ORIGINAL RESEARCH STUDIES

Online Learning in a "Fancy Prison": The Impact of COVID-19 on the International Student Academic Experience While Living in a Quarantine Hotel

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Abstract: The rapid development of the COVID-19 pandemic during the spring 2020 academic semester resulted in many international undergraduate students evacuating the United States to return to their home countries. Some faced government-mandated quarantine in a designated quarantine hotel upon their entry into the country which overlapped with the end of the spring semester or start of summer term. Interviewers conducted qualitative interviews on Zoom with international students enrolled at American universities regarding their experiences with online learning while in isolation. This extreme environment had negative implications for their psychological well-being as well as their ability to self-motivate. Researchers formulated best practices based on the data to assist instructors and institutions in making better decisions regarding the academic experience of students who may be forced into quarantine in an unfamiliar environment in the future.

Introduction

In spring 2020, American universities and colleges faced the difficult decision to move in-person classes online in light of the COVID-19 crisis. The University of Washington became the first American university to halt in-person classes and shift to remote learning in early March 2020 (Baker et al., 2020). Most higher education institutions followed suit quickly thereafter and shuttered their physical doors to open virtual ones. This quick shift to remote learning created difficult decisions for faculty, staff, and students as the virus impacted nearly every aspect of a student's college experience (Smalley, 2020).

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For example, college students quickly had to make decisions regarding their finances, housing, and academic futures.

As the virus continued to spread from spring into summer, approximately three quarters of the world's countries suspended travel (Brumfiel & Wilbur, 2020). International students faced the difficult decision of whether to stay in the United States or return to their home country and risk issues with their visas or even exposure to health risks (Rust et al., 2020). Nonetheless, many international students studying in the United States left the country to avoid border closures and essentially becoming trapped in the United States. This migration of international students to their home countries may have gone unnoticed by some faculty. However, the transition for international students was not seamless as many faced restrictions or challenges upon arrival to their home countries.

Although every country tackled the COVID-19 pandemic differently, many mandated persons entering the country to quarantine, including staying in a quarantine hotel. These isolation units popped up worldwide from Australia (Shepard, 2020) to South Korea (Sang-Hun, 2020). Thus, some international students experienced immediate quarantine once they returned to their home country. Because of the timing of their flights and required quarantines, some students finished their spring 2020 coursework online while living in a quarantine hotel. Researchers explored the impact of quarantine on students who were forced to complete the spring and summer 2020 semesters online due to the pandemic.

Through qualitative interviews, this project identifies the environmental, psychological, and educational challenges international students experienced when leaving the United States in spring 2020 and entering a quarantine hotel. Some interviewees were unaware of their new living situations until they boarded planes leaving the United States. The majority of interviewees experienced academic stress due to technology and online learning while also combating loneliness and boredom. This project centers around the unique and unusual situation of quarantine hotels to help provide a better educational environment for undergraduate students who are forced into quarantine isolation while taking online classes.

Literature Review

COVID-19 changed the landscape of education in the United States and around the world. With the outbreak of the virus, most educational institutions suspended in-person learning (Daniel, 2020). Researchers also found students learned less during government-mandated lockdowns (Engzell et al., 2021). In particular, the suspension of in-person learning negatively affected students who already were low achieving as it removed in-person faculty support (Grewenig et al., 2021). Researchers found students prefer in-person education over online learning as they may feel they have fewer resources and more difficulty in communicating with their instructors in a virtual setting (Aguilera-Hermida, 2020). There are additional factors to consider when thinking about the additional challenges faced by students studying abroad and those posed in general by online education.

International Students

The number of international students studying in the United States increased prior to the COVID-19 pandemic. In 2019, over one million international students attended American universities (Bastrikin, 2020). Jennings (2017) indicates a number of reasons motivating students to study in the United States,

including the quality of American schools, an interest in learning a new language, and increased job prospects. American colleges and universities may have attempted to attract larger numbers of international students as students from overseas generally pay out-of-pocket for tuition (Aw, 2012). International students also benefit from studying abroad, such as personal growth and development and a transformed worldview (Conceição et al., 2020).

Despite these benefits, both universities and international students have to overcome a few institutional and interpersonal difficulties. With the expansion of the international student population studying in the United States, universities found their students and faculty experienced obstacles when assessing a student's credentials, language skills, and measuring a student's previous academic experiences (Aw, 2012). In sum, some international students arrive in the United States with different expectations for their studies and face challenges adapting to a new culture. Standardized testing is in place for many of these areas. Still, despite having some set standards, many international students struggle with adapting to a new culture which may impact their academic performance (Andrade, 2005). The following sections identify common areas international students experience stress and how online learning can exacerbate the difficulties adapting to unfamiliar learning styles.

International Student Challenges and Stress

Research posits communication is the most significant challenge experienced by international students as it results in reduced academic performance (Mori, 2000), which can lead to academic and psychological stress (Smith & Khawaja, 2011). Mori suggests that communication apprehension may cause international students to not understand the material, hinder their ability to ask questions, and even impact note-taking in class. Furthermore, the act of asking questions can cause an international student to feel like a burden, which can exacerbate already present emotional distress (Taliaferro et al., 2020). Other factors may include a student's socialization with others as one's ability to build relationships with others and create those social connections necessary to overcome cultural barriers (Dove & Bryant, 2016). Unmet interpersonal needs can also create emotional distress (Taliaferro et al., 2020). Thus, researchers decided to explore whether unexpectedly moving online during spring 2020 while staying in quarantine might have limited or completely erased interpersonal connections within a course.

Social isolation can lead to slowing the acculturation process for international students (Dove & Bryant, 2016). To academically succeed, international students need support from faculty and success centers, social support from friends and family, an opportunity to become involved in activities, as well as ample time spent in the country for cultural adaptation (Rabia & Karkouti, 2017). When forced into isolation at quarantine hotels, students lose many avenues of socialization with not only U.S. American students, but also their peers from their home country. Spending 14 or more days in physical isolation can lead to depression, especially if students cannot incorporate their preferred strategies to cope with stress and anxiety (Gebregergis et al., 2020).

Further complicating academic and emotional distress is the fact education is structured differently across countries. For example, in China a student expects more examinations and the course to be instructor-focused such that students are more passive in the classroom (Huang, 2012). Instructors in the United States teach in styles different from their academic colleagues across the globe and the result may be poor academic performance for those students unfamiliar with the teaching style (Telbis et al., 2014). The following sections argue the structure of an online learning platform may negatively impact a student's academic performance.

Online Learning

Research demonstrates online education can be effective if the instructor is able to plan accordingly; however, the pandemic forced instructors to switch to emergency online teaching without much notice (Hodges et al., 2020). Across many disciplines, research demonstrates some students have a more challenging time achieving academic success in an online course than a face-to-face course (Xu & Jaggars, 2014). Students that indicate a preference for in-person learning over online faced challenges in adapting to remote coursework during the pandemic (Aguilera-Hermida, 2020). Online coursework demands students become responsible for their own learning, as they navigate a newfound responsibility for keeping track of assignments. Both faculty and students agree that students must be driven, use time effectively and efficiently, and take ownership of their academic performance to thrive in an online learning environment (Xu & Jaggars, 2014). Additionally, faculty report that it is harder to maintain students' interest, especially in instances with a large class size (Boerema et al., 2007). Students' lack of interest and oftentimes lack of motivation can negatively impact their academic success (Pregitzer & Clements, 2013).

An unsuccessful academic experience on an online platform can be caused by students feeling isolated, feeling overwhelmed by the academic content, having a lack of investment in the course, and having a lack of motivation to succeed in the course (Bambara et al., 2009). As mentioned above, interpersonal connections with the instructor and classmates create a sense of belonging. Bambara et al. (2009) also argue engagement helps "the classroom feel real" (p. 224). A sense of community within an online class can also help prevent students from feeling overwhelmed by unfamiliar and complex course material. Students also reported that the organization of a course and frustrations with technology cause them to feel overwhelmed. If students feel overwhelmed by the online content, they will not be able to focus and emotionally invest in the course, which will lead to a loss in motivation.

Instructors need to be aware of cultural differences when designing online courses (Kung, 2017). Some cultures predominantly use a traditional face-to-face educational model; thus, online education is uncommon. For example, Chinese students are accustomed to a teacher-centered pedagogical style and prefer to receive course content in a face-to-face environment (Tan, 2018). Taiwanese students also prefer a face-to-face instructional model instead of online classes (Wang & Reeves, 2007). Thus, the sharp transition online in spring 2020 could have been a negative experience if the student was not familiar with navigating an online format or from a different culture. Due to the stress and anxiety international students already experience, instructors may need to modify their online courses to consider how culture impacts student learning (de Alvarez & Dickson-Deane, 2018).

Online engagement strategies such as videocasting (video podcasting) and collaborative discussion forums increase academic performance for international students (de Castro et al., 2020). International students can pause and relisten to lectures, which can help clarify concepts and ease academic stress (Sherry et al., 2010). Videocasting is also a more reliable resource when studying for an exam (Evans, 2008). Lecture-directed discussion boards help guide conversation for international students who might feel anxious about a language barrier (de Castro et al., 2020). Discussion boards are also helpful as international students report feeling more anxiety about their oral language skills than their written skills (Sherry et al., 2010).

Instructors need to be strategic when integrating technology into their courses and adjust their pedagogy to ensure academic success (Okojie et al., 2006). Online course design can negatively impact student engagement and material retention (Wang & Reeves, 2007). Thus, instructors need to consider how their use of technology will improve course delivery. The COVID-19 pandemic forced educators to rapidly move online and students had to quickly transition. This project explores the impact of online learning on international students while in quarantine.

Method and Analysis

For this study, two researchers employed qualitative semi-structured in-depth interviews via Zoom and used an interpretive qualitative lens to analyze the data. A qualitative approach allows researchers to emotionally engage (Tracy, 2019) with participants when discussing stressful events, such as being isolated in a quarantine hotel while enrolled in online classes. The semi-structured interview guide created space for interviewees to identify important or interesting aspects of their experience, giving interviewees agency to guide the conversation (Tracy, 2019). In other words, we did not impose or interrupt their narratives to follow a rigid set of questions. Qualitative interviewing also provides flexibility when collecting data (Lindlof & Taylor, 2011). For example, if the internet cut out during the interview researchers could pause and restate questions with ease. Following Tracy's (2010) "Big Tent" criteria for excellent qualitative research, this study is considered rigorous as the two interviewers collected data until the data became saturated. The following subsections identify the interview and analysis process.

Interview Process

Seven undergraduate international students were interviewed for this study. Using a snowball sample, researchers first contacted students in their own courses via email. Then the interviewer asked if the interviewee knew of any of their friends who had similar experiences and would be interested in participating in the study. The interviews were conducted via Zoom and were recorded. Researcher 1 took notes during the interview and Researcher 2 conducted the interview. The interviews lasted 20–40 minutes. Due to IRB restrictions to ensure interviewees remained confidential, researchers did not collect demographic data beyond the student's physical location. However, Table 1 includes the pseudonyms used to identify each participant along with the location of their quarantine hotel.

TABLE 1 Participants	
Pseudonyms	**Location**
Juan	Bolivia
Aziz	Kuwait
Said	Kuwait
Mariam	Kuwait
Lupe	Bolivia
Abdul	Kuwait
Amir	Egypt

All of the interviewees stayed in a quarantine hotel during the end of the spring term or the beginning of the summer term in 2020. Four students were from Kuwait, two were from Bolivia, and one was from Egypt. One student had returned to the United States at the time of the interview but had been in a quarantine hotel during spring 2020. Two of the interviewees were in the quarantine hotel when the researchers collected data, four were interviewed after being released, and one was interviewed after he or she returned to the United States.

We asked five questions: (1) Describe the process of leaving the United States and returning to your home country, including how you ended up at the quarantine hotel, (2) Walk me through a typical day being in the quarantine hotel, (3) How has this situation impacted your ability to learn while enrolled in online classes this summer, (4) What advice would you give to a teacher working with students who are in your situation or a similar situation to make the learning environment better, and (5) How do you manage stress and anxiety given that you are in this situation? Researchers then asked if there was anything else the interviewee wanted to include to ensure they were able to fully describe their experience outside the confines of five questions.

Analysis

Both researchers transcribed and coded the interviews. Researchers used an inductive content analysis by theming patterns within the students' experience (King et al., 2018; Thomas, 2006), meaning themes emerged and were coded during the analysis process. A codebook was created that identified three implications for student learning (1) environmental, (2) psychological, and (3) cognitive. For example, when answering questions (1) Describe the process of leaving the United States and returning to your home country, including how you ended up at the quarantine hotel and (2) Walk me through a typical day being in the quarantine hotel, students described how unusual the experience was, specifically within the environment. For example, students had flown home many times before, but the airport experience was different this time. They also shared how alarming it was to physically enter the hotel and universally described the space as a prison.

Interviewees also focused on the psychological impact of the hotel when answering question (2) Walk me through a typical day being in the quarantine hotel. Participants framed their behavior or routine around feeling hungry or bored. They also experienced loneliness during their isolation. When asked questions (5) How do you manage stress and anxiety given that you are in this situation, they provided strategies for overcoming the previously explained feelings of loneliness and boredom. Last, questions (3) How has this situation impacted your ability to learn while enrolled in online classes this summer, and (4) What advice would you give to a teacher working with students who are in your situation or a similar situation to make the learning environment better, encouraged interviewees to explain the cognitive impact of their experience. Thus, that information became the final theme. It is clear the environment influenced their psychological state, which impacted their cognitive abilities.

Findings

Before providing recommendations on how to structure an online learning model for students in quarantine hotels, it is first important to understand how the experience impacted their ability to learn online. As explained above, this project found three major themes within the students' experience of staying in a quarantine hotel while taking online classes. The three themes include the impact of their

environment, their psychological or emotional state, and the effects on their intellectual achievement or learning. The following sections identify the interviewees' thoughts, perceptions, feelings, and ideas to improve learning for students in similar situations.

Environmental

Students reported their experience of stress when initially traveling back home. Amir said his plane changed course mid-flight and instead of landing in Cairo, it landed in a different city. He explained, "It was pretty ugly that day, people started screaming; it was a mess." Juan did not know he was going to a quarantine hotel until the same day as his flight, so he did not pack appropriately. Upon landing, the students faced unusual circumstances. The process between the airport and the hotel took 4 to 5 hours for Juan and Aziz. Juan explained once they landed, authorities sprayed him and his luggage with alcohol. Aziz was not allowed to leave the airport to smoke a cigarette. Abdul reported the government covered his bus in plastic.

For some students, staying in the hotel was optional. For example, Aziz chose to stay in the hotel because he shares a room with his brother at home. Similarly, Said reported having a small house and a large family. Both Aziz and Said chose to stay in the hotel to prevent possibly infecting their family members. The ability to choose where to quarantine can impact a student's perception of their experience. Furthermore, Aziz had stayed at the assigned hotel before his quarantine experience which might have eased any feeling of anxiety or uncertainty.

Aziz explained the hotel provided medical care and food upon request. They also provided him with an electrical adaptor. Thus, Aziz was unable to use his computer to participate in his online class prior to receiving the adaptor. Mariam and Abdul wore tracking bracelets. Abdul reported having to take a picture of his face multiple times a day and upload it to a government app. Overall, the participants reported their hotel stay felt like a prison. Abdul was allowed to walk outside for 15 minutes to get fresh air. Even though Aziz did not leave his room for 20 days, he described the hotel as a "fancy prison." However, Aziz had a balcony where he could smoke. Said did not leave his room for 14 days but reported that the view was "nice." Mariam also could not leave her room and she explained, "I couldn't see the sun even, we didn't have a balcony . . . I didn't know if it was morning or night until I looked at a clock."

Only one of the participants, Mariam, reported having a roommate. Juan explained everyone had a single room even if there were two beds provided in the room. Abdul was supposed to have a roommate, but the room was too small and they requested separate rooms. After 14 days, Aziz became stir-crazy. Once his test results came back negative, he wanted to leave but the government required him to stay for a full 28 days. He became very frustrated as he felt the additional time was unnecessary. He discussed his frustration with the hotel supervisor and explained he was taking an online class and needed to return home. Eventually, the supervisor agreed, but Aziz had to wait a few more days for transportation. Thus, he only spent 20 out of the allotted 28 days in quarantine.

Juan explained the cost of staying at the hotel was usually $100. However, given the crisis, the price for people quarantining was only $25 a day. As a result of the reduced rate, the hotel did not provide people with large food portions. Finally, after the 5th day, the hotel allowed them to order food through UberEats or other platforms. Lupe and Amir also reported being hungry and not being able to receive items from the outside. However, Lupe's situation was even more complicated because she did not bring

her computer with her. She had to borrow a laptop from a staff member; however, the Wi-Fi was bad because everyone quarantining at the hotel used it for classes during finals week.

Overall, the evacuation process and the environment of the hotel were not conducive to academic success. Their unusual travel experience caused students to feel stressed and anxious. The hotel's environment felt like a prison, especially for students who could not leave their rooms. The feeling of hunger and general frustration negatively impacted their emotional and psychological state.

Psychological

During the interview, three themes emerged regarding the students' psychological and emotional state during their quarantine: boredom, lack of control, and loneliness. It should come as no surprise that almost all participants indicated feeling boredom while isolated in a quarantine hotel room for days on end. Most were in rooms with only beds, desks, and a television. Mariam only had her cell phone with her when she entered quarantine and therefore did not have a laptop to help distract her. Abdul and Amir reported feeling that there was "nothing to do." Although all students were enrolled in classes online, that only passed a small portion of the day. Some participants were lucky to have sources of entertainment with them. Aziz passed the time away from class by watching "four television shows and more than 20 movies." Whereas Said played video games as he only brought one book with him, which suggests that he did not bring any physical course material with him. It is clear that all participants had little advance notice of the situation and, therefore, did not pack things to do to distract them from their situation. Abdul did not know he would be required to stay in a quarantine hotel and only packed one bag that included "three t-shirts and two pairs of shorts." He then had to wash them in the sink of his hotel room for the rest of his stay as outside objects and goods were not allowed to be delivered.

Four participants indicated feeling a lack of control or helplessness over their situation. Juan, Lupe, Abdul, and Amir all indicated they did not have agency in the decision to quarantine. Amir stated feeling stress resulting from an inability to do anything, being prevented from leaving, and not receiving objects from the outside. Abdul indicated concerns over a car he left on his university's campus back in the United States and was uncertain what would happen to it. He also stated he was unsure when he would be allowed to return to retrieve the rest of his stuff. Furthermore, participants had very little autonomy to select their food, meal times, type of room, or determine the length of their stay.

The majority of participants focused on the effects of isolation and the inability to connect to others or socialize. They also reported a lack of direct human interaction; however, a few were allowed to interact with others during meals. Juan was permitted to eat meals with friends that he made on the airplane flight. Those meals were the only socialization he had during the quarantine and were his favorite parts of the day. In addition, Lupe was allowed to have some socialization during meals because she was in the first group of students returning to her country. However, she learned groups after her were socially isolated as they were not permitted to eat together. Aziz was fortunate to have a balcony where he made friends with an older man quarantining in the room next door. They would speak outside on the balcony at a distance, but other than that individual he had no face-to-face human contact.

The majority of participants relied on technology for all human connection. As a result, Mariam was bored and lonely. She indicated her friends would all FaceTime each other and sometimes they would not even speak. They would sit on FaceTime, so they knew they were not alone. Similarly, Amir had a

group chat with people from his flight and was not allowed to see anyone face-to-face. Aziz combatted loneliness by communicating with friends and family over the phone. He indicated, "it was difficult to not be able to physically socialize." He missed activities like going outside or having dinner with friends. Mariam's situation did not permit her to socialize with anyone outside of her room. She had a roommate only because the person had been her roommate back in the United States. Aside from the roommate, she had no direct face-to-face human interaction. As a result, Mariam indicated speaking with friends and students enrolled in the class helped relieve the feelings of loneliness.

Despite having technology and limited in-person interactions, a few participants indicated feeling disconnected from the world. Abdul spoke to his friends and family on the phone and video chat, but he still felt disconnected from the outside world. Juan would open his window and put his head outside for a few minutes a day to remind him there was a world and life outside of the room. Therefore, although students indicated engagement with their peers via technology helped, they still experienced loneliness. It may be useful for instructors teaching students in this environment to include more group work that creates more opportunities for students to connect to each other. The following section will identify how the environment's psychological effects impacted the students' ability to focus on schoolwork.

Cognitive

Students reported several stressors relating to the coursework itself or the learning process while isolated and taking online classes. Three of the participants located in time zones outside the United States' standard zones indicated the difference in time impacted their ability to submit assignments and even stay awake for class. Aziz explained he received feedback from faculty that he was the first person to submit assignments or reply on discussion boards. However, Aziz turning in assignments first was simply the result of being ahead in time which impacted the timing of his submissions. Mariam altered her sleep schedule to be awake in the United States' time zone, even though that decision resulted in her sleeping for "14 hours a day." Additionally, Amir summarized his advice for faculty teaching students enduring a similar experience to understand "it is even harder to take classes online in a different country with a different time zone." Abdul indicated even though he had plenty of time to do the work he lost track of time as the "days blurred together since we were closed off from society." Of note, no students in a standard American time zone indicated an impact on sleep or assignments.

There were also unexpected drawbacks for these students regarding the online format. Lupe and Amir both encountered difficulties in transitioning online. For Lupe, it was the first time she had ever taken an online class. She indicated that she did not know what to do at times. Amir also described classes online as "difficult." Furthermore, students reported feeling frustrated not being able to engage with their faculty or even ask questions to the instructor face-to-face. Lupe indicated some of her professors were unfamiliar with online teaching, which made her feel "lost" in the class. Additionally, she chose not to reveal to her professors that she was in a quarantine situation as she worried they would think she was making excuses. Therefore, she remained silent about her experience and felt she could not speak to her professors about the course. Amir encountered a total lack of communication with his faculty because the hotel did not have Wi-Fi for 3 days. Amir summarizes his online learning experience simply by saying, "it is hard to take classes online."

Other participants lost focus on schoolwork due to the psychological and environmental impact of the experience on them. As referenced above, many students did not receive adequate-sized portions of

food at mealtime. Juan could not sleep due to his hunger, which directly impacted his ability to focus. Lupe and Abdul remarked on the difficulty in concentrating as a result of being in the same unchanging environment. The students lost motivation and focus on assignments even though they had ample time simply because, "when you're in the same place with the television, phone, and a bed, it is hard to be focused or motivated to write an essay" (Lupe). Juan kept focus first by following a routine, but then he started playing video games to alleviate his boredom and lost track of time. Therefore, hunger, inability to focus, lack of motivation, and boredom appear to be common themes experienced by participants in this situation.

Not all participants disliked online learning in this environment. Said preferred the quiet of the hotel and was able to study. He mentioned twice in the interview that it was "a cool experience" since he could not hear his neighbors and enjoyed the quiet place to study for exams. Aziz also had a positive experience engaging in online learning as his instructors took attendance, created opportunities for group work, and even virtual tutoring sessions where he could get extra assistance. His online course was structured so that he could organize his time and move through the online modules at his own pace. He enjoyed this structure and felt he had the necessary support due to instructional videos on how to navigate the online platform, Zoom, and other resources. Finally, Mariam also reflected on positive experiences in that her professor recorded lectures and posted them online. She highlighted the importance of flexibility in her experience.

While the interviewers did not ask about the students' final grades or feedback from their instructors, it is clear that some experienced many negative elements to their academic experience. Others enjoyed the quiet space and had ample support from their online instructors. The key difference in the students' experience was instructor involvement and the structure of the course itself. While some students felt disconnected from their peers and their professors, others felt adequately supported by their faculty members and could engage in some socialization with classmates. Last, faculty members who remained flexible with their material created a positive learning environment.

Implications and Recommendations

The goal of this study is to help faculty develop online programs for students living in a stressful environment such as a quarantine hotel. Findings revealed the quarantine hotel experience negatively impacted students' psychological and emotional states which, in turn, negatively impacted their ability to focus and feel confident while enrolled in online classes. Findings support Pregitzer and Clements' (2013) research that argues if online students are uninterested or unmotivated, their academic success will be negatively impacted. However, there are several ways instructors can enhance a student's learning experience while in an unusual environment. The following sections identify ways instructors can reconsider their communication, course organization and assignment development, and strategies to remain flexible during uncertain times.

Communication

As previously explained, online courses can lack interpersonal connections (Bambara et al, 2009; Taliaferro et al., 2020). Based on the above findings, students in quarantine hotels reported a lack of socialization and some even experienced full isolation. Thus, incorporating interpersonal connections as part of the course design will not only positively impact a student's physiological well-being but also

enhance students' communication apprehension (Mori, 2000). Thus, it is important for instructors to invite international students to chat during virtual office hours. Engaging with students during office hours creates the opportunity for instructors to encourage students to ask questions, which will prevent the student from feeling like a burden (Taliaferro et al., 2020). Communicating through office hours will also help students from passive learning cultures understand areas of improvement (Huang, 2012).

As Rabia and Karkouti (2017) suggest, international students need support from faculty. Thus, it is also imperative that instructors trust students when they disclose issues. For example, Lupe explained the Wi-Fi in the hotel was bad because everyone was using it and Amir's hotel lost internet for 3 days. Technological issues are frustrating for everyone. However, the goal when communicating with students is to reduce their feeling of being a burden. Thus, when students reach out it is important to remain empathic as that will ease the students' stress and anxiety. Furthermore, instructors should actively ensure their communication style does not add to an already stressful experience.

Course Organization and Assignment Development

Based on the students' responses, we argue faculty need to strategically increase academic success and decrease moments of isolation by designing community-focused courses. For example, assignments that require group work can inspire camaraderie and friendships among students. Instructors should also craft assignments that will shift students' focus to the future, such as mapping out a professional plan after graduation. This approach will help distract the student from their stressful present environment. Assignments that are interesting and generate excitement will also help distract students. However, Boerema et al. (2007) recognize tailoring courses to student interest to avoid boredom, such as that experienced in quarantine hotels, could be difficult with large class sizes.

All of the participants reported that their hotel stay felt like a prison. The most extreme example was Mariam being unable to tell if it was morning or night due to the lack of windows in her room. Thus, interviewees lost track of time. To extend Bambara et al.'s (2009) suggestions for making a classroom feel more "real," instructors should design the course with a routine pattern. In this structure, students will be able to keep track of their days. For example, incorporating regular due dates for assignments will help students keep track of their assignments as it creates clarity and structure. This strategy will specifically help students in different time zones because it can encourage them to work ahead. For example, Aziz was the first person to submit assignments or reply on discussion boards simply because his time zone was ahead of the United States. The feeling of being ahead of schedule can boost a student's academic confidence. Working ahead can also be accomplished if the entire course is open and includes pre-recorded lectures. This approach also aligns with Sherry et al.'s (2010) suggestion that pre-recorded lectures can be paused and re-watched, which is particularly helpful for international students. Reorganizing courses to accommodate international students in unusual situations might require a change in pedagogy. However, instructors should critically reflect on why they are attached to a specific course design. Specifically, reflect on who is struggling with the rules and restrictions within a course design and adapt to ensure those students are academically successful.

Flexibility

Remaining flexible will also help instructors when considering how time zones impact class meetings and assignment deadlines. When in an online environment, one tactic to avoid time zone issues is to simply email the class before it starts to find out if any student is in a different region of the world. This

approach will be helpful as students cannot predict how their country will respond to COVID-19 and its variants. The most extreme unexpected circumstance is Amir's plane changing its destination mid-flight. Thus, remaining flexible will reduce the stress the student is most likely already experiencing. Furthermore, in the same email, an instructor can ask students to reflect upon their own skill set when it comes to online learning. Students may have varying degrees of experience with online learning or, in some cases, none at all. For example, Lupe and Amir both struggled with transitioning online; especially since it was Lupe's first experience taking an online class and she was unfamiliar with the platform and format. She also did not feel comfortable asking the instructor for clarification. Knowing the skill level of students may influence the amount of time an instructor spends explaining how to complete an assignment online or even whether or not the instructor reviews the online platform being used so that all users understand the features.

Next, flexibility also applies to course content delivery and understanding of technical problems. If students are in different time zones or quarantine hotels, consider allowing students to work at their own pace. This will give them a sense of control or agency they do not have while in quarantine. Working at their own pace will also ease the anxiety of Wi-Fi access. Lupe reported the Wi-Fi was bad because everyone else in the hotel was also using it. Also, Amir reported completely losing Wi-Fi for 3 days. Thus, it is understandable if some students are unable to communicate or submit assignments timely. If a student is in a stressful environment and claims the internet is problematic, working with the student on deadlines may help alleviate some of their anxiety.

Conclusion

One limitation of this study is that some of the interviews took place after the students had emerged from their quarantine stays. While all participants were able to reflect on the challenges of learning while isolated, it is possible some of their memories of their time may have faded with time. Additionally, the quality of the hotels ranged from rooms with balconies to others with no access outside. In others, there was not enough food or there was poor internet. Therefore, not all of the participants had the same quality of living environment even though many shared themes emerged from this research.

The research implications for this type of situation are endless. Future research could include a focus on the American student experience while in isolation in a quarantine dormitory. Some American universities and colleges set aside dormitories to serve as quarantine spaces for students during the fall 2020 semester (Hartocollis, 2020). The American quarantine dormitory experience could be different than an international quarantine hotel experience. This study included participants who were from different cultural backgrounds. In that regard, analyzing a sample of participants from the same cultural background may also provide valid insight into best teaching practices as some students from different cultural backgrounds may be better equipped for a quicker transition to online.

There also are implications relating to a student's familiarity with online learning. Some participants in this study have already been familiar with online learning as opposed to those who were forced to learn online for the very first time. Similarly, analyzing responses from students enrolled in the same subject matter could shed more light on the impact of isolation on a student's academic experience since the participants in this study were all enrolled in different courses. Finally, more research is needed regarding the impact the quarantine hotel had on a student's grade and learning outcomes as this study focuses more on the student's well-being and overall experience as opposed to measuring the academic impact.

This study identified how a stressful environment such as a quarantine hotel can impact a student's emotional state and motivation to engage in the learning process. Additionally, this environment can negatively impact one's ability to focus or overall cognitive ability. Based on these findings, researchers have provided recommendations for faculty to consider when creating an online class which can be used not just in quarantine situations, but universally. Through self-reflection on course design, communication practices, and improving flexibility, instructors hopefully will be able to improve a student's morale and learning if they are forced into unusual living situations.

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