongly value education," resulted in almost 68% of the respondents strongly agreed or agreed, 10% were neutral, and 4.3% disagreed. In response to "I want to obtain a more prestigious job" when measuring the motivation of participants pursuing a master's

degree resulted in 77% strongly agreed or agreed, 17.1% reported neutral, 5.8% disagreed or strongly disagreed. Additionally, A little more than 54% of respondents responded strongly agreed and 30% agree to “I want to have a higher income” 11.4% reported neutral and 4.3% responded disagreed or strongly disagreed. The final statement measuring the motivation of participants, “I want to learn more about the profession” 95.7% resulted in strongly agreed or agreed and 4.3% responded neutral.

Students' Preparedness to Enter Profession after Remote Learning

The following set of statements were also measured on a five-point scale and assessed advanced year social work participants' preparedness in entering the field after a year of remote learning. Students responded to the following statement, “I am prepared to enter the field of social work after graduation.” Findings indicated that 31.4% strongly agreed, 52.9% agreed, 14.3% were neutral, and 1.4% disagreed with that statement. In response to another statement, “I am prepared on how to execute rapid rapport building put in the field,” 81.4% of participants strongly agreed or agreed, 15.7% of participants had a neutral response, and 2.8% of respondents disagreed or strongly disagreed. This next statement, “I am confident in my knowledge of theories and how to apply them in the field,” had 12.9% of respondents strongly agreed, 47.1% agreed, 32.9% had a neutral response and 7.1% disagreed with the statement. The last statement tailored to preparedness, “I am prepared to use the generalist

intervention model out in the field,” had 25.7% of students strongly agreed, 62.9% of students agreed, 10% responded neutral, and 1.4% disagreed.

The following set of statements utilized a five-point scale to better understand the how the COVID-19 pandemic and remote learning impacted advanced year students. In this statement, “I had a hard time comprehending class material via e.g., Zoom and/or other remote learning programs” 52.9% strongly agreed or agreed, 15.7% had a neutral response, 31.4% disagreed or strongly disagreed. In the following statement, “I had difficulty applying call material to my field placement,” 8.6% strongly agreed, 32.9% agreed, 21.4% were neutral, 30% disagreed, and 7.1% strongly disagreed with the statement. Findings for this statement, “I experienced increased levels of stress, increased responsibilities, and lack of time management due to the COVID-19 pandemic,” demonstrated that 60% strongly agreed, 24.3% agreed, 8.6% had a neutral response, 5.7% disagreed, and 1.4% strongly disagreed. Additionally, in this statement, “I found remote learning to be user friendly,” presented that 11.4% strongly agreed, 40% agreed, 27.1% of students had a neutral response and 2.4% disagreed. In the following, “I found remote learning to be convenient and accommodating to my schedule,” 24.3% responded strongly agreed, 37.1% agreed, 25.7% neutral, 8.6% disagreed, and 4.3% strongly disagreed. The final statement on the survey, “I was more comfortable participating during class in a virtual setting,” demonstrated 7.1% strongly agreed, 11.4% agreed, 28.6% had a neutral response, 34.3% disagreed and 18.6% strongly disagreed.

Independent Samples t-tests

In addition to understanding MSW students' motivation and preparation to move into the field upon graduation after experiencing remote learning due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the study sought to identify differences between Title IV-E students and non-Title IV-E students. The researcher hypothesized that Title IV-E students would be more motivated and prepared to move into the field because Title IV-E students receive additional supports not available to non-Title IV-E students. Independent samples t-tests were used to compare the means of Title IV-E students and non-Title IV-E students for questions 7-22 (see Appendix A). There were no statistically significant differences in responses between Title IV-E and non-Title IV-E students on any of the questions 7-22; however, there was one question in which the t-test revealed a p-value very nearly approaching significance.

Although not statistically significant, the t-test comparing Title IV-E and non-Title IV-E students' responses to question #14, "I am prepared on how to execute rapid rapport building out in the field," was noteworthy. The independent samples t-test produced a p-value of .051, which is just a hair off from indicating a statistically significant result. Although not statistically significant, Title IV-E students rated themselves more prepared to execute rapid rapport building than non-Title IV-E students, $t(68) = 1.989$, $p=.051$.

CHAPTER FIVE

DISCUSSION

Introduction

This chapter will discuss the results of this study and how it relates to the literature. The chapter will describe the uniqueness of the data collection process during a global pandemic. The chapter also explores the limitations and strengths of this study, and the implications for the School of Social Work. Finally, this chapter will elaborate on the perspectives of advanced year students entering the field of social work after experiencing a global pandemic and remote learning.

Discussion

The purpose of this study was to explore the impacts on the motivation and preparedness of advanced year social work students during the COVID-19 pandemic. This study indicated that there were no statistically significant differences between Title IV-E and non-Title-IVE students' responses. However, a notable finding suggested that Title IV-E students rated themselves more prepared to execute rapid rapport building than non-Title IV-E students. Although not quite statistically significant, this finding is important when considering how all advanced students in their advanced year are prepared to execute rapid rapport building in the classroom setting. Title IV-E students receive additional support that is not accessible to not non-Title IV-E students however the overall

preparedness to enter the field should be taught equally amongst the groups of students.

The literature also describes that face-to-face interaction in schools of social work is ideal and critical to the profession centered on people (Stotzer, Fujikawa, Sur & Arnsberger, 2013). It has been argued that significant micro social work interactions are better demonstrated and understood in person therefore invaluable (Lee et. al., 2019). The results of this study revealed that the graduate student participants felt more comfortable in person rather than participating virtually. This study's findings also suggest that students had a hard time comprehending class material through remote learning . These results are consistent with the literature describing humans as social creatures and suggesting that the replacement of in-person interactions with technology can become potentially problematic (Phelan, 2015).

A noteworthy result from the research indicated that 60% of graduate student participants experienced a significant increase in stress, responsibilities and other nonacademic factors due to the pandemic. These results are consistent with the literature which suggests nonacademic factors such as home life, finances, and personal crises can considerably impact a graduate student and their success (Detres et. al., 2020).

Another important result from this study was that Title IV-E students felt more prepared than non-Title IV-E in rapid rapport making. The literature claims that social workers should be trained and confident in their skill sets (Barth et al,

2017). The training provided in higher education and field placements is a form of enrichment to graduate students and is meant to give the students more confidence in executing effective and meaningful work. Ausbrooks et al (2014), describe that training should accommodate and build on all workers and their level of skills set upon entry. Higher comprehension and execution of their skills should be a result thereafter. School work graduate students should also be experiencing the same level of training in the classroom and field placements regardless of stipend status.

Strengths

The study's findings provided insight into the drastic changes in learning environments and the personal lives of graduate students through the COVID-19 pandemic. Although the study used a relatively small sample, it demonstrates the impact students experienced during uncertain and anxiety-provoking times. This research study was conducted during a global pandemic that has caused life-changing adjustments. Although advancements in technology are occurring, the transition to online courses was a concept that was fairly new and required frequent adjustments. What makes this study even more unique is that it discusses the effects, impacts, and experiences of students during the pandemic that will be discussed for years to come.

Limitations

In spite of its strengths, this study has several limitations. One limitation of this study is its small sample size. The pandemic likely affected the response rate of the survey, generating a small sample size. In addition, the study was limited to one university's MSW program. More generalized results could have been provided if the survey was administered to other university MSW programs, which would address this limitation. Another limitation is that it was administered strictly online to be in compliance with the stay-at-home orders and regulations to stop the spread of COVID-19. More participants could have possibly been recruited if the researcher had the opportunity to provide in-person self-administered surveys to those willing to participate. Lastly, due to the nature of this survey participants were unable to elaborate on their answers or ask clarifying questions on specific survey questions.

Implications for Research & Teaching

This study suggests that MSW students' lives were greatly impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic and the switch to online learning and internships. Future research is needed to better understand and to improve remote and hybrid learning methods with a larger sample of universities and students. These studies should also explore the impact and improvement of remote field placements to support student engagement and have opportunities to apply class material in the field. In addition, faculty and staff should use semester and yearly

evaluations of their courses to better evaluate Title IV-E and non-Title IV-E students' experiences with remote learning in the future.

The result suggesting that Title IV-E students might be more prepared to execute rapid rapport building than their non-Title IV-E peers suggests some difference in training and education between the two groups of students. Future research and school officials should explore this issue further, perhaps using qualitative methods or informal methods to better understand this difference and its underlying cause.

Conclusion

The purpose of this study was to investigate the impacts on the motivation and preparedness of Advanced Year Social Work students during the COVID-19 pandemic. The findings provided more insights into students' perceptions of their remote learning experience. The study revealed that students were impacted by the pandemic and the drastic change to remote learning. The results of the study suggested that despite the drastic changes to remote learning, it did not significantly impact the two groups of students' preparedness and motivation to enter the field. However, Title IV-E students might be more prepared to build rapid rapport with clients than non-Title IV-E students. The results of this study are somewhat consistent with the literature. The concept of remote learning is new and was quickly enforced during a time of significant uncertainty and health emergency. Further research is recommended to determine if the graduate

students that completed their studies during the pandemic are prosperous in their professions.

APPENDIX A
SURVEY

**ADVANCED SOCIAL WORK STUDENTS' MOTIVATION AND READINESS:
COVID 19 REMOTE LEARNING EXPERIENCE**

This survey was created by the researcher, Andrea Patricia Godinez

This survey is designed to learn more about the relationship between advanced year social work students' motivation and preparedness to enter the field after a year of remote learning. Answers will remain anonymous. Please type in your answers and/ or select the answer that best suits you. After you have completed the survey hit submit.

DEMOGRAPHIC INFORMATION

1. Gender
 - a. Male
 - b. Female
 - c. Queer
 - d. Nonbinary
 - e. Trans
 - f. Decline to respond
2. Race/Ethnicity
 - a. Black/African American
 - b. White/European American
 - c. Hispanic/Latino
 - d. Asian/Pacific Islander
 - e. First Nation/Native American
 - f. Other
3. How many years of experience do you have in the field (including internship placement)?
4. Was your internship placement during your last year mostly in person or mostly remote?
 - a. Mostly In person
 - b. Mostly Remote
5. Title IV-E Status?
 - a. Yes
 - b. No
6. Did you receive your bachelor's degree in Social Work?
 - a. Yes
 - b. No

7. I was deeply impacted by the COVID 19 pandemic.
- a. Strongly Agree
 - b. Agree
 - c. Neutral
 - d. Disagree
 - e. Strongly Disagree

**MOTIVATION- WHY DID YOU DECIDED TO GET YOUR MASTER'S DEGREE
IN SOCIAL WORK?**

8. I want to be in a profession that helps individuals, families, and communities to enhance their well-being.
- a. Strongly Agree
 - b. Agree
 - c. Neutral
 - d. Disagree
 - e. Strongly Disagree
9. I was taught to strongly value education.
- a. Strongly Agree
 - b. Agree
 - c. Neutral
 - d. Disagree
 - e. Strongly Disagree
10. I want to obtain a more prestigious job.
- a. Strongly Agree
 - b. Agree
 - c. Neutral
 - d. Disagree
 - e. Strongly Disagree
11. I want to have a higher income.
- a. Strongly Agree
 - b. Agree
 - c. Neutral
 - d. Disagree
 - e. Strongly Disagree
12. I want to learn more about the profession.
- a. Strongly Agree
 - b. Agree
 - c. Neutral
 - d. Disagree

- e. Strongly Disagree

PREPAREDNESS

13. I am prepared to enter the field of social work after graduation.
- a. Strongly Agree
 - b. Agree
 - c. Neutral
 - d. Disagree
 - e. Strongly Disagree
14. I am prepared on how to execute rapid rapport building and crisis intervention out in the field.
- a. Strongly Agree
 - b. Agree
 - c. Neutral
 - d. Disagree
 - e. Strongly Disagree
15. I am confident in my knowledge of theories and how to apply them in the field.
- a. Strongly Agree
 - b. Agree
 - c. Neutral
 - d. Disagree
 - e. Strongly Disagree
16. I am prepared to use the generalist intervention model along with my critical thinking skills in the field.
- a. Strongly Agree
 - b. Agree
 - c. Neutral
 - d. Disagree
 - e. Strongly Disagree

COVID 19 AND REMOTE LEARNING

17. I had a hard time comprehending class material via e.g., Zoom and/ or other remote learning programs.
- a. Strongly Agree
 - b. Agree
 - c. Neutral
 - d. Disagree
 - e. Strongly Disagree

18. I had difficulty applying class material to my field placement.
- a. Strongly Agree
 - b. Agree
 - c. Neutral
 - d. Disagree
 - e. Strongly Disagree
19. I experienced increased levels of stress, increased responsibilities, and lack of time management due to the COVID-19 pandemic.
- a. Strongly Agree
 - b. Agree
 - c. Neutral
 - d. Disagree
 - e. Strongly Disagree
20. I found remote learning to be user friendly.
- a. Strongly Agree
 - b. Agree
 - c. Neutral
 - d. Disagree
 - e. Strongly Disagree
21. I found remote learning to be convenient and accommodating to my schedule.
- a. Strongly Agree
 - b. Agree
 - c. Neutral
 - d. Disagree
 - e. Strongly Disagree
22. I was more comfortable participating during class in a virtual setting.
- a. Strongly Agree
 - b. Agree
 - c. Neutral
 - d. Disagree
 - e. Strongly Disagree

APPENDIX B
INFORMED CONSENT FORM



School of Social Work

WE DEFINE THE *Future*

CALIFORNIA STATE UNIVERSITY, SAN BERNARDINO
5500 University Parkway, San Bernardino, CA 92407

909.537.5501 | fax: 909.537.7029
<http://socialwork.csusb.edu>

Informed Consent

The study in which you are asked to participate is designed to examine Advanced Year Social Work Students' motivation and preparedness to enter the field after experiencing remote learning due to COVID-19. The study is being conducted by Andrea Godinez, graduate student, under the supervision of Dr. Deirdre Lanesskog, Assistant Professor in the School of Social Work at California State University, San Bernardino (CSUSB). The study has been approved by the Institutional Review Board Social Work Sub-committee at CSUSB.

Purpose: The purpose of this study is to examine Advanced Year Social Work Students' motivation and preparedness to enter the field after experiencing COVID-19 remote learning.

Description: Participants will be asked brief demographic questions and a series of questions on their motivation and preparedness in entering the field after experiencing remote learning

Participation: Your participation in this research study is voluntary. You can refuse to participate in the study or discontinue your participation at any time without consequences.

Confidentiality: Your responses will remain anonymous. No identifying information will be collected, and responses will be destroyed after the completion of the research project.

Duration: The survey will take about 10 to 15 minutes to complete.

Risks: Although not anticipated there may be some discomfort in answering questions. Students have the option to skip the question or stop answering questions at any point.

Benefits: There will not be any direct benefits to the participants of this study.

Contact: If you have any questions about this study, please feel free to contact Dr. Deirdre Lanesskog at (909)-537-7222 or via email at dlanesskog@csusb.edu.

Results: Results of the study can be obtained from the Pfau Library Scholar Works database at California State University, San Bernardino June 2021.

This is to certify that I acknowledge this information and I am accepting to participate in this study.

Please mark with an X _____

Date: _____

The California State University • Bakersfield • Channel Islands • Chico • Dominguez Hills • East Bay • Fresno • Fullerton • Humboldt • Long Beach • Los Angeles
Maritime Academy • Monterey Bay • Northridge • Pomona • Sacramento • SAN BERNARDINO • San Diego • San Francisco • San Jose • San Luis Obispo • San Marcos • Sonoma • Stanislaus

APPENDIX C

INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD APPROVAL LETTER



February 3, 2021

CSUSB INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD

Administrative/Exempt Review Determination

Status: Determined Exempt

IRB-FY2021-71

Deirdre Lanesskog Andrea Godinez
CSBS - Social Work
California State University, San Bernardino
5500 University Parkway
San Bernardino, California 92407

Dear Deirdre Lanesskog Andrea Godinez:

Your application to use human subjects, titled "ADVANCED YEAR SOCIAL WORK STUDENTS MOTIVATION AND PREPAREDNESS: COVID-19 REMOTE LEARNING EXPERIENCE" has been reviewed and determined exempt by the Chair of the Institutional Review Board (IRB) of CSU, San Bernardino. An exempt determination means your study had met the federal requirements for exempt status under 45 CFR 46.104. The CSUSB IRB has not evaluated your proposal for scientific merit, except to weigh the risk and benefits of the study to ensure the protection of human participants. Important Note: This approval notice does not replace any departmental or additional campus approvals which may be required including access to CSUSB campus facilities and affiliate campuses due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Visit the Office of Academic Research website for more information at <https://www.csusb.edu/academic-research>.

You are required to notify the IRB of the following as mandated by the Office of Human Research Protections (OHRP) federal regulations 45 CFR 46 and CSUSB IRB policy. The forms (modification, renewal, unanticipated/adverse event, study closure) are located in the Cayuse IRB System with instructions provided on the IRB Applications, Forms, and Submission webpage. Failure to notify the IRB of the following requirements may result in disciplinary action. The Cayuse IRB system will notify you when your protocol is due for renewal. Ensure you file your protocol renewal and continuing review form through the Cayuse IRB system to keep your protocol current and active unless you have completed your study.

- Ensure your CITI Human Subjects Training is kept up-to-date and current throughout the study.
- Submit a protocol modification (change) if any changes (no matter how minor) are proposed in your study for review and approval by the IRB before being implemented in your study.
- Notify the IRB within 5 days of any unanticipated or adverse events are experienced by subjects during your research.

-
- Submit a study closure through the Cayuse IRB submission system once your study has ended.

If you have any questions regarding the IRB decision, please contact Michael Gillespie, the Research Compliance Officer. Mr. Michael Gillespie can be reached by phone at (909) 537-7588, by fax at (909) 537-7028, or by email at mgillesp@csusb.edu. Please include your application approval number IRB-FY2021-71 in all correspondence. Any complaints you receive from participants and/or others related to your research may be directed to Mr. Gillespie.

Best of luck with your research.

Sincerely,

Nicole Dabbs

Nicole Dabbs, Ph.D., IRB Chair
CSUSB Institutional Review Board

ND/MG

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