VIRTUAL SESSION HOUSEKEEPING

• To reduce distracting background noise, please stay muted unless you are speaking

• We will be using Slido today (app.sli.do). To connect, go to https://tinyurl.com/y2kg2ord or scan the QR code:

![QR Code]

Slido #59259

• Discussion is encouraged by chat or audio in Zoom and via Slido's Q&A

• Remember to evaluate this session at the end
DEEPER LISTENING: 
THE UNEXPECTED RELEVANCE OF EXTERNAL STRESSORS AND TIME POVERTY FOR ONLINE STUDENTS

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THEORETICAL LENS

Framework was influenced by *time poverty* (Vickery, 1997)

- Student parents and working students are:
  - More time poor than their childless and non-working peers (Wladis, Hachey, Conway, 2018)
  - More likely to enroll in online courses (Jaggars, 2014)
- Previous research literature found that external stressors negatively impact college students’ academic performance
METHODS

Data were collected from 49 City University of New York students enrolled in online courses through in-depth semi-structured interviews, where students were asked about:

• their reasons for enrolling in an online course
• their experiences in the online course
• various complex environmental factors that were present during the semester they were enrolled in the online course
• other external life stressors that may have impacted their studies
An emerging coding scheme was developed to determine common themes in student interviews.

1. One researcher read through all the student responses and developed an emergent coding scheme using constant comparison analysis

2. Two other researchers coded student reasons for course dropout using the developed coding scheme

3. All three researchers revised the coding structure throughout the coding process (combining, splitting, re-defining, recategorizing, suggesting new codes)
Students’ reasons for enrolling in courses online:

- 51% cited commitments related to paid work
- 31% cited family obligations
- 27% cited commute, distance, or convenience

Many of these factors are related to **time poverty**.

These results are similar to previous studies and reflect that various external non-academic factors are relevant to students who enroll in courses online at public universities in the US.
At the end of the interview, students were specifically asked whether any other life events impacted the time and energy they had for their studies that semester.

Many students cited external environmental stressors that they did not originally cite when previously asked about their reasons for enrolling online or factors that impacted their studies.

- 73% of students cited at least one external stressor
- Many of these students cited up to three or four categories of stressors
STRESSORS DISCUSSED BY STUDENTS

- Job
- Childcare
- Illness
- Finances
- Pregnancy

- Moving
- Relationships
- Eldercare
- Immigration
- Death

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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Stressor</th>
<th>Proportion</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Serious illness/injury (family/close friend)</td>
<td>33%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Death in the family/close friend</td>
<td>19%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Caring for sick/disabled parent/grandparent</td>
<td>19%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Job stressors</td>
<td>19%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Serious illness/injury (their own)</td>
<td>17%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unemployment/job change</td>
<td>17%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Moving house or housing insecurity</td>
<td>17%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Pregnant/birth of a child</td>
<td>11%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Financial issues</td>
<td>11%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Disabled child</td>
<td>9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Childcare issues</td>
<td>8%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Romantic relationship stressors, including divorce</td>
<td>8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Planning a wedding</td>
<td>3%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Domestic violence</td>
<td>3%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Immigration</td>
<td>3%</td>
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</tbody>
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INCIDENCE OF FACTORS RELATED TO TIME POVERTY AND STRESSORS – 3

• These stressors are likely underreported due to desirability bias – students may be influenced by the stigma of not matching the profile of a typical college student

• 89% of the factors reported by students did not come up when students were asked specifically why they enrolled online or what factors impacted their course outcomes

• These factors only arose when students were specifically asked about other life events that impacted the time and energy they had to devote to their studies
External stressors are underreported – of the students interviewed,

• 20% cited general work and/or family or other external factors as impacting their decision to enroll online without describing or detailing the exact nature of these stressors

• About 60% provided specific details about particular family commitments impacting time or energy they had for courses

• Of students who described family-related stressors impacting their time or energy for college, only 32% had originally cited family responsibilities as a reason for enrolling online.
LIMITATIONS

• This study cannot establish generalizable causal relationships, and the results cannot be used to make larger-scale inferences.

• Only students taking courses online were interviewed, not students who enrolled only in face-to-face courses.

• The results are exploratory and suggest key factors that should be further tested in future research.
DISCUSSION OF NARRATIVES

• How can we help students feel more comfortable with sharing these kinds of stressors?
• What can we do in our institutions to support students with external stressors better?

Slido #59259:
Submit your thoughts in the “Ideas” section! Then, vote on others’ comments by either upvoting or downvoting.

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Student 1: working 40 hours/week to pay for living expenses; primary caretaker of two children in primary school. They cited work and childcare as having an impact on the decision to enroll online and on course outcomes.

“Recently I found out I had kidney stones, you know I was getting a lot of pain, and I thought it had to do with my sleeping habits. I would wake up and I would have a lot of lower back pain. It affected me as far as moving around and certain points it was very painful for me to move around... The semester that I took the classes online, my father actually he was actually dying of cancer, and that was hard of course because I was still in school... he passed [in] November during this time. I did let the teachers know and they were very considerate. You know they said you’ve been a good student and you know if there was an assignment when we were going to have the funeral, they told me you go be with your dad, even though I was trying to do the work the same day I found out... since my dad passed, I also alternate households because I would stay with my mom, because she was by herself. I would stay there a couple of nights and go to my home with my husband and kids, then there would be times when we would all stay there and like that.”
"I suffer from clinical depression so some days it's very very hard to get out of bed in the morning. My life tasks let alone any of my other additional tasks that has impacted my education has been fortunate though because I've had professors [who are] very very understanding and with dialogue I was really able to do what I had to do to make sure I was reaching my grades even though I was feeling very very overwhelmed… [Last semester] my sister died from cancer… I was very tired. I was being pulled in a lot of different directions and a lot was being expected of me. I think it's different when you're a parent and you're going to school than when you're fresh out of high school living at home you know, and classes don't take that into consideration when writing the syllabus. We're expected to perform as if we're 18 and have no responsibilities when in all actuality we have 1000 responsibilities. So depression, grief she was very sick you know chemo radiation, all of those things had me being pulled in 1000 different directions and it was hard for me to not only cope but to keep up."
Student 3: had a challenging work schedule, which was the reason for enrolling in an online course; they described work as having a major negative impact on their ability to do well in school:

“I was working so I was kinda getting bogged down. I was full-time school, I never took an online course in my life, so I figured I'll try it because I don't have to go in that day, I'll be able to go to work and then study at night when I go home…I was working in retail at the time and it was very demanding. Sometimes they wanted you to stay later or if someone else is not doing their job you have to pick up their slack. Working on weekends, no time to yourself, it was very stressful to manage. Yeah in the beginning everything was they had a system set up where it was a set schedule where you knew when you were coming in on the exact days. Then later they changed it where the schedule changes every single week. It was just the worst system so you never knew when you are coming in so you know what to expect. The store got busier and busier and busier… I tried not to make noise about things so I would go home late and still have to study…I was able to do it but I wish I would've had more time definitely.“
Student 4: This student described work as the reason for enrolling online, but also other challenges that impacted their ability to do well in courses:

“There is no adequate affordable childcare and when I was at [the college] they had a daycare center, so I could take my classes there, but the debt that I was accruing because I would have to take student loans to make ends meet it's why I had to start working. And I'm married, there was a cap, my husband said I could borrow a certain amount of money. And I exceeded that so… [My job] is not very flexible at all I have to be there. I work Tuesday, Wednesday, Thursday, Friday, and Saturday. My Fridays alternate between 7 PM and 7 AM and sometimes there are 11 to 7am… I have two minor children one is seven and one is one. My seven-year-old I had to send to a private school in Pennsylvania but it's free because I wasn't making enough money to take care of her. Once I lost my last job and I started school I had to send her and they accepted her thank God so she's safely in school. Now that this job and things are getting better I can go get her… I think I could do better as a student if I didn't have the responsibilities of children. As a matter fact I know I could do better I could do a lot better if I had done it sooner or before I had children… The only problem that I ran into in my first semester was that I was almost homeless. That was the only thing just getting through the first year was a struggle I was absent a lot and I didn't have – I wasn't able to study as much… I just want you to know that this is hard with my responsibilities, like going to school is the hardest thing, but it's the best thing that I've ever done you know it really is it's a real sacrifice now that I'm thinking about it, as I'm listening to myself, it's a real sacrifice…”
DISCUSSION OF NARRATIVES

• How can we help students feel more comfortable with sharing these kinds of stressors?
• What can we do in our institutions to support students with external stressors better?

Thoughts from the “Ideas” section on Slido

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**CONCLUSIONS AND IMPLICATIONS**

- Life circumstances and external stressors that contribute to time poverty were highly prevalent in this sample.
- Many stressors were interrelated and co-occurring.
- External stressors included factors such as illness, death in the immediate family, caretaking responsibilities, job stressors, and housing insecurities.
- Students enrolled in online courses at public institutions in the US experience a host of external challenges that may impact their ability to successfully complete their courses.
- Further research which investigates these external factors could be critical to fully understanding how to best support these students.
REFERENCES


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