STUDENT EXPERIENCES DURING THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC

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CERTIFICATION OF APPROVAL

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DEDICATION

This thesis is dedicated to my fiancé and my family. To my fiancé, Ashveen, because of your love, support, patience, and encouragement this could not have been done without you in my life. To my mother, your love, strength, and sacrifices have guided me and continue to impact me every day. To my father, your hard work and work ethic does not go unnoticed, and I carry it with me every day. To my siblings, Simon, and Colin, I love you and I hope to continue to be role model to you. I am forever grateful to have each of you in my life. Lastly, to the long days and nights of hard work.

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this qualitative study was to understand and interpret the experiences of students during the COVID-19 pandemic. This study was designed to identify the experiences of students during the pandemic and understand its impact on students. The research participants consisted of six students that engaged in semi-structured interviews. Data collected from the interviews were analyzed and compared to establish patterns among the participants' responses to highlight the experiences and impacts of the pandemic. Analysis of the data revealed three themes: student learning, student performance, and student social emotional experiences. In general, students were affected negatively by the COVID-19 pandemic in a variety of ways. The findings of this research suggest an importance for educational stakeholders to implement a focus of student voice to engage, motivate, and support the social emotional well-being of students.

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

The COVID-19 pandemic altered the usual way of life for people around the world and caused changes in economic, political, educational, social, and domestic systems (Kolak et al., 2021). The pandemic abruptly changed the lives of people as precautionary measures were enacted to prevent the spread of the infection such as lockdown restrictions, school closures, and stay-at-home orders (Smith et al., 2020). School closures were enacted to prevent the spread of the infection and caused the foundations of learning and teaching to change in response. The United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization announced that 1.6 billion students, half of the student population at all educational levels globally, were unable to continue their education as a result of the COVID-10 pandemic (UNESCO, 2020). Schools around the world faced varying policies and decisions by local and state government authorities, leading to differing experiences by teachers, students, and parents.

As I was going through the pandemic school year 2020-21, I struggled in meeting the demands of my personal and professional life. As a history teacher at a public school I became aware of the unique challenges that my high school students were likely facing in their academic and personal lives. As the school year progresses, educators were following decisions that were being made for students by stakeholders, but without the direct input of students. A focus of this research was to

emphasize the importance of student input in relation to their educational environments. As the pandemic has impacted the world this research seeks to understand the challenges and successes experienced by students during this school year.

Many teachers, students, and parents were impacted by the decisions and policies from national agencies causing changes to state educational entities and local school districts around the country. At the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic and the proceeding school closures, the learning process was reorganized in the format of distance learning (Javurek & Mendenall, 2020). Distance learning is an institutional education activity where students, teachers, and teaching materials in various places are brought together through information communication technologies (Akcil & Bastas, 2020). Many schools during their use of distance learning utilized instruction information communication technologies such as web-based collaborative video conferencing tools such as the web application Zoom (Serhan, 2020). To provide learners the opportunity to participate in courses and programs from remote locations using digital technologies like Zoom, learners required an internet connection (Kamble et al., 2021). As many schools implemented distance learning, students, teachers, and parents were left to grapple many new issues. A study by Lepp et al. (2020) discusses some of these issues such as, the availability of technological facilities in students' homes, the preparation of schools for the use of technology, and adequate preparation for teachers. Answers to these and other concerns were necessary for a successful transition to distance learning during the pandemic.

The changes in schools caused by the pandemic impacted the practices of teaching, learning, and support. These changes provided unique experiences for many teachers, students, and parents placed in the unanticipated situation. Many teachers faced many new challenges during the pandemic. Studies discussed teachers' difficulties in learning modern technologies, lacking preparation and support to teach remotely, and an increase in work-related stress during the transition to distance learning (Kim & Asbury, 2020; Serhan, 2020; Trust & Whalen, 2020). Research on the pandemic provides insight to the negative impact on student lives such as a lack of preparation for an online experience and distance learning not being the most effective mode for student learning or engagement (Akcil & Bastas, 2020; Nenko et al., 2020; Tumen, 2020). Parents faced difficulties in their experiences during the pandemic such as concerns over the social development of their child, taking a completely new and unprepared role in education for their child, and for many parents balancing their work life at home with their children also being home (Bhamani et al., 2020; Kolak et al., 2021; Zhao, 2020). The experiences of teachers, parents, and students demonstrate an importance to improve and influence the wellbeing of schools during the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic. As the needs of students can vary greatly, an importance is needed on ensuring that the experiences of all students are heard by stakeholders and used to impact education during and after the COVID-19 pandemic.

Statement of the Problem

A significant problem facing our education system today is the importance of understanding and implementing feedback from the experiences of students amid a

school year impacted by a global pandemic. Wilson et al. (2020) states, "an importance of engaging with students in the process of understanding and improving their lived experience during the pandemic needs to be recognized" (p. 3). Many schools have the interest of students in mind, but as the COVID-19 pandemic has progressed student voice has, in many cases, been limited regarding policy choices.

In neglecting or misinterpreting the learning experiences of students during the pandemic educational stakeholders are ignoring the receiving end of educators' efforts and adjustments for the pandemic driven school year. As Miller (2021) discusses in her study on the educators' experiences during the pandemic, the research on the student experiences is not as widely available. Smith et al. (2021) discusses how the empirical evidence has been quite limiting on the topic of student academic outcomes during the COVID-19 outbreak. As present and future research is being published regarding the relationship between education and COVID-19, the experiences of students is a limited, as most studies focused on teacher experiences. It cannot be ignored the importance of student experiences and the impact these experiences can provide to all educators as they embark on post-pandemic schooling.

A study focused on the experiences of students during the ongoing pandemic can provide knowledge to influence the practices of all educational stakeholders to provide insight to improve the outcomes of schools during and after the pandemic.

Research Question

What were the experiences of Central Valley High School general education students during the first response to the COVID-19 pandemic?

Significance of the Study

The findings of this study are important for many educational stakeholders. Teachers will benefit from an understanding of the various experiences and knowledge that students obtained from a school year filled with uncertainty. Teachers may also be introduced to unfamiliar problems or issues from students that were never conceived as occurring throughout the pandemic school year. Administrators will benefit from knowledge which may be used to provide school wide support and resources for the following and future school years. Additionally, this study can provide recommendations to educators, administrators, and parents as the experiences of students during the pandemic may require extra support from these groups. Finally, scholars in the field of online learning and distance learning will benefit from the feedback provided by students on these models of learning during the pandemic.

Definitions of Terms

Distance Learning. An institutional education activity where students, teachers, and teaching materials in different places are brought together through information communication technologies. (Singh & Thurman, 2019).

Initial Response to the COVID-19 Pandemic. This refers to the time between the onset of the pandemic, March 2020 and the 2020-2021 school year, August 2020 to June 2021.

Summary

This chapter outlined the need for the increased focus on student experiences during the COVID-19 pandemic. The introduction of students to new modes of

instruction in schools, such as the hybrid model and distance learning, provided unique learning experiences for students. The purpose of this study is to understand the experiences of students during the pandemic to provide discourse to assist all educational stakeholders during and after the pandemic.

In Chapter II, I will present a review of the literature on topics such as responses to the COVID-19 pandemic, the experiences of teachers, students, and parents, and COVID-19 pandemic educational implications. In Chapter III, I will present the methods and data collection techniques used in the study. In Chapter IV, I will present the findings from the study. In Chapter V, I will outline the implications of this research for administration, teacher practices, and student learning.

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CHAPTER II

LITERATURE REVIEW

The COVID-19 pandemic drastically changed the landscape of many schools and has created student experiences that only a once in a lifetime global pandemic can produce. The adaptation to an ever-changing global pandemic led to unique student experiences by high school students from the Central Valley that need to be understood by educational stakeholders. This literature review will first frame the impact of COVID-19 and educational responses to this global pandemic. The review will then discuss the experiences of educational stakeholders during the transition of learning caused by the pandemic. Finally, this literature review will present the implications of the COVID-19 pandemic and topics that require attention by education stakeholders.

Education's Response to COVID-19

A review of the literature on COVID-19 and education focused on three important themes and concepts. First, a portion of the research will outline the decisions made by policy makers involving education and the COVID-19 pandemic. Next, many of the research articles discussed the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on education in California and around the world through school closures. Lastly, a portion of the research outlines distance learning, the mode of learning elected by schools and individuals during the pandemic.

Policy Makers

As cases of COVID-19 began to be reported in the United States decisions needed to be made by policy makers to prevent the spread of this disease. Declarations of states of emergencies began to be issued as the COVID-19 disease became a global pandemic as concerns for public safety were rising. Governor of California Gavin Newsom (2020a) declared a state of emergency for California on March 4th, with President Trump (2020) declaring a national state of emergency for COVID-19 on March 13th, as the disease spread caused significant risk to the public health and safety of the nation. As COVID-19 continued to spread in the United States the World Health Organization provided guidance to protect children and support safe operations on March 10th, 2020 (WHO, 2020). However, by the end of March 2020, the US reported over 3,000 deaths, 164,500 confirmed cases, and all 50 states had announced mandatory or recommended school closures. These declarations of emergencies foreshadowed the forthcoming decisions that would impact schools for the remainder of the 2020 school year as well as to the onset of the 2020-21 school year. As these policy makers viewed the pandemic's impact on education as a brief disruption that would later turn into to a confronted reality in which state and district leaders needed to plan some form of learning into the 2020-2021 school year (Javurek & Mendenhall, 2020). As no cure or vaccine existed, the main public health response to the pandemic was social distancing leading to the closure of many venues in which people gather, such as schools.

School Closures

Many schools began closing their doors to students and families at the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic, particularly in California. Elk Grove Unified School District, the largest in Northern California, was the first school district in the state to close its schools, cancel in person classes, and suspend any in person student related activities on March 7th, 2020, with the idea of moving the pending Spring Break to the following week so no school days would be lost (Egel et al. 2020). Many more school districts in California soon followed Elk Grove Unified. Stanislaus County in the Central Valley elected to close all schools March 15th, 2020, due to declining student attendance, increased health concerns, and community feedback (Farrow & Lopez, 2020). Merced County schools in the Central Valley also decided to close schools beginning March 19th, 2020, with the goal of reopening on April 20th, 2020 (Kuhn, 2020). All 25 of the county's school districts in California ultimately closed their campuses March 19th with tentative reopening dates in the middle of April with state officials announcing that school could open on May 4th if conditions allowed (Holland, 2020). California Governor Newsom made an announcement on April 6th, 2020, officially closing California schools through the spring semester with a recommendation for schools to transition from classroom instruction to distance learning (Holland, 2020). Also, Governor Newsom suspended all state testing in California during the 2020 school year (Newsom, 2020b). This situation was not seen

just in California, as students, families, and educators around the country and world faced similar realities in their first response to the COVID-19 pandemic.

School buildings around the world stopped in person instruction to protect students and teachers from the spread of disease. The prime minister of the United Kingdom, Boris Johnson, announced that beginning March 25th, 2020, schools would halt in person instruction to apply downward pressure on the upward curve of COVID-19 cases (Triggle, 2020). Many countries around the world were introducing similar closure announcements like the United Kingdom and the United States. The United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization announced that 1.6 billion students, half of the student population at all educational levels globally, were unable to continue their education at the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic (UNESCO, 2020). One year into the COVID 19 pandemic, close to half of the world's students were still affected by partial or full school closures with over one hundred million children falling below the minimum proficiency level in reading because of the health crisis (UNESCO, 2021). Based on the research presented, the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic had an impact on schools in California around the world beginning with widespread school closures.

Distance Learning

Distance learning is a term that has come to be synonymous with education and the COVID-19 pandemic. The superintendent of schools in Stanislaus County, Scott Kuykendall, announced in a news release after the official closure of schools through spring that students and parents should understand that the 2019-20 school year is not

over; it has just transitioned from classroom instruction to distance learning (Holland, 2020). This transition to distance learning began at the end of 2019-20 school year for some students and became a prominent mode of learning for many schools at the beginning of the 2020-21 school year. As the name implies a key component of this learning is the physical distance of the educator and learner (Singh & Thurman, 2019). Distance learning is defined as an instructional delivery system that offers learners the opportunity to participate in courses and programs from remote locations with the support of digital technology such as an internet connection (Kamble et al., 2021).

Distance Learning is instruction originally meant for face-to-face instruction, presented remotely to students, through a web-based collaborative video conferencing tool, such as Zoom (Serhan, 2020). The use of distance learning techniques such as videoconferencing is not a new phenomenon. Educators in higher education have used video conferencing tools for many years to communicate in real time under the pretext of distance learning (Candarli & Yuksel, 2012). A study conducted by Knipe and Lee (2002) examined the quality of videoconferencing to that experienced in a traditional classroom environment. The results indicated that the experience of students in the remote site was of less quality than the students in the traditional classroom (p. 310).

In using collaborative video applications such as Zoom, Google Meet, or Microsoft Teams, educators were able to provide instruction to students through a distance learning format during the pandemic. However, while distance learning

enabled many students to continue the spring semester amidst the pandemic, this form of education is not a viable long-term solution. Going forward, institutions need to develop sustainable educational plans that can withstand the challenges and unknowns of the ongoing pandemic (Johnson et al., 2020). An impact to education's response to the COVID-19 pandemic is the implementation of a new mode of learning which is distance learning operated using collaborative video applications.

Experiences of Stakeholders

The experiences of stakeholders during the pandemic, such as teachers, students, and parents, provide insight to overall outcome of the pandemic. First, many of the research articles discussed the experiences of educators as they were placed in a new situation through distance learning during the COVID-19 pandemic. Next a portion of the research outlined the positive and negative experiences of students. Lastly, a portion of research outlined the new and unique experiences of parents as many involved in the learning of their child now faced the circumstances associated with an ever-changing pandemic.

Teacher Experiences

The COVID-19 pandemic put many teachers in a new situation, and many were introduced to distance learning. This pandemic forced the reorganization of education such putting teachers, students, and their parents in a new situation (Lepp et al., 2021). As physical school closures were enacted, instructors faced many new challenges such as learning to use modern technologies, designing instructional materials to fit an unfamiliar environment, adopting new assessment techniques, and

providing an interactive remote learning environment (Serhan, 2020). Teachers were not only placed in a new situation, but the way many educators have been teaching for years was changed due to the pandemic. Trust and Whalen (2020) found that teachers lacked preparation and support using technology to design quality instruction during the transition to distance learning. Many educational institutions were forced to use different distance education systems and tools, placing a new importance on digital technology at all levels of education (Korkmaz & Toraman, 2020). Also, teachers in their use of modern technology, such as videoconferencing through applications like Zoom, faced the experience of disrupters joining their online class sessions. These incidents were known as Zoom bombing, and occurred when disruptors would join online meetings to share racist or obscene content to cause chaos. However, most of these incidents were not unplanned and many of these occurrences were considered inside jobs from students (Ling et al., 2021). Teachers were at the forefront of using these distance learning tools and technology for their students some being prepared and others being unprepared.

Besides technological and pedagogical readiness, teacher well-being and work-related stress during the COVID-19 pandemic has been addressed in research. Kim and Asbury (2020) described the stress experienced by teachers during the onset of distance learning which involved the loss of control over work, blurred lines between home and work, and irregular working hours. Teachers described the insecurity felt at the beginning of distance learning period as "like a rug had been pulled from under you" (Kim & Asbury, 2020, p. 1070). The research suggests that

teachers during the pandemic faced challenges involving changing instruction practices to conform to distance learning and the perceived work stress associated with this transition.

Karakaya et al. (2020) investigated the views of biology teachers about distance education during the COVID-19 pandemic. They found that the participants had positive views about distance education conducted during the pandemic in terms of classroom management, competencies, and application processes. Also, that distance education provides advantages due to time management, organization of the learning process, use of technology and being independent of place. However, the study also found disadvantages of distance education for educators due to disruption of classroom organization, lack of technological infrastructure, and inequality of opportunity. The findings in this study support other research in advantages and disadvantages to distance education and the experiences of teachers during the COVID-19 pandemic (Karakaya et al., 2020).

Student Experiences

Students encountered both negative and positive experiences during the COVID-19 pandemic. Tümen (2020) found that students' lives were affected negatively and positively by the COVID-19 pandemic. Many students disclosed the disadvantages to distance education such as the lack of interaction, communication problems with instructors, time management, traditional educational habits, and mostly the inability to ask questions to instructors as frequently. Students also disclosed advantages to distance education such as flexibility of time and place, more

responsibilities in learning, and comfort in environment. Akcil and Bastas (2020)

came to a similar consensus with Tümen (2020), that students were not prepared for

an online learning experience at the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic. Overall, these

studies found COVID-19 pandemic had a more negative than positive impact on

students' lives.

Nenko et al. (2020) found similar outcomes regarding student experiences

during the COVID-19 pandemic and distance learning as overall negative. Eighty

percent of the respondents in this study evaluated the distance education during the

pandemic negatively. Students noted the excessive bureaucracy of distance learning

such as low funding, poor public awareness, lack of adequate technical equipment,

with the largest impact being the insufficient qualifications of teachers. Further

research by Syauqi et al. (2020) provides more information on student experiences

involving teachers. This study found that teachers did not manage distance learning in

line with student expectations, distance learning has not had an effective effect of

increasing their knowledge, and materials that were designed and managed were not

in line with student expectations. The research finds the experiences of students

involving distance learning to not be as effective, needs improvement, and impacting

the worldview of students.

Parent Experiences

As students around the world were not able to attend school physically many

parents were faced with difficulties in having their children home and being involved

in their child's education during the COVID-19 pandemic. As the pandemic changed

the flow of life through measures enforced around the world such as partial or full-time curfews, and the introduction of flexible working, or working from home (Zhao, 2020). Many parents were in a situation in which they were working from home as well as having a responsibility of taking care of their child as well as ensuring that they were learning during their distance education. The pandemic disrupted the routines of families and individuals all around the world this includes the structured routine between many parents and their children that attend school.

A study from Bhamani et al. (2020) found that COVID-19 impacted children's learning by disrupting their child's daily routine, a difficulty adjusting to an online mode of education, and impacting the social development of their child. This study found parents were most concerned with the inability their child would have regarding socializing with peers during distance education. Jones & DEY (2020) found parents with students who were able to adjust to distance learning found benefits such as having more time with their child for family time and having children at home to better understand what they were learning and parents whose children had difficulty adjusting to distance learning found no benefits for their child. The largest challenge for parents was the ability to balance working from home and supporting their child with parents noting this as impossible to balance.

Kolak et al (2021) found many parents have never yet been obliged to take on such a role in education. During the pandemic, many parents were now communicating with teachers daily to assist their children in comprehending learning materials. This study also found that most parents were satisfied with how teachers

managed this format of teaching and communication to them and their child. The parents' role at home as a facilitator and at times a teacher for their child placed parents in a new situation due to the pandemic.

Educational Implications of COVID-19

The pandemic changed education as most schools around the nation were unprepared for a global pandemic. As the pandemic caught many stakeholders of education unexpectedly there are many implications of this school year that could transition to possible implications that require attention by education stakeholders. Literature on this topic provides needed attention in items such as teacher and student relationships, socioeconomic backgrounds, and the various technology needs for students and schools.

Teacher and Student Relationships

The relationships between teachers and students and students have always been important and the COVID-19 pandemic emphasized this need. A caring teacher-student relationship helps students feel accepted, liked, and connected to others (OECD, 2019). The COVID-19 pandemic has threatened to exacerbate the problem of school connectedness between students as evidence has suggested that this has been at a decline over the past 15 years (OECD, 2017). In a distance learning situation, there are challenges to the student and teacher relationships. Zhu et al. (2021) found that the quality of teacher-student relationships amongst students predicted fewer mental health difficulties and buffered against peer victimization. Positive teacher-student relationships fulfill students' basic needs for belonging,

especially during a pandemic. An importance of the needs of students during the pandemic such as social interactions is crucial to support students especially positive teacher-student relationships.

The pandemic led many schools to use an online learning environment, but research has found that there is a greater possibility for a sense of loss among learners in this environment. Online learning has been shown to be connected with a loss of social interactions, loss of connection, and a resultant sense of isolation (Pallof & Pratt, 2007). Miller (2021) investigated the experiences of K-12 educators as they strove to rebuild relationships with students during the pandemic. This study found that online learning revealed teacher-student relationships in need of repair and reprioritization and challenges to building these relationships due to the digital divide. Most educators have recognized the value of relationship building with students and the COVID-19 pandemic provides needed attention to this as seen through research.

Socioeconomic Backgrounds

The response of many schools to transition to distance learning due to the challenges of the pandemic led to implications such as the possibility of impacting students from differing socioeconomic backgrounds. Many schools were forced in an unexpected position when the pandemic occurred and a large focus was on the placement of health protocols to minimize the spread of COVID 19, yet health protocols do little to address learning gaps between students with and without regular access to distance learning (Storey & Slavin, 2020). This study also finds that the transition to distance learning for many schools was often seen as inconsistent which

revealed existing inequalities in US society, especially those related to socioeconomic status and race. This study found that students from lower socioeconomic backgrounds were more likely to have less success under a distance learning format. Research from Mann et al. (2021) found comparable results as students from disadvantaged socioeconomic backgrounds were more likely to struggle during distance learning than students without this background.

Further research discusses the pandemic's uneven impact on students around the world and how this uneven impact leads to not being able to treat all students to the same intervention to fix what ails them academically (Betebenner & Wenning, 2021). Kuhfeld et al. (2020) found from the results of interim assessment products administrated in fall 2020 that the pandemic is impacting student learning negatively. As the research presents the academic outcomes of students during the pandemic can be impacted by socioeconomically backgrounds.

Technology Needs

The COVID-19 pandemic demonstrated that the transition to distance learning emphasized the importance of technology for schools and students. Research has confirmed that the availability of technological facilities in students' homes is a major concern in the transition to student learning and economic inequality could hinder students' ability to participate effectively in their studies (Lepp et al., 2021). Internet connectively is an issue that has been mentioned extensively in the literature as remote learners spread across the country do not get seamless access to internet connectivity due to a lack of infrastructure, thus posing limitations for institutions to

reach out to the students in the online learning environment and hampering their learning" (Kamble et al., 2021). Students have faced issues with technology supported by the research and the pandemic demonstrates a need for a technological infrastructure to provide successful student learning outcomes.

As schools are the providers of the education to students a focus regarding the implementation of technology needs mentioning provided by the review of literature. Miller (2021) suggests the following:

In order to foster students' belongingness, and thus school success, schools, districts, and states must ensure all students have access to devices such as Chromebooks, internet connectivity, and a safe place to work so that educators can build inclusive remote learning communities where no student is left out because they lack the basic resources needed to participate. (p. 128)

Further research from Korkmaz and Toraman (2020) found that:

Considering the potential more difficult days to come, it is quite logical to state that education will have an even more critical role for societies. In addition, with the new educational context triggered by the pandemic, the recognition of online learning must be sustainable. Because this pandemic has also shown us the fact that having digital literacy skills and technology use in education is not a choice anymore but necessity. (p. 305)

The implementation of technology into education according to the research is likely to continue, thus investment into these technological needs for the students and schools is warranted.

Summary

The research discussed in this literature suggest the importance of discussing the difficulties faced by all involved in making decisions during COVID-19 pandemic especially those involved in education. The educational response of COVID-19 provides framework to the introduction of policy maker decisions involving school closures and the implementation of distance learning for many students. The research on the experiences of teachers, students, and parents faced during the pandemic provides insight to the challenges faced by educational stakeholders. Lastly, the literature provides suggestions to continue to support schools and students with possible implications that require attention by those supportive of education.

CHAPTER III

METHODS AND PROCEDURES

The purpose of this study was to better understand the experiences of high school students during the COVID-19 pandemic. The goal was to gain insight into the students' experiences involving the initial transition to the pandemic and to provide a social and academic lens for making sense of these experiences. The research question of this study is as follows; what were the experiences of Central Valley High School students during school's initial response to the pandemic? Research has provided context to the experiences of teachers during the COVID-19 pandemic, but further research should pertain the perspectives and experiences of students (Wilson et al., 2020). This chapter will describe the context, sampling, data collection, and analysis for my research study. The study received UIRB approval #2122-008.

Research Design

A qualitative method was chosen for the research study as the study involved the collection and analysis of non-numerical data. This research study consists of semi-structured interviews. The experiences of students can best be told in a qualitative research design as this approach provides flexibility to the changes that may still occur during the pandemic and meaningful insights to the reality that many of these students faced during the COVID-19 pandemic. The experiences of students can differ tremendously in relation to their school year during the pandemic and a qualitative study can provide insight to these experiences. A qualitative study also

allows the researcher to discover new ideas from open ended responses presented from an interview (McMillan, 2015). Unfamiliar problems or opportunities that would not have been thought of otherwise can be uncovered through a qualitative study and in this case the experiences of students during the pandemic.

A qualitative case study was used for this research study as it allows exploration of a phenomenon within a context. In this case the phenomenon in question is student experiences during the pandemic, relating to school. A case study for this research study will provide an illustrative and cumulative look into the experiences of students during the pandemic using a satisfactory research design. The criteria for the participation included: being a public high school student enrolled in a high school in the Central Valley in California and enrolled in high school during the onset of school closures in spring 2020. These commonalities allowed me to view this small group of students as "a bounded system" (Creswell, 2007). There were evident differences amongst participants, but their similarities bounded them within a shared academic context.

Participants and Setting

For this study I have selected high school students from a colleague's classroom in the social studies department. I discussed the study with my department during a normally scheduled department meeting. The first teacher interested in assisting me, who taught 11th-12th grade had his classroom students selected. Eleventh and twelve grade students were chosen as those were the only grades with students from the previous school year with high school experience and data that

could be used for this study and fit the necessary criteria. I provided information

about the study to the teacher who presented the study to their respective classes and

answered questions pertaining to the study. The first six students to turn in the

consent and assent form in participated in this exploratory study.

      The study included six participants. Participants included four male and two

female participants. Four participants were in 11th grade and two participants were in

12th grade. Pseudonyms were used to protect the confidentially of the participants.

Lana is a female 11th grade student who identifies as Asian American. Tim is a male

11th grade student who identifies as Hispanic. Mike is a male 12th grade student who

identifies as white. Gary is a male 11th grade student who identifies as Asian. Nikki is

a female 11th grade student who identifies as Hispanic. Simon is a male 12th grade

student that identifies as Palestinian. These students have unique backgrounds and

experiences providing a rich data set for this study.

      My research was conducted at a low income, academically low preforming,

title I high school in the California Central Valley that serves 9th-12th grade students.

School enrollment was approximately 1900 students, a majority being Hispanic and

minority students. This study will use the timeframe of the first response of the

COVID-19 Pandemic beginning with school closures in March 2020 and concluding

June 2021. The 2020-2021 school year started with distance learning with students

logging into the platform Zoom to join their class sessions during scheduled class

periods. In November 2020 students were allowed the choice to attend school on a

hybrid A and B schedule, students who felt uncomfortable or unsafe to attend school

continued distance learning. From Mid-December 2020 to Early March 2021 students were not allowed to attend school and were again attending school via Zoom through distance learning. From Mid-March to the end of the school year students were allowed to attend school every day if their classroom did not go over the capacity labeled by the school to allow a 6-foot distance between students during the class period. Students who did not elect to come back to school remained receiving instruction through distance learning using the web application, Zoom.

Instrumentation and Procedure

Interviews were the main data collection tool for this study. To provide transparency in the selection of participants for this study I provided consent (Appendix A) and assent (Appendix B) forms to a fellow teacher in my department who provided the documentation to the first six students who volunteered in their classes. Once the participants provided me with the consent and assent forms, semi-structured interviews were scheduled and conducted based on interview questions (Appendix C) reflecting their experience during the COVID-19 pandemic. A semi-structured interview method was used. Semi-structured interviews provide flexibility and the ability to extend questions by participants providing deeper responses to the questions. Each assenting student participated in a one-on-one semi structured interview related to the student experience during the COVID-19 pandemic. The focus of the interviews was on students' experience (described the time period you were focusing on). The interviews took place in my classroom before school, during lunch, or after school depending on preference of the participant/parent/guardian and

current state and school COVID-19 protocols. Interview questions were open ended to allow students to share their perspective and experience. Interviews lasted 30-45 minutes. During the interview students were audio recorded, with parent approval. Data was then be transcribed and analyzed.

Procedures

The primary methods of sampling was convenient/purposeful sampling. The sampling method was convenient, as I drew from students from my school site, but another classroom. Convenient sampling was utilized because of limited resources, mainly time and access to other schools because of Covid-19 protocols. Purposeful sampling was also employed in that students needed conform to the following criteria: be a public high school student from the Central Valley in California, be a student in my subject department, enrolled in the school from 2019-present, and not be a current student of mine.

The steps to begin this study consisted of contacting the school principal to request permission to conduct research at the school site with students. After permission was granted, I provided the information to the colleague in my department to present the study to students. This teacher taught 11th and 12th grades, which influenced my sample. I explained the purpose and intent of my study in clear and concise manner to my colleague. They provided this information to their students to avoid any confusion or misconceptions. It was made abundantly clear that participation in the study was voluntary.

The teacher that is assisting me in recruiting explained the study to students in each of their classes. The teacher answered questions students had regarding the study. The teacher then made the consent/assent forms available to interested students. The teacher informed students that if they or their parents/guardians had questions, they were to reach out to me via phone or email to me. Students interested in participating in the study then took the forms home to be filled out. Parents and students who had questions were be able to email or call me for clarification. Students were instructed by their teacher to submit completed forms to my classroom and that the first six students to submit the forms would be part of this exploratory study. Upon the collection of forms, interviews were scheduled.

To ensure confidentiality or privacy, I kept all the information, audio recorded interviews, and transcriptions, on a password protected computer. Once interviews were completed, I transcribed them. Once I finished transcribing the interviews, I replaced actual names with pseudonyms. I then destroyed the audio recordings of the interviews. Key identifiers such as name of participants and the school site were substituted with pseudonyms in this document.

Researcher's Role

In the study I had several different roles. As the researcher, I collected and analyzed data presented from student interviews at a high school where I am employed. I have attended this school as a student and now educate students from my home community. A driving force to conduct a study on the experiences of students during the pandemic is my passion to learn about the unique students at my school.

I felt a desire to learn more about the experiences of students during the pandemic because I did not feel their voices were being represented enough in mass media articles or educational discourse. I was specifically felt the benefit in conducting research at my school particular as a method to better understand and address the needs of the student population. As I have conducted a qualitative study, I the researcher view myself as a tool of data collection.

Students may have felt minimal levels of anxiety in discussing their experiences during the pandemic. Over 70,000 people in Stanislaus County had tested positive for Covid-19 at the start of the study and over a thousand had lost their lives to Covid. Emotions were important for students to discuss in the interview and the emotions that are associated with their experiences of the pandemic could affect their wellbeing during the reflection. To minimize the risk of emotional harm, students were reminded before the study that they were free to skip any question or stop all participation at any time for any reason and they will suffer no negative penalties.

My role as a mandated reporter was identified in both the parental consent form and the interview protocol. I did not anticipate any issues arising given the focus on experiences students faced during the pandemic. However, parents/guardians and students were made aware as a precaution. Lastly, I have reached out to a counselor at the school who has agreed to serve as a contact if any students need support after the interview.

Ethical Considerations

I kept ethical considerations in mind and as a guiding principle as I conducted

my research. Participants were asked to share responses that could cause stress or

anxieties. Strategies were used to limit these feelings to be expressed by the

participants. A method that was used to alleviate this stress and anxiety was to remind

the students the safety of the interview as was written in consent forms provided to

the students and parents. Students were also aware that they were able to withdraw

any time from the interview with no penalty and all their responses were kept private

and confidential. Additionally, another teacher was selected to recruit participants and

I chose to not interview any of my current students. These actions were taken to limit

power differentials between the participants and myself.

Data Analysis

Interviews were an important data collection tool for this study. Data was

organized and analyzed using a spiral approach (Creswell, 2007). First, I listened to

interviews from the voice recorder as a form of perusing the data. During my initial

listen, I also checked with my notes to ensure accurate statements made by the

participant. Secondly, I organized the data by transcribing the data by typing out the

responses according to the audio recording by each interviewee on an excel

spreadsheet sorted by each question asked during the interview. All responses by

interviewees were checked multiple times for accuracy by listening to the voice

recording and through transcription of the interview. Thirdly, I practiced open coding

and constructed a code book by creating codes based on frequent phrases or topics

discussed in all the participants interview responses. I focused on meaning making among students and how they made sense of their experience. I then found examples of each code from the data sets and found non-examples of the codes where possible. Finally, I synthesized these codes by creating themes associated with the codes used in the data set to provide the resulting findings highlighting the experiences of students during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Data was collected in the following ways: recorded through an audio recording program via computer, audio recording via tape recorder, and recordings transcribed to text with a voice to text program via computer. This data will be kept on a password protected computer and any devices used that contain student information, data, or notes were locked through a passcode or in a locked cabinet.

Summary

In Chapter III, I presented the methodology of the study in terms of the general perspective, research design, participants and setting, instrumentation and procedure, and data analysis. In Chapter IV, I will present the findings of the study.

CHAPTER IV

FINDINGS

The purpose of this study was to gain insight into the experiences of Central

Valley public high school students during the COVID-19 pandemic. Six students

were interviewed and asked questions pertaining to their unique experiences during

the first year and a half of the pandemic. The interviews were analyzed, and three

themes emerged. This chapter will present the findings that emerged from the data

analysis. I will begin by discussing the learning experiences of students during the

COVID-19 pandemic. Next, I will share the general impact on student performance

during distance learning. Lastly, I will share the overall student emotional experience

during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Student Learning Experiences

One significant theme emerging from the data was the experiences involved in

learning during the pandemic. This experience included the use of distance learning,

the practice of communication and engagement in learning, the role of homework and

grades, and the preparation by teachers to teach in an online learning environment.

Students discussed the successes and the challenges involved in using distance

learning. Students indicated findings that learning during the pandemic possessed

difficulties and positives in engagement and communication. Students expressed that

homework and grades impacted their experience. Also, students discussed the

inexperience of many teachers to teach during distance learning. The participants'

experiences demonstrate an overall insight into the successes and challenges associated with learning during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Distance Learning

One of the experiences of students during the pandemic was their experience associated with distance learning. Some student responses indicated that they faced mostly difficulties in using this mode of learning. Simon articulated this most clearly when he said, "It was super difficult for me to learn online because when I'm at my house, I'm not in the same environment as I would be at school." All participants experienced some challenge associated with the use of distance learning. However, for some the primary focus was on the lack of student interaction amongst students and with teachers or technology issues. Gary communicated this when he said, "During distance learning, I never felt comfortable asking questions or I would have some computer issue during class time." These examples suggest that distance learning caused challenges to their overall learning experience. Other challenges participants mentioned included unprepared teachers, technology issues, or mental health struggles. All participants faced some type of challenge in their experience with distance learning.

Nevertheless, some student responses indicated that distance learning allowed successes for the participants. Nikki articulated this most clearly when she said, "Distance learning was successful as the learning for the most part was easy. I liked that you could do your own thing inside of your own house." Some participants experienced some level of success in their experience of distance learning. Tim

shared, "Distance learning gave me more time to focus on other things that I cared about such as extracurriculars and community service." So, while all the participants shared a challenge of distance learning some participants did find an aspect of success in their experience such as the ease of learning or the ability to focus on other interests.

Engagement

A perspective that influenced many student experiences during the pandemic was student engagement with school. All participants experienced a difficulty in engaging with the learning environment during distance learning. Mike voiced this clearly when he said, "There was really no engagement between the student and the teacher. It was just the teacher talking, and it was hard to focus." His words suggest that engagement between the teacher and student was challenging during the pandemic. However, for some participants their focus on engagement with school was impacted by specific classes or by technological issues many experienced. Simon articulates this when he said, "For some classes, I was very engaged, and for other classes I could not get engaged no matter what. There were also internet problems that would always affect a class at some point every day." His words suggest that engagement with school faced difficulties impacted by class or because of issues involving the internet. This data reveals that the engagement of students with school impacted their overall learning experience.

Communication

Additionally, many student responses discussed the difficulties in communication during their learning experience. Lana most clearly stated this when she said, "I feel like it should be easy to just unmute myself and ask my teacher a question, yet it was kind of awkward and uncomfortable." Her words suggest that the uncomfortable nature of communicating during distance learning was troublesome to her learning experience. Many participants shared this state of being discomfort in asking questions or communicating during distance learning. In addition to communication causing discomfort, communication also posed a barrier to learning. Simon articulated this when he said, "What is the point of going to school if I am not going to be face to face with teachers and having conversations. It was a very hard way to learn." His words suggest that communication and conversation with teachers assist a student's learning experience. Gary discussed an impact of communication when he stated, "To get help during online learning I would send an email and the fastest I would get a response is 2 or 3 days which is too late." His words suggest that untimely communication by teachers negatively affected the learning experience of students, and the data reveals communication by students and teachers as impactful during the pandemic.

Homework and Grades

Many student responses in the data expressed challenges to their learning experience associated with homework and grades during the pandemic. Gary articulated this most clearly as he said:

It becomes difficult to do homework online compared to in person, because in

person you have the teacher to help you and to keep you motivated. It also felt

like teachers gave us a lot of homework because we were home instead of

school.

Gary's words suggest that homework during the online experience was difficult

during the pandemic. All participants discussed homework as a challenge to their

learning. Nikki stated, "I got really behind in my homework, which I'd catch up on

every two or three weeks because grades were going to be entered." Her words

suggest that homework was not a priority for many students until grades were about

to be entered. All participants mentioned grades as impactful to their experience with

homework and school during the pandemic. Tim discussed this when he said, "Well,

the only thing that made me want to learn was the grades." His words suggest that

grades were impactful to the learning experience of many students. As most students

discussed homework as a source of difficulty, grades appeared to be more impactful

to the learning experience for the participants.

Inexperience

Many student responses indicated an impact to their learning experience

developed from the inexperience and lack of preparation of many teachers in an

online learning environment. Lana conveyed this most clearly when she said, "I had

some teachers who really did not know how to teach on Zoom. I had classes were no

one really knew what we are supposed to be doing." She communicated that some

teachers were unprepared to teach using the video conferencing program, Zoom. All

participants experienced some level of inexperience from their teachers in using

technology or teaching during distance learning. Some participants did, however,

focus on the efforts of teachers to learn to teach during the pandemic. Simon

discussed this when he said he had, "some teachers that handled it well and some that

did not. But I did gain respect for the teachers that tried their best to learn all new

technology and it meant a lot to see them try hard to be successful." While most

participants discussed the inexperience of teachers to teach during the pandemic,

some participants did acknowledge the effort of many educators to learn to teach in

this unfamiliar environment. The data seems to suggest that the inexperience of

teachers to teach online was impactful to the learning experience of most students.

Impacts on Student Education

The second theme emerging from the data was the factors impacting student

education during distance learning. Students discussed the role of motivation as an

impact to their performance to learn during the pandemic. The data revealed that

students lacked focus due to various distractions which was impactful on their

schooling. Students also discussed their learning environment as a factor that

impacted the success of their education. Also, students discussed an impact to their

education in their overall use of technology. These factors impacted the participants

overall performance as a student during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Motivation

All participants discussed motivation as impacting their performance as

student during the pandemic. Simon articulated this most clearly when he stated,

"Academics is a large part of my life, and I had the personal motivation to be engaged." His words suggest that personal motivation played a role in impacting his success to learn during the pandemic. Lana discussed this when she said, "A driving factor for me to succeed was that I know what I want to do after high school and understand what needs to be done to be successful." Her words suggest that her motivation was derived from understanding her own self-motivation to be successful. However, other factors played a role in impacting the motivation of students. Mike conveyed this when he said, "The hardships of learning online and not understanding the material entirely would break down my motivation." His words suggest that the environment of online learning and its hardships impacted student motivation during the pandemic. Therefore, while some students had the self-motivation to positively impact their performance during the pandemic, some students faced challenges that would break down their motivation.

Distractions

Students discussed distractions as a significant impact to their understanding during the pandemic. Simon articulated this most clearly when he said, "I would want to do my schoolwork, but then you look and see your PlayStation or TV in front of you. There are so many distractions at home." Many students discussed how they were distracted with the various devices available to them at home and this led to disruptions to their learning. However, some students when discussing distractions focused primarily on the use of their phones as the most powerful impact to their education. Gary discussed this as he said, "I was always on my phone during class

time and would very rarely understand the material for the class." Tim articulated this

further when he said, "I would do group face-times with my friends on our phones

during online learning and ignore our teachers. I was never focused on school."

These quotes suggest many students experienced a freedom from authority by

teachers in a distance format as can be seen through freedom of using their phone

without repercussions during class time. This data seems to reveal that most students

faced some form of distraction during their learning experience at home that appeared

to negatively impact their overall education during the pandemic.

Environment

Some students expressed the role their environment played during the

pandemic as a factor that had an impact on their education. Simon voiced this when

he said, "At home you can do whatever you want even when you are in class on

zoom." Most students experienced a structure free classroom environment when they

were learning at home. Tim said, "I would decide to go to the kitchen during class

and would come back lost on the material for the rest of class." His words indicate

many students had the freedom at home to physical leave during class time

influencing their ability to learn the material. Yet, this freedom came at a cost

regarding his ability to focus over a prolonged period. All participants discussed their

home environment as a factor to their overall success of understanding and learning

during the pandemic. Yet, some students experienced emotions associated with

learning at home. Nikki said, "School from home was really boring and depressing

and made me feel like not even trying." Her words suggest that some students were

impacted by emotions associated with learning at home. Most students expressed a sense of sadness and loneliness associated with being at home during the pandemic. All students expressed their environment at home as being an impact to their learning, personal sources related to their home environment appeared to be more powerful for the participants.

Technology

Most student responses discussed their usage of technology and its impact on school. Mike conveyed this when he said, "I would have computer malfunctions and it would set me back in learning the material." His words suggest that technology issues had an impact on his education and caused issues in both accessing and then understanding material in his online class. All participants experienced some level of technology difficulty such as an internet connectively issue. Tim mentions this as he stated, "The Wi—Fi would always act up and disconnect because there were so many people on it at the time." His words suggest that students were impacted by internet connectively during class time and the use of the internet by others inside of their homes. However, technology issues led many students to experience strong emotions related to their education during distance learning. Gary discussed this when he stated, "I would be angry and stressed at my computer for not letting me be able to learn. I would be angry at my teacher for not giving me extra days to complete work due to internet issues." His words suggest that technology problems led to emotions directed at the computer and teachers. So, while most participants discussed

technology as being problematic, emotions of anger and stress at the internet and teachers were intense by some participants.

Student Social-Emotional Experiences

The final theme emerging from the data was the social emotional experience of students during the COVID-19 pandemic. Student responses expressed various changes to relationships with school as an experience during the pandemic. The data revealed that students experienced numerous emotions as an outcome to the pandemic. Students also discussed the impact the pandemic had on their interactions with friends. The participants' experiences demonstrate an insight into the impact the COVID-19 pandemic had on student social-emotional health and well-being.

School Relationship

Many student responses discussed the impact of the pandemic on their overall relationship with online school compared to in person school. Participants viewed school as different in practice when compared to their perception of school prior to the COVID-19 pandemic. Tim conveyed this most clearly when he said, "Being at home it felt like a vacation, and I would go to bed late at night and wake up every morning late for school because it didn't feel like school." His words suggest that many students did not feel that online school was school. Mike articulated this when he said, "School is always a place where we need to go to learn and get an education, but online school felt different compared to a normal in person school." This quote seems to suggest that online school had a different feeling when compared to traditional in person school experience. Most students expressed the differences of

online learning to normal in person learning. Online learning was A, B, and C in many students eyes. However, one participant discussed a similarity in their relationship between online and in person learning. Simon expressed this when he said, "I felt I learned the same amount online as I would have learned in person." So, while most participants discussed their changing relationship with online school compared to in person school, one participant found school to remain the same throughout the pandemic. The data seems to suggest that most students felt differently about school during the pandemic when compared to their feelings of school during a normal school year.

Friends

Many participants described the impact the pandemic had on their social emotional health due to the decrease in interaction with friends during online school. Mike conveyed this when he said, "I am normally a happy person, but not being with my friends it was sad and depressing. It was hard not seeing them for several days at a time." His words seem to suggest the impact the pandemic had on his social emotional health due to the lack of interaction with friends. Most participants expressed emotions related to the lack of interactions with friends as a challenge to their experience throughout the pandemic. Simon discussed this when he said, "I was kind of depressed at times, because during online school you're not with your friends at all and that is a big part of being at school." This quote seems to suggest that emotions of sadness were developed as students were not accustomed to being in school without being with their friends. Lana articulated this further when she said, "I

felt a little bit of loneliness. School is fun because you see all your friends, you hang out with people in your classes, it's a place for you to be social. I began missing friends and missing people." Her words seem to demonstrate that she developed emotions of loneliness as she struggled to have any type of social interaction with friends or with people. The data seems to indicate that most students faced challenges during the pandemic to their social emotional health and missed the routine interactions amongst friends during in person school.

Emotions

Most student responses discussed various emotions experienced by students during the pandemic that impacted their emotional health and well-being. Emotions range from sadness to loneliness during the pandemic and were impactful to many students' socioemotional health. Tim discussed this most clearly when he said, "I would get frustrated a lot at school and I would get sad with the choices the school made because I thought they could do a better job." His words seem to suggest that his emotional wellbeing was impacted by school choices during the pandemic. All participants experienced some level of emotion that impacted their well-being. For some participants, the focus was on the lack of connection to the outside world. Nikki expressed this when she said, "School during the pandemic really made me miserable. I was bored and depressed. I had no source of connection to the outside world, and I was home in bed all day." Her words suggest her emotional health was impacted directly by the pandemic. The data seems to reveal that all students experienced some level of impact to their emotional health and well-being during the pandemic.

Summary

This chapter presented findings from my data analysis regarding the experiences of students during the COVID-19 pandemic. The three main themes that emerged included: the student learning experiences, the impacts on student education, and the student social-emotional experiences. In the following chapter, I will discuss the implications of the results.

CHAPTER V

CONCLUSION

This chapter will present a summary of my findings. The chapter will then share the implications of the findings for myself as an educator, future students inside of my classroom, and administrators. Additionally, limitations will be addressed. Following this, suggestions for future research and a conclusion are presented.

Discussion

Through this study I sought to understand the experiences of high school students during the initial phase of the COVID-19 pandemic. The findings of this study address the influence of the COVID-19 pandemic on student learning experiences, student educational performance, and student social emotional well-being. The findings of this study connect, support, and add complexity to knowledge from existing scholarship.

I found the learning experience, educational performance, and social-emotional well-being for students during the pandemic was an experience impacted by various challenges. These findings are similar to the work of Knipe & Lee (2002) as students experienced and were impacted by a lower quality of education through a distance learning model compared to their previous experience of a traditional classroom environment. Also, such knowledge adds complexity to scholarship on teacher preparation for the pandemic because many educators were not prepared in the usage of technology or trained to deliver instruction using an online model (Trust

& Whalen, 2020). This study found that students, similar to teachers, were not prepared to use technology or receive instruction using an online model as well. Lastly, the findings of this study relate to existing scholarship on the impact of the pandemic on students' lives because student social-emotional health and well-being were affected negatively (Tümen, 2020). Through student interviews and existing scholarship, I was able to gain an understanding of the overall student experiences, perspectives, and the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on students.

Implications

As an educator who currently works with students that have thoroughly experienced a global pandemic, the findings of this research are extremely beneficial. The results of this study provide a greater understanding of the student experience during this time, I will begin to incorporate ways to support all my students that have faced unique challenges due to the COVID-19 pandemic. For example, I plan to implement activities and instruction with greater levels of student voice inside of my classroom. Student voice is essential to a positive classroom environment and the findings from this study and overall impact of a global pandemic demonstrate a focus to be receptive and understanding of all students. Doing so will allow me to better shape my lessons to incorporate the experiences of my students and provide a more valuable educational experience. These findings will also shape my teaching style to meet the needs of all my students and in providing support instructionally and social emotionally. Doing so will create a more positive classroom environment and create strong classroom relationships with students. Gaining the perspective of students

during the pandemic has given me insight into how to better support students inside of my class.

My future students will benefit from the findings of this study. The ability for students to share their experiences positive and negative during a global pandemic will improve my success as an educator for the future. By gathering the perspectives and experiences of students, this study highlights the various supports that need to be implemented for students. Students will be given opportunities to provide feedback to myself as the educator and have outlets in my class to be supported. Students will be supported in using technology effectively rather than meaninglessly as found from this study. A push will be made to create a classroom environment that is open to ideas for instruction produced by all students to improve motivation and engagement. Outlets such as journal entries, collaboration amongst students, and anonymous forms will be used to improve and resolve the relationship between student and school and support their social-emotional wellbeing. By implementing means to progress an overall negative experience most students endured from the pandemic I hope to provide a classroom open to innovative ideas, student voice, and a safe environment to impact their learning experience. Importantly, this will demonstrate students have been heard from their experience during the pandemic and have a voice that matters that will be used to improve their educational experience.

Administrators are another group that will benefit from the findings of this study. This study further implies a level of benefit to gaining the perspectives of students that have underwent a global event and can help shape the future of our

students within our community. The findings of this study show the successes and challenges students experienced in learning during the pandemic. Administrators need to recognize the impact a pandemic had on student performance and find ways to assist in resolving unhealthy habits created by the pandemic. A push for administration should be made to improve many of the unhealthy habits' students have created due to the pandemic by providing opportunities for students to learn about the harms of too much screen time, the importance of a regular sleep schedule, how to improve study habits and extra opportunities for students outside of normal school hours to receive support from teachers, counselors, and administrators. Also, administrators should conduct interviews with various students to implement student voice in their plans to improve school culture and climate post COVID-19 pandemic. By doing so students will feel like their voice is influential to the trajectory of the school, more connected to the learning environment, and feel better supported by school administration. Overall administration should begin to create platforms and outlets platforms to better support students' social emotional health that has been impacted by the pandemic. Administration could implement a weekly temperature checks form sent to all students via email or quarterly meetings with school counselors to assist a clear need for student social-emotional well-being. By gaining an insight to the experiences of students during the pandemic this has given me perspective to the vital role administration has in creating a supportive school community open to student voice and well-being.

Limitations

My goal as a researcher was to gain an understanding of the experiences of students during the COVID-19 pandemic, which I have done. However, one limitation of my study concerned the lack of triangulation as a confirmability strategy. Triangulation is the process of corroborating evidence about a finding from diverse types of data (Merriam, 2009). Using other forms of data collection would have allowed me to confirm the findings within the study. I could have sent out a survey to the participants prior to the study to gain a better understanding of how they perceived their experience with the COVID-19 pandemic prior to participating in the study. This would have allowed me to compare their responses from the survey and the interview questions to gain a deeper understanding of their experience with the COVID-19 pandemic. These actions would have strengthened my findings and improved the analysis of the data.

Suggestions for Future Research

This study can be used as a starting point to gain insight and understanding of the impact the COVID-19 pandemic had on high school students. It would be beneficial to reproduce this study and include more participants within the exceptionally diverse population of a school in the Central Valley. Doing so would allow the researcher to compare data and determine any similarities and differences between the experiences of a larger data set of students.

Another possible area for further research would be to conduct this study with a different student population. Conducting this study with special education students

might have data that informs different experiences to the pandemic. Doing so might also inform the supports for teachers that teach special education students and general education students. This would increase the capacity of teachers to meet the needs of all the students within their classrooms.

Conclusion

The purpose of this study was to understand the experiences of students during the COVID-19 pandemic. The research revealed that students during the pandemic experienced successes as well as challenges. Students experienced negative impacts to their performance in school due to the pandemic. Students experienced difficulties regarding their social emotional state that impacted their wellbeing. Lastly, the overall student experience during the COVID-19 pandemic was negative.

As a result of conducting this research, I will use the findings to influence my teaching practices. I plan to provide opportunities to students to provide feedback to the instruction that they are being given and provide supports to assist their social emotional wellbeing. By strengthening these aspects of their education, I will create a more positive learning environment and be able to support all the diverse students inside of my classroom. This will ensure to students that their experiences during the COVID-19 pandemic will not define the rest of their educational journey and endeavors.

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APPENDICES

APPENDIX A

PARENT CONSENT FORM

California State University, Stanislaus
Parental Consent in Research
Student Experiences During the COVID-19 Pandemic

Purpose of the Research
The Principal Investigator, Ryan Chima, is a graduate student at California State University, Stanislaus conducting research for a master's degree thesis in Curriculum and Instruction

The purpose of this research is to understand the experiences of central valley high school students during the Covid-19 pandemic.

Procedures
If your child/ward participates they will
- Participate in an interview which will last 30-45 minutes
  - Be asked questions relating to their experiences as a student during the COVID-19 pandemic such as, distance learning, engagement and motivation, social and emotional learning, and inequalities that may have experienced during this school year.

Potential Risks or Discomforts
There are no known risks to you for your child/ward's participation in this study. However, there might be a
possibility of potential emotional harm to participants in the form of anxiety and stress as they will describe their experiences during the Covid-19 pandemic. However, strategies will be employed to minimize this risk and steps will be taken to guarantee that no type of emotional harm will be caused to the participants involved. They will be able to skip any question they are made uncomfortable by. Also, they may stop participation in the study at any time for any reason with no penalty.

Potential Benefits of the Research
There are no direct benefits for your child/ward. However, numerous reasons why the research study conducted at this school will be beneficial for all involved. Educators may benefit by gaining a better understanding of how some students at the school describe their experiences during the pandemic, so that preventive measures and effective strategies to address these experiences can be placed more effectively at this school. This study may also help futures students at this school gain a better understanding of the importance of this pandemic school year and how their experiences can assist this school in better serving the student population.

Confidentiality

To ensure confidentiality and privacy, the information collected will be kept in a password protected computer and a locked file cabinet. While the study is underway, all the data recorded on an audio-recorder will be transferred immediately and stored on a password protected computer. All the data collected on the recorder will then be destroyed in a timely manner. Pseudonyms will be used in any presentation of the data from the study to protect the confidentiality of participants.

The researcher **will not** keep your research data to use for future research or another purpose.

Costs

There is no cost to you beyond the time and effort required to complete the procedures listed above.

Compensation

No compensation will be provided for participation in the study.

There is no anticipated commercial profit related to this research.

Participation and Withdrawal

Your child/ward's participation is voluntary. They may refuse to participate or stop participation at any time without penalty or loss of benefits.

Questions

If you have any questions about this research project please contact me, Ryan Chima, at (###) - ### - #### rchima@csustan.edu or my faculty sponsor, Dr. Steven Drouin at (###) - ### - #### or sdrouin@csustan.edu

If you have any questions regarding your rights and participation as a research subject, please contact the IRB Administrator by phone (209) 667-3493 or email IRBadmin@csustan.edu.

Safety

If a student needs support after the interview, a counselor from Buhach Colony is available to talk to the student
Contact Information:
Dallas Morgana
Buhach Colony High School Counselor
mdallas@muhsd.org
(###) - ### - ####

Consent

I have read and understand the information provided above. All of my questions, if any, have been answered to my satisfaction. I consent to take let my child/ward take part in this study. I have been given a copy of this form.

Participating Child's Name (printed)

_____

Parent/Guardian Name (printed)

_____

Parent/Guardian giving consent (signature)

_____

Date _____

Location of Interview: Please check one
_____ I/my child would prefer to meet in the Mr. Chima's classroom (in person)
_____ I/my child would prefer to meet via zoom (online)

Time of Interview: Please check one
_____ I/my child would prefer to meet before school
_____ I/my child would prefer to meet after school

Audio Recording: Please check one
_____ I give consent to let the interview be audio-recorded for the most accurate representation of the students responses to the questions
_____ I do not give consent to let the interview be audio-recorded for accuracy. This will result in the student being dismissed from the study to avoid inconsistencies in student interview responses.

APPENDIX B

STUDENT ASSENT FORM

California State University, Stanislaus
Student Assent in Research
Student Experiences During the COVID-19 Pandemic

Purpose of the Research
The Principal Investigator, Ryan Chima, is a graduate student at California State University, Stanislaus *c*onducting research for a master's degree thesis in Curriculum and Instruction

The purpose of this research is to understand the experiences of central valley high school students during the Covid-19 pandemic.

Procedures
If you agree to participate, you will
- Participate in an interview which will last 30-45 minutes
  - Be asked questions relating to your experiences as a student during the COVID-19 pandemic such as, distance learning, engagement and motivation, social and emotional learning, and inequalities that you may have experienced during this school year.

Potential Risks or Discomforts
There are no known risks to you for your participation in this study. However, there might be a possibility of potential emotional harm in the form of anxiety and stress as you describe your experiences with this school year and aspects of a challenging year. I will take steps to make sure no type of emotional harm will be caused to you. You will be able to skip any question that might make you uncomfortable. Also, you may stop participation in the study at any time for any reason with no penalty.

Potential Benefits of the Research
There are several reasons why you are sharing your experiences will be helpful. Educators are adults and may have a different understanding about the pandemic. However, educators are also making decisions about students based upon assumptions about your experience. Sharing your experience can help them make more informed decisions. This study may also help futures students at this school gain a better understanding of the importance of this pandemic school year and how their experiences can assist this school in better serving the student population.

Confidentiality

All information/data collected will be kept in a password protected computer and a locked file cabinet for safety. All data collected will be destroyed in a timely manner.

The researcher **will not** keep your research data to use for future research or another purpose.

A pseudonym (made up name) will be used for you and the school when I write up what I found in the study, to protect you.

Costs

There is no cost to you beyond the time and effort required to complete the procedures listed above.

Compensation

No compensation will be provided for participation in the study.

There is no anticipated commercial profit related to this research.

Participation and Withdrawal

Your participation is voluntary. You may refuse to participate or stop participation at any time without penalty or loss of benefits.

Questions

If you have any questions about this research project please contact me, Ryan Chima, at (###) - ### - #### or rchima@csustan.edu or my faculty sponsor, Dr. Steven Drouin at (###) - ### - #### or sdrouin@csustan.edu

If you have any questions regarding your rights and participation as a research subject, please contact the IRB Administrator by phone (209) 667-3493 or email IRBadmin@csustan.edu.

Safety

If a student needs support after the interview, a counselor from Buhach Colony is available to talk to the student
Contact Information:
Dallas Morgana
Buhach Colony High School Counselor
mdallas@muhsd.org
(###) - ### - ####

Assent

I have read and understand the information provided above. All of my questions, if any, have been answered to my satisfaction. I assent to take part in this study. I have been given a copy of this form.

Your Name (printed)

_____

Your Assent (signature)

_____

Date _____

Audio Recording: Please check one
_____ I assent to let the interview be audio-recorded for the most accurate representation of your responses to the questions
_____ I do not assent to let the interview be audio-recorded for accuracy. This will result in the student being   dismissed from the study to avoid inconsistencies in student interview responses.

APPENDIX C

INTERVIEW PROTOCOL

Interview Procedure and Questions

Introduction:
Thank you very much for taking the time to talk with me today. My name is Mr. Chima, and I will be facilitating this interview. The goal of this project is to understand the experiences of students during the COVID-19 pandemic. For the questions I'm about to ask you, please answer in as much detail as possible. However, I want you to know that you may skip any question for any reason. Nothing you say will be held against you as my student or member of the community. Also, if you would like to stop participation in the interview and study at any time for any reasons, just let me know.

I wanted to remind you that as a teacher, I am a mandated reporter. This means that if you share something with me that might be illegal or that someone was or might be hurt, I need to share this information with the school principal.

Do you understand and have any questions before we get started?

Prior to answering these questions, I want to remind you that some of the questions relate to the beginning of the pandemic which was March of 2020 to the present day.

> **Broad**
> 1. What do you recall when you heard that you were not coming to school the next day in March of 2020 because of the COVID-19 pandemic?
>
> **Distance Learning**
> 2. Tell me about your initial experience with Distance Learning.
>   a. What challenges, if any, did you experience?
>   b. What success, if any, did you experience?
> 3. What did it feel like to be attending school from your home or other places?
>
> **Engagement/Motivation**
> 4. Tell me about the pandemic and your engagement with school.
>   a. For example, understanding the material presented by your teacher
>   b. Seeking help
> 5. How would you describe your motivation motivated to learn during the pandemic?
>   a. What helped increased motivation?

        b. What hindered your motivation?

Social & Emotional

6. Tell me about the pandemic and your socio-emotional state?

        a. Clarify: What emotions were you experiencing throughout the pandemic as it related to school?

Inequalities

7. Tell me about resources (technology/schoolbooks) and your experience with learning during the pandemic?

        a. How did resources influence your experience in distance learning such as internet connection, computer malfunctions, lack of a quiet space?

Closure

8. How did the pandemic effect your view on school?
9. What is an aspect of your experience during the pandemic that you feel is important for teachers/administrators to know about?

End of Interview:

Thank you for participating in this interview, I really appreciate your time.

I want to remind you that if you need someone to talk to after reflecting on the pandemic, Mrs. Dallas, is available to talk to you anytime.

Contact Information:
Dallas Morgana
Buhach Colony High School Counselor
mdallas@muhsd.org
(###) - ### - ####