**Abstract: The Impacts of School Disruptions on Families of Carleton University Faculty and Staff during COVID-19**

Ontario families have experienced longer education and schooling disruptions than any other Canadian province or territory, with most schools closed for a total of 20 weeks during the period from March 14th, 2020 to May 15th, 2021 (Gallagher-Mackay et al., 2021). However, little research has been implemented to analyze the experience of families with online learning and school disruptions as a result of the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic, particularly within the Ontario context (Gallagher-Mackay et al., 2021). Given the need for more insight into understanding how children and families have been impacted by these disruptions, I decided to inquire and analyze the experience of Carleton University faculty and staff with children aged 5 – 12 years old who attended school in Ontario during the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic by rooting my inquiry and analysis in the discipline of Childhood and Youth studies.

**The Study:** Initially the research topic I had proposed was one examining the experiences of racialized families in Ottawa with online learning and school disruptions during the COVID-19 pandemic. I planned to use an anonymous Google Forms survey to collect information from eligible participants recruited through contacts with local organizations. Unfortunately, my original method of recruiting participants through different non-profit organizations within Ottawa did not work. When this failed, I sought ethics approval for a change in protocol that would allow me to expand my recruitment pool, however, this method led to the data being compromised and did not produce any eligible participants. Realizing the need to utilize existing relationships to find participants, I decided to regroup and form a new approach that focused on understanding the experience of families of Carleton University faculty and staff with online learning and school disruptions. This qualitative study engaged 5 participants, Carleton University faculty and staff who are parents with children aged 5-12 years-old attending school in Ontario. Participants were recruited through the use of convenience sampling from professional contacts within the Carleton community. Participants were asked to participate in a 20 to 30-minute zoom interview in which each participant answered questions about their family’s experience with online learning and school disruptions in order to understand their concerns, challenges or potential silver linings.

**The findings:** The interview responses of each participant were organized in a spreadsheet and analyzed using a thematic analysis. The preliminary findings of this study reveal a number of key themes. One of the primary themes amongst participant responses was mental health. Many parents noted increased levels of stress and anxiety amongst themselves, their partners, and their children. This was due to factors such as lack of consistency, with schools going in and out of online learning and different delivery methods for online learning during lockdowns in the province. Additionally, the ability to multi-task and balance working full-time and helping their children with online learning and co-teaching their children, something which this study found was more prominent amongst families with younger children who were less independent and needed more assistance with online learning, also contributed to increased levels of stress and anxiety. Another key theme was socialization, with many participants noting that they are concerned about how their children are doing socially and how they will adjust when returning to school. This is due to how participants cited school as a major socializing agent and a place in which children learn social skills and techniques, however, as a result of the numerous school closures and months in which many of them lasted, participants expressed socialization as one of their biggest concerns. Moreover, while some participants reported struggling with the lack of consistency with regard to delivery method or the influx in emails from their children’s teachers, this study found that many participants felt that given resources (i.e., time) and the restraints with online learning, that teachers and other support staff did a great job and felt very supported by their children’s schools (i.e., when it came to be provided the resources needed for their children’s success such as laptops or handouts, by support staff or being met with understanding given the circumstances of the pandemic).

**Usefulness and future research:** This study has the potential to inform policy and practice within Ontario’s education system and curriculum, particularly as the COVID-19 pandemic continues into the 2021-2022 school year and for the post-pandemic era. Moreover, this study may also be of use in informing Carleton University administration about the experiences of their faculty and staff who have children attending schools and the ways in which they can better support them. As I initially sought out to do with this research project, future research should examine racialized families experience with online learning and school disruptions as result of the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic within the Ontario context due to how studies have shown that Black, Indigenous, and people of color (BIPOC) are being disproportionately impacted by the current COVID-19 pandemic, but little is known about their experience (Centre for Disease Control and Prevention, 2021; Guttmann et al., 2020; James, 2020; Public Health Ontario, 2020; Sefa Dei & Lewis, 2020Wane, 2020).

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