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I Feel Robbed: Students' Response to Disruptions of Internship Placements Secondary to COVID-19

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ABSTRACT

Community-based internship placements were disrupted by COVID-19 resulting in an abrupt transition from in-person to remote work. In response, academic institutions developed virtual assignments to assist students in obtaining required internship hours. This study examined the influence of COVID-19 on social work students enrolled in institutions of higher education participating in field internships. A mixed methods convergent parallel design was utilized to understand the experience and impact of the pandemic on students' emotional, physical, and mental well-being. The majority of students reported negative impacts on their mental health. Students also reported being denied the opportunity for professional closure within internship placements, specifically with supervisors, staff, and clients. The results identify mental health and coping skills, along with professional preparedness as common themes. The findings regarding the impact on mental health align with national data collected by the Council on Social Work Education (CSWE).

Keywords: COVID-19, Higher Education, Mental Health, Internships, Collective Trauma, Social Work

In response to the COVID-19 pandemic, social work students enrolled in field internship placements through institutions of higher education were displaced from community-based agency settings. An anonymous electronic survey was distributed to understand and assess faculty responsiveness to student needs during the pandemic, the lived experience of students transitioning to online learning, and the impact of the pandemic on students' mental health during the final weeks of the spring 2020 semester.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Prior to March 2020, social work students enrolled in internship classes had unrestricted access to their field placement, site-based leadership, and direct-service activities. Students were simultaneously enrolled in classes including seminar, where students had the ability to process their field experience. Due to the global impact of the novel coronavirus, field students witnessed an unprecedented shift in their coursework. Students were forced to transition from in-person to remote internship activities. This abrupt change affected the professional relationships between students, field instructors, and clients.

Council on Social Work Education

In March 2020, the Council on Social Work Education (CSWE) and the Commission on Accreditation responded to the unanticipated consequences of COVID-19 for field students. Undergraduate and graduate social work programs were provided a reduction in the required number of hours necessary to meet academic requirements (CSWE, 2020a). In addition to the reduction of hours, social work programs created remote internship activities for students to assist in satisfying hourly field requirements.

Shift in Learning Modality

Due to the swift transition from face-to-face instruction to online, faculty were charged with designing, implementing, and facilitating online instruction mid-semester. The benefits of maintaining a structure, process, and identified academic benchmarks are clearly outlined in the literature for online, hybrid, and face-to-face instruction (Goh et al., 2017; Kleinpeter, 2018; Krull & Duart, 2018). Research regarding the impact of an abrupt transition from face-to-face to online learning modalities found students struggled with increased levels of stress and deterioration of mood (Besser et al., 2020; Clabbaugh et al., 2021). Students identified the shift in modality resulted in a decrease in focus, difficulty balancing school and work responsibilities, and a decrease in the quality of learning (Aguilera-Hermida, 2020). Students also experienced doubt regarding continuing or maintaining their academic goals due to the shift in learning modalities and stress (Clabbaugh et al., 2021). Despite best practices in online education aimed at creating community and maintaining open dialogue, students struggled with unanticipated emotional

consequences (Ainsa & Olivarez, 2017; Alqurashi, 2019; Besser et al., 2020; Solpuk, 2019).

Emotional and Academic Impact

Emerging literature on the negative impact of COVID-19 identifies the collective trauma of the pandemic on the well-being of college students. CSWE (2020c) found undergraduate and graduate students struggling with an increase in mental health symptoms secondary to the pandemic. Increases in anxiety, depression, and suicidal ideation were identified across graduate and undergraduate programs in large institutions of higher education (Wang et al, 2020). International research conducted in the epicenter of the outbreaks identifies the struggles students faced in the wake of isolation from peers, faculty, and in some instances, family (Odriozola-Gonzalez et al., 2020; Zhang et al., 2020). International studies have identified an increase in depressive symptoms including stress, anxiety, and aggression in graduate and undergraduate students affected by social isolation from the pandemic (Besser et al., 2020; Deng et al., 2021; Tang et al., 2020). The catalyst for emotional upheaval identified specific social and emotional repercussions including the transition to online learning, shifts in course expectations, and student concerns regarding successful completion of the academic expectations (Moawad, 2020).

The impact of sustained social isolation on the mental and emotional well-being of young adults was also explored. Szczepanska and Pietrzyka (2021) found individuals who were unable to engage with others reported a reduced quality of life as a result of social distancing. In support of this finding, research with university students reported an increase in depressive symptoms and suicidal ideation secondary to the reduction of interpersonal interactions (Kohl et al., 2021).

Historical Implications

In researching the traumatic impact of abrupt social isolation, unanticipated academic disruption, and best practices in transitioning to online education, connections to September 11, 2001 were found (Alpert & Nguyen-Feg, 2020; Liverant et al., 2004; Neuwirth et al., 2020). The state of New York was the location of both the 9/11 terror attacks and the epicenter of the COVID-19 pandemic in the United States. Due to the geographic proximity of New York City to the research area, reviewing existing data on the impact of 9/11 offers retrospective support for faculty intervention. Faculty members identified a decrease in academic outcomes after the terror attacks, requiring educators to adapt their teaching style to support student learning (Neuwirth et al., 2020). Following the events of September 11th and the COVID-19 outbreak, students were asked to leave campus or shelter in place (Alpert & Nguyen-Feg, 2020). Fear and uncertainty regarding personal health and well-being compounded the worry associated with the health and wellness of family and friends (Liverant et al., 2004). While the events on September 11th were isolated to the span of a few hours, the emotional and psychological impact of the event is ongoing, similar to the ever-evolving nature of the pandemic (Neuwirth et al., 2020). Due to the unprecedented nature of the attack on the United States, and the rapid

spread of the virus, these events parallel one another in relationship to social and emotional responses to the individuals impacted.

This study sought to identify academic supports and interventions that provided guidance in a turbulent time. The research team worked to identify the interventions that supported students through the transition from face-to-face to online instruction. An additional purpose of this study was to identify methods to support students in the event of an abrupt shift in educational programming and resources available to support students in the event of a disaster.

METHODS

A mixed methods convergent parallel design was utilized to explore the impact of COVID-19 on social work students engaging in field internships. The online survey consisted of quantitative questions in addition to open-ended qualitative questions to further elicit deeper understanding of student experiences.

Participants

Participants were self-selected senior baccalaureate (BSW) and graduate (MSW) social work students engaged in internship placements at two different institutions of higher education. Participants were required to be 18 years of age and submitted consent prior to participating in the study. Convenience sampling was used to locate participants. An invitation to participate in an anonymous survey was sent to students via email. A second email was sent as a reminder to students to elicit further responses.

Out of 90 potential participants, 40 students completed the survey of which 95% of respondents identified as female, 5% identified as male, and zero participants identified as other genders. The majority of participants (87.5%) identified as White; 87.5% identified as Non-Latino/Hispanic. Participants ranged in age from 21 to 51 years of age, with a mean age of 27. Within the sample, 35% were MSW students; 65% of participants were BSW students; 45% of participants were living with their family/parents, 45% were living in their own home or apartment, and 10% of participants were living on campus (Table 1).

Table 1: Sample Demographics

Category	n	%	Category	n	%
Gender			*Academic Program*		
Male	2	5.0%	BSW	26	65.0%
Female	38	95.0%	MSW	14	35.0%
Race					
White	35	87.5%	*Living Situation*		
African American/Black	3	7.5%	Living with Family	18	45.0%

Multiracial	2	5.0%		Living Independently	18	45.0%
				Living on Campus	4	10.0%
Ethnicity						
Non-Latino/Hispanic	35	87.5%				
Latino/Hispanic	5	12.5%				

Note. n=40. Participants' average age was 27.

Procedures

Participants engaged in a one-time online survey. Participants were emailed a recruitment statement that included a link to the questionnaire. Upon reviewing and submitting the informed consent, participants were prompted to complete the survey. No personal identifying information was requested. The survey, which contained seven closed-ended questions and three open-ended questions, took approximately ten to fifteen minutes to complete. There was no compensation offered. Institutional Review Board approval was received from the two institutions of higher education and all procedures were followed.

Data Analysis

Data downloaded from Survey Monkey was converted to an Excel file and coded appropriately. SOFA (Statistics Open For All) was employed to analyze quantitative data**.** The quantitative data were analyzed by conducting frequency distributions and chi square statistics to examine student experiences.

Qualitative data from open-ended questions were analyzed using a grounded theory approach of line-by-line coding and constant comparative analysis in the development of themes (Charmaz, 2006; Padgett, 2008). The research team also engaged in memo writing to reduce bias throughout the analytic process (Charmaz, 2006; Morgan, 2014). Three hundred sixty-five open codes were compared and sorted into 12 focused codes through an audit trail. Further consultation with the research team identified 4 provisional categories; 2 final themes emerged from the data. A code book was created to further refine the definitions of themes and supporting focused codes. The following strategies were utilized to ensure rigor of qualitative data analysis: memo writing (Charmaz, 2006; Morgan, 2014), member checking (Padgett, 2008), auditability (Cooney, 2011; Padgett, 2008) and examining transferability and credibility (Cooney, 2011). Credibility was evident in that the themes were supported by the literature. The experience of participants was consistent across academic level and institution, therefore demonstrating transferability.

QUANTITATIVE FINDINGS

When participants were asked if the disruption in their field internship emotionally/mentally impacted them: 82.5% strongly agreed/agreed. Fifty-seven

percent of participants strongly agreed/agreed that completing alternative internship activities impacted the student learning experience.

Seventy percent of participants strongly disagreed/disagreed that they were able to effectively terminate with agency staff at their field placement. When participants were asked if they were able to effectively terminate with clients at their placement, 60% of participants responded strongly disagreed/disagreed.

The efficacy of alternative field assignments provided to participants was examined. Of the participants who strongly agreed that faculty provided effective alternative assignments, 69.5% strongly agreed/agreed that alternative assignments impacted their learning. When asked if faculty provided effective alternative assignments, 57.2% responded neutral or disagreed. These quantitative findings were corroborated by the emergent themes in the qualitative data analysis (Table 2).

Table 2: Percent Agreement

Item	Strongly Agree/Agree		Neutral		Strongly Disagree/Disagree	
	<u>n</u>	<u>%</u>	<u>n</u>	<u>%</u>	<u>n</u>	<u>%</u>
Q1. Faculty effectively provided alternative field education assignments for the spring 2020 semester.	37	92.5%	1	2.5%	2	5.0%
Q2. Completing alternative field activities impacted my learning experience.	23	57.5%	13	32.5%	4	10.0%
Q3. I was able to effectively terminate with staff at my placement.	6	15.0%	6	15.0%	28	70.0%
Q4. I was able to effectively terminate with clients at my placement.	4	10.0%	12	30.0%	24	60.0%
Q5. The disruption of my field education physically affected me.	16	40.0%	7	17.5%	17	42.5%
Q6. The disruption of my field education emotionally/ mentally affected me.	33	82.5%	4	10.0%	3	7.5%

Q7. The communication with your Field Instructor was disrupted due to the COVID-19 pandemic.	18	45.0%	3	7.5%	19	47.5%

Note. n=40

QUALITATIVE FINDINGS

All participants discussed two themes: mental health and coping skills, along with professional preparedness. These two themes were supported by participants' reactions to the impact of COVID-19 on their internship placement.

Mental Health and Coping Skills

On forty-four occasions participants discussed an overall negative impact on their mental and emotional health due to COVID-19. One participant reported, "this pandemic increased my stress level and cause[d] harm to my mental health." This participant continued to express the subsequent anxiety related to the abrupt transition to an online learning platform with alternative assignments, "I experience[d] bouts of anxiety as I tried to navigate field experiences online." Another participant further elaborated, "the experience was overwhelmingly stressful." These participants had several challenges to overcome in their personal, educational, and professional lives, however they had a deeper understanding of the greater impact of the pandemic as reflected in this participant's response, "I was sad in the beginning, but I understand it was best for the health and safety of everyone."

Twenty participants explored an increase in purposeful self-care. Several participants reported "a lot of self-care" through varied outlets. One participant discussed the "support from my supervisor, friends and family and honestly eating ice cream" as their coping strategy. Twenty participants identified family, friends, peers, professors, and field supervisors as support systems. Other participants reported the positive impact of processing with their peers in the seminar course; one stated "I was able to use time management, mindfulness and process the pandemic in real time in seminar class and with my peers." Another participant expanded on this topic, "seminar was really helpful to touch base with my professor and classmates and check in with our feelings." Several participants reported eliciting support from professors and supervisors by "reaching out to faculty, staff and family to provide support during this time." Another participant stated, "our professors seemed to work tirelessly in order to help all students finish hours…"

However, not all participants had support and subsequently felt the consequences, "I became severely lethargic, overwhelmed, and anxious about the future, my ability to graduate, and my ability to be a good social worker as I no longer had as many sources of support to lean on." Overall, participants reported their mental health and coping strategies suffered the greatest impact in the wake of COVID-19. This participant's feedback summarizes how several participants navigated self-care

during the pandemic, "staying busy, staying focused, planning ahead, and taking time to rest and do nothing when I needed it… keeping in touch with fellow students also assisted in support."

Professional Preparedness

The lack of professional closure, changes in communication, challenges with obtaining required field hours, and completing alternative assignments had an overall impact on social work students during the COVID-19 pandemic. The lack of closure was discussed on 62 occasions by the majority of participants, one stated "the stopping of my field placement was very sudden, from both my institution and my placement."

A sudden disconnect between the student and the field agency was perceived as termination by participants, "everything felt it came to an abrupt end. There became [a] lack of communication from supervisors at internship." However, some participants expressed increase connection in the remote educational platform to complete their field experience, "my field instructor has been very communicative throughout the entire year, regardless of remote or in-person circumstances--I am very thankful for this."

Several participants discussed their primary concerns which vacillated between meeting the required hours, alternative assignments, educational impact, and graduation requirements. Participants voiced 61 concerns about the challenge to complete the required number of hours. The following quotations elaborate on participants' primary concerns: "if I would make the required hours needed to graduate"; "fulfilling the field requirements with online activities and finding alterative assignments to complete to meet the necessary field hours"; "getting all of the hours and losing interest and the educational aspect of field placement."

The participants had differing opinions on professional preparedness, specifically on how prepared they felt to enter the profession upon graduation. Many participants felt the pandemic limited their educational experience and confidence as a social worker; this notion was endorsed 54 times. One participant described feeling unprepared to work in the social work profession,

> I can appreciate the activities that the university put together to fulfill our duties as social work seniors. However, I feel that these activities were not a sufficient replacement for in field experiences. Seeing and interacting with clientele face to face develops important social work soft-skills.

One participant explored her concern regarding competence, "I was concerned about appearing less credible/competent due to lack of field experience." Another participant felt very disheartened about the lack of hands-on practice, "[COVID-19] robbed me of experience that I would have been able to transfer to my resume to secure a job."

However, other participants reported the development of new skills including communication, tele-health, and resiliency. Another participant stated, "I was able to effectively complete my required field hours. Although virtual field experience [is]

not the same as face-to-face engagement with clients, I feel that I was able to learn new social work skills." Participants were able to utilize social work skills to process the COVID-19 pandemic and channel that experience into a positive response,

> Honestly for the negative impacts, there were also positives. I think looking at the strengths, I came to realize just how resilient I am and how I was able to overcome an obstacle such as this. I also think that it provided an opportunity for me to learn how to tele-work which may be more common moving forward. While I prefer in-person interactions, tele-work offers many advantages, so I was able to learn how to use applications such as Zoom to overcome it.

Some participants expanded upon existing skills and recognized a development of new professional competencies. Resilience was a topic mentioned by participants with the positive impact of the pandemic and implications on their future, "it has taught me to be resilient and to use effective communication during a tragic moment in my educational journey." The majority of participants expressed ongoing communication regarding internship tasks and experiences with their field instructor despite the disruption during internship placement. Only a few participants expressed frustration with poor communication with their internship supervisors. The participants utilized the pandemic to understand their level of professional preparedness for a career in social services.

DISCUSSION

This study explored the educational disruption of social work students engaged in internship courses at two different institutions of higher education during the first wave of the COVID-19 pandemic in spring 2020. At the time, limited research on the impact of the pandemic was available. In response to the rapid spread of the virus, field internships were terminated or significantly altered for students at all academic levels. The upheaval of internship placement, in-class educational instruction, and other aspects of their personal lives, resulted in students experiencing a wide range of social and emotional stressors. The unprecedented impact of the pandemic on social work programs resulted in swift reevaluation of educational opportunities for all students. Students engaged in internship courses suffered a dual disruption in coursework when removed from face-to-face courses and professional skill building opportunities through field internship. The repercussions reported in social and academic spheres led the researchers to explore the impact of trauma as an iterative process. Participants clearly identified the impact of the pandemic on their mental and emotional well-being. The unanticipated challenges in personal life management, educational concerns regarding meeting academic standards while transitioning from in-person to remote learning platforms, and coping with the uncertainty of personal health and well-being was corroborated by both the quantitative and qualitative findings of this study.

Learning Opportunities

Emerging data regarding the impact of COVID-19 continues to shape administrative responses to students returning to in-person academic experiences. At the onset of the pandemic, social work programs provided students with Education, Policy, and Accreditation Standard (EPAS) specific tasks for remote learning to mitigate concerns regarding accruing internship hours. Field education is the signature pedagogy for social work utilizing the CSWE EPAS for program accreditation and graduation requirements. Crafting remote tasks reflective of EPAS guidelines was necessary to maintain students' successful course completion to avoid additional trauma for students dealing with a disrupted academic trajectory. The CSWE modification of field hours in response to COVID-19 was openly shared with students (CSWE, 2020a). University-sponsored and professional webinars, child abuse and mandated reporting online trainings, and National Association of Social Workers online events were offered as alternative learning activities in order to meet the standard for graduation requirements. Students were also provided the opportunity to create resource manuals for their affiliated community agency. Of the participants, 92.5% identified the alternative activities and learning resources provided by faculty as effective. Additionally, participants' responses to the open-ended survey questions explored how these alternative assignments supported their learning despite the lack of traditionally facilitated academic content.

Responses to Internship Disruption

Two primary themes emerged from the data regarding the disruption of internship placement coursework during the COVID-19 pandemic: mental health and coping skills, along with professional preparedness.

Mental Health

The vast majority of participants (82.5%) reported experiencing emotional and mental impacts as a result of the pandemic, which mirrored existing research that documented the initial outbreak overseas. This finding was further described by participants through the open-ended questions regarding their mental health. Recent studies found an increase in negative mental health systems secondary to the impact of COVID-19 (CSWE, 2020c; Zhang et al., 2020). Participants identified an increase in anxiety, stress, and feeling overwhelmed while engaging in coursework and completing field-education requirements. Mental health as a theme was echoed in the existing data on COVID-19 specifically academic concerns regarding exams, assignments, and for some, transitioning to a new living environment (Mowad, 2020). The majority of participants identified family, friends, and faculty as a supportive resource during the pandemic. Participants explored the impact of the pandemic on their mental and emotional well-being through the increase in purposeful self-care and support.

Additionally, participants cited the structure of classes in addition to support from family, faculty, and peers as a mechanism to cope with the stress. Participants identified engaging in seminar as a resource for connection and collaboration with

peers. Participants described faculty engagement as a support, mentioning 36 accounts of helpful professors. The mindful presence of faculty during disrupted coursework can support students' academic performance and emotional regulation even when pedagogical methodologies are disrupted (Leigh et al., 2020). Support for creating community through Zoom classrooms to encourage conversation and open dialogue between students and with faculty has been linked to existing data (Brecht, 2020; Leigh et al., 2020).

Preparedness Upon Graduation

Examining participants' perceptions regarding the impact of online learning activities to complete required internship hours produced varied feedback. While the majority of participants agreed that faculty provided adequate alternative learning opportunities, some did express concerns regarding the applicability of those activities to professional social work. Participants identified the abrupt displacement of students and missed internship experiences to the concerns that their field work did not possess the rigor they anticipated. National data collected by CSWE (2020c) supports the finding that students felt their schools provided clear direction and focus during the transition to online learning, but the shift in teaching modality disrupted their academic progress.

Emerging research on practice readiness identifies mixed results regarding students' confidence in their skill set upon graduation. Due to the impacts of academic disruptions, mental health symptoms, and adjusting modified living and learning environments, students experienced stressors related to academic development (Wang et al., 2020). While previous studies revealed appreciation for support and knowledge procured in face-to-face courses, students reported concerns regarding their professional skill set upon graduation (Goodman et al., 2014; Son et al., 2020; Wilson, 2013).

IMPLICATIONS

Disaster Responsiveness

In reviewing literature, connections between the terrorist attacks on September 11, 2001, and the COVID-19 pandemic were identified. In both scenarios, life was altered for many, and the impact of each event incited far-reaching personal, professional, and economic consequences. The collective trauma of disaster events like the terror attacks in 2001 and the COVID-19 pandemic have generational consequences as individuals live through the shared experience of those events (Neuwirth et al., 2020; Watson, et al., 2020).

In the case of academic settings, faculty were forced to shift their teaching modality from face-to-face to online, while students reoriented themselves to online learning and, for many, returned home. Due to the swift transition from in-person to online coursework, students suffered negative mental health outcomes (Son et al., 2020).

The hallmark of a disaster is the abrupt nature of the event, often leaving the victims of the event in peril. To lessen the impact of an unprecedented catastrophe, planning is necessary (Simeone, 2021). All aspects of a disaster cannot be accounted for, however, within an academic setting, creating a strategy to transition faculty, students, and staff to a safe alternative method of service delivery is necessary. Ensuring coursework is approved for face-to-face and online platforms can ease the disruption in the flow of academic instruction.

Additionally, the outcomes from this study suggest that faculty should prepare a flexible teaching platform that can quickly adapt to abrupt changes in the classroom environment. Utilizing a hybrid educational model may begin to address current concerns regarding safety in returning to the classroom (Krull & Duart, 2018).

Professional Skills

The skills necessary to transition into professional social work roles are often cultivated in field internship experiences. While faculty attempted to create meaningful alternative assignments during the emerging pandemic, participants noted a lack of confidence in their professional skills as evidenced by 54 mentions of feeling unprepared for social work practice upon graduation. The difficulty of addressing career preparedness, particularly in the wake of a disaster, lies in the ability to professionally terminate from an internship placement. Without professional closure, students may experience anxiety or a lack of confidence in their abilities to engage in professional context.

While faculty can provide support and educational resources for students displaced from their internship, an online learning module cannot replicate face-to-face interactions with a client. Participants were unable to experience professional closure with their internship supervisor, staff, and clients, resulting in increased stress and anxiety.

Developing a responsive, flexible plan for students placed in community-based agency settings can alleviate the unceremonious displacement of students from internships. A strategic plan designed to respond to disaster-related events can provide intervention and support if face-to-face work is no longer feasible. Additionally, establishing a plan for termination supports the Code of Ethics (NASW, 2017) and can be crafted into a teachable moment for students that can be processed in seminar. While a developed disaster response plan may not be implemented, cultivating awareness around mindful preparation and readiness provides a skill set for students to use in future professional work.

Limitations

Due to the demographic composition of the universities included in this exploratory study, it is necessary to note the small homogenous convenience sample. The majority of participants self-identified as female and White, which echoes not only the demographics of the institutions of higher education explored in this study, but the social work profession at large (CSWE, 2020b). Additional research outside of the academic institutions included in this study is necessary to expand

generalizability. While this study explores the impact on social work students, the collective trauma from the pandemic on individuals attending institutions of higher education is not specific to social work students.

Current data indicates that individuals, families, and communities of color are impacted by the virus with greater severity (Oppel et al., 2020). Given this, participants in this study may have had increased access to resources or health care that can mitigate stressors related to COVID-19. Social desirability bias in participant responses was a concern as two members of the research team are directors of field education and had prior relationships with the convenience sample of participants. Several strategies were used to mitigate this potential bias. First, an anonymous online survey was used. Second, all surveys were distributed after final grades were submitted. Social desirability bias is less prevalent in self-report surveys, particularly when administered in an online electronic format (Mavletova & Couper, 2013) as opposed to in-person (Rubin & Babbie, 2016). Social desirability bias did not seem to impact internal validity as demonstrated by the frequent endorsement of negative consequences, feelings of unpreparedness to enter the profession, and varied feedback stemming from the COVID-19 pandemic.

CONCLUSION

The experience of participants paints a picture of the systemic collective trauma due to the impact of COVID-19 on social work students in higher education. Participants experienced an unexpected shift in their social and academic structure, resulting in doubts and uncertainty related to professional self-efficacy. These feelings of inadequacy led students to question the validity of earning a degree with a reduced number of internship hours. It is interesting to note that students were displaced for six weeks of a thirty-week field internship placement. Ongoing concerns regarding students' personal confidence in cultivating the skills necessary for professional social work was supported by the literature.

Despite the negative impacts identified, participants reported an increase in communication with family, friends, and faculty; the development of coping strategies and purposeful self-care; and identified resilience as positive outcomes to their experience during the pandemic. The findings of this exploratory study regarding faculty responsiveness, alternative educational opportunities, and the impact on mental health align with national data collected by the CSWE.

Undergraduate and graduate students impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic encountered unanticipated stressors and consequences during internship placements. Further evaluation of the ongoing repercussions of COVID-19 on educational settings, internship placements, and new professionals is warranted. Faculty, university and professional responsiveness to disaster events should be continuously reevaluated and enhanced to support student well-being and maintain the integrity of the academic experience.

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