

Program coordinators' support for student wellbeing in online work-integrated learning (eWIL)

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Student wellbeing is regarded as a salient priority across higher education. Given the growing participation of higher education students in work-integrated learning, it is important to explore how student wellbeing is being supported in this critical learning environment. While student wellbeing must be considered across all educational contexts, wellbeing may be most challenged when working and learning online. The purpose of this research, therefore, was to explore ways in which student wellbeing is supported by program coordinators when students are engaging in online work-integrated learning (eWIL). Seventeen program coordinators across Canada were interviewed and data were analyzed thematically. Thematic analysis generated three main themes: program coordinators' perspectives on their role in supporting student wellbeing, wellbeing supports offered to students engaged in WIL, and intersectional considerations for supporting student wellbeing. These findings advance the discussion of innovative and tailored approaches needed to support student wellbeing in online work-integrated learning environments.

Keywords: Mental health, student support, wellbeing, eWIL, remote WIL, online learning, international students

Higher education institutions are increasingly trying to bridge the gap between job market demands, students' grasp on course knowledge, and ability to perform in an academic setting (Orrell, 2004). This has been facilitated by an increase in work-integrated learning (WIL) offerings in higher education. Work-integrated learning enriches the scope of traditional academic study through the provision of quality opportunities that target and foster a student's abilities to successfully apply their skills and knowledge in workplace contexts, through engaged industry partnerships (CEWIL Canada, 2021.; Jackson, 2015). The cited benefits of WIL have historically centered on the opportunity it provides for learning, meaningful connections between students and a community of practice, and workplace integration, which often involves mentorship and networking opportunities that occur in the workplace setting (Jackson, 2013, 2015). Other outcomes achieved through participation in WIL programs include ease of transition from education to work, and future success in the workplace (McBeath et al., 2017).

While scholars have long advocated that intentional measures and resources should be in place to enhance student wellbeing to achieve success in higher learning and related opportunities (e.g., WIL) (Okanagan Charter, 2015, as cited in Stanton et al., 2016), the unprecedented circumstances of COVID-19 have further highlighted the need for supporting student wellbeing, especially when working and learning online and remotely, outside of the traditional school environment (i.e., classroom or laboratory). Restrictions brought on by this pandemic forced many higher education institutions to re-imagine their curriculum in the context of online learning, with participation in WIL as no exception. While most COVID-19 related restrictions have now been lifted, the access and flexibility afforded by

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a virtual environment have ensured that online work and learning are here to stay, justifying the need to be considering strategies to support student wellbeing in these contexts. s

Consideration of student wellbeing in online WIL, also referred to as eWIL or remote WIL, is especially important given that through online WIL experiences, students are navigating unfamiliar workplaces online, are exposed to new challenges, and are distanced from supports present in traditional in-person settings. Physical distancing from support networks and social groups can have a significant impact on a student's sense of belonging and social connectedness (McBeath et al., 2017; Stanton et al., 2016), thus compromising a student's sense of wellbeing. Furthermore, when engaging in WIL, students have been known to prioritize their WIL tasks over personal needs or course assignments (Gillett-Swan & Grant-Smith, 2018), creating an additional vulnerability for student wellbeing during the time in which they are engaging in WIL online.

Researchers have reported that WIL opportunities concurrent with academic study periods have been known to heavily tax a student's already scarce resources, increasing their vulnerability to negative affect, sadness, stress and mental health disorders, with anxiety and depression being the most prevalent (American College Health Association, 2016; Orrell, 2004). Additionally, students have reported high rates of substance use, poor sleep quality, and emotion dysregulation (ACHA, 2016; Halladay et al., 2019). These disruptions to a student's wellbeing can result in significant impairments to mental, social, and emotional functioning, which may reciprocally affect their capacity to be fully invested in their academic learning, and successfully integrate and master their skills in a WIL environment (Gillett-Swan & Grant-Smith, 2018; Halladay et al., 2019). Ultimately, the potential challenges of online WIL on student wellbeing, and the likely prospect of online WIL opportunities being increasingly adopted in higher education, highlights the need to advance student supports in this area (Jackson, 2015).

Notwithstanding the wealth of existing research on implications for student wellbeing within online learning contexts (Lischer et al., 2021; Zainal Badri et al., 2022) and the recent scholarship on COVID-19 impacts on WIL (Zegwaard et al., 2020), research specifically about online WIL has been scarce (Goold & Augar, 2009; Male et al., 2017; Vriens et al., 2010). Moreover, existing research lacks insight on the perspectives of the broader team of stakeholders responsible for developing and embedding intentional measures to support a student's wellbeing in online WIL. Therefore, the purpose of this study was to explore ways in which student wellbeing is supported by program coordinators when students are engaging in online work-integrated learning (eWIL).

Theoretical Underpinning

Given the focus on understanding how student wellbeing is supported through online WIL, Aked and colleagues' (2008) framework, entitled the *Five Ways to Wellbeing* was employed to guide the present inquiry and research design. This framework was developed to promote an awareness of behaviors related to the five ways that are known to enhance wellbeing (i.e., connect, be active, take notice, learn and give).

The first way to wellbeing, connect, identifies the importance of creating strong social connections with others achieved through meaningful interactions. Secondly, be active, highlights the influence of physical health and exercise on mental health, including the reduction of anxiety and depression through physical activity. Thirdly, take notice, urges individuals to be present in the moment and focus on positive aspects of a situation to assist with individual reflection and deeper appreciation of experiences. Fourthly, learn, promotes ongoing learning, while identifying its benefits, such as reducing

feelings of isolation, and developing social relationships. Lastly, give, promotes volunteering and assisting individuals other than yourself to create feelings of fulfillment and connectedness to one's community.

This framework was used to prompt discussion with program coordinators on the ways in which they helped to support student wellbeing, and this framework was integrated as a tool to organize the presentation and analysis of the research findings.

METHODS

This study employed a qualitative research design to explore program coordinator's approaches to supporting student wellbeing in the context of online WIL. Qualitative research is characterized by a set of interpretive, material practices, that make the world and socially constructed nature of reality, visible (Denzin & Lincoln, 2011). A constructivist paradigmatic position was adopted, promoting a collaborative relationship between the researcher and the participant, where meaning was created through the interview process (Guba & Lincoln, 1994).

Recruitment

After receiving Research Ethics Board approval from the corresponding author's institution (#40238), participants were recruited through a two-fold process, initiated via social media posts advertising the research study and the distribution of formal recruitment emails. Researchers searched Canadian post-secondary institution websites for personnel who held coordinator, manager and director titles, in relation to co-op, internship, field placement, practicum, experiential learning and apprenticeship programs, as per the various types of WIL specified by Co-operative Education and Work-Integrated Learning Canada (CEWIL Canada, 2021.). Recruitment emails were sent to a variety of individuals who held these titles, inviting them to contact the researchers if they were interested in participating in the study. These processes were supplemented by snowball sampling.

Data Collection

Data collection consisted of semi-structured interviews ranging in length from 30 – 60 minutes, with program coordinators who were currently involved in online WIL or had been within the last two years. Semi-structured interviews included open ended questions and were inherently flexible and complimentary to a constructivist approach.

Prior to the interview, participants were asked to complete a short questionnaire to collect demographic information, including the type of WIL program they coordinated, as per CEWIL (2021.). Interviews were conducted online using Zoom or via phone call, and the researchers took a variety of precautions to protect the participants' rights to confidentiality and privacy in the virtual environment, including password-protected calls, and using waiting room features. All interviews were audio-recorded.

Data Analysis

Semi-structured interviews with participants were transcribed verbatim and thematically analyzed upon completion. Thematic analysis was chosen for this study as it allowed for both social and psychological interpretations of the data and for differences and similarities to be highlighted while identifying major patterns and generating themes across the data set (Braun & Clarke, 2006). Additionally, thematic analysis produces results that are typically widely accessible, which was suited to the applied aim of this study, being to provide recommendations for WIL program coordinators on

how to better support students' wellbeing in online WIL contexts. A combined inductive and deductive approach was utilized to code interview transcripts (Reid et al., 2017). Thematic maps were also used to aid the sorting of the data.

Steps taken to ensure trustworthiness of the data included member checking, maintaining an audit trail of the research design and any amendments made, and investigator triangulation (Cope, 2014).

Participants

Study participants included 17 WIL program coordinators from a mixture of Canadian colleges and universities. Participants supported one or more different types of WIL programs, including field placements, internships, work experience, co-operative education, applied research projects and service learning. All participants were currently involved in online WIL or had been within the last two years. Additional details on the participant demographics can be found in Table 1.

TABLE 1: Participant demographics.

Participant #	Gender		LGBTQI2+ Community	Black or Person of Colour	Program of Study Supported
	Male	Female			
1		X			Science
2		X	X		Business
3		X			Design
4		X			Design
5	X				Arts
6		X			Science
7	X				Business
8	X			X	Business
9		X			Science
10		X			Arts
11		X			Science
12		X			Arts
13		X			Engineering
14		X			Business
15	X				Engineering
16	X				Science
17		X			Arts

Note. No participants in our study identified as being Indigenous [i.e. Canadian First Nations, Metis, and/or Inuit]

RESULTS

Three major themes were generated; program coordinators' perspectives on their role in supporting student wellbeing, wellbeing supports offered to students engaged in online WIL, and intersectional considerations for student wellbeing. Each theme is described below.

Program Coordinators' Perspectives on their Role in Supporting Student Wellbeing

All program coordinators recognized that they had a role to play in supporting students' wellbeing. When prompted at the beginning of the interview to reflect on their role, participants highlighted the

main responsibilities they had, including being accessible and available to answer student queries, assisting students in finding meaningful work and providing emotional support for students.

Being accessible and available

Participants shared how many students felt anxious and uncertain navigating the novelty of the online WIL landscape. Being available to listen and help students with any questions they had was a significant part of their role in supporting students' wellbeing. This often includes counsel on WIL, as well as the impact of WIL on student's course-based learning and studies more broadly. Elaborating on this, one participant shared: "When I interact with students, I feel my role is just to support them and listen to them and help them answer questions in any way that they have for me" (P13, Engineering). Similarly, another program coordinator explained how they made sure they were accessible and available to respond to student queries, thereby ensuring students saw them as a resource for support throughout their online WIL experience:

I make myself very available to them, so that they know that if they've got any question or concern, to please let me know ... in terms of my role, I feel it's really important just to listen and to get back to them. To just say hey, you know I'll look into this ... I'm able to assure them. That's pretty well what I do from my end, just being very supportive and encouraging and making sure they know that services are available to them if that's the way they need to go. (P4, Design)

Further to the point of being available, participants clarified the importance of actively checking in with students to remind them that they were still working to support them on the back-end, particularly amidst ongoing uncertainty related to the pandemic. In line with this, one program coordinator explained:

It's being available as much as possible if they have questions and also checking in with them often, especially during COVID-19, just to see how they're doing or to let them know that I'm still working on their behalf. Just because there's so much uncertainty. (P9, Science)

Facilitating meaningful work experiences

Program coordinators acknowledged that another significant aspect of their role in supporting students' wellbeing was facilitating opportunities for students to engage in meaningful work experiences. In this regard, meaningful experiences were described as online WIL opportunities that aligned with students' interests, skill sets and/or anticipated future career plans. Considering this, program coordinators articulated several ways that they deliberately tried to facilitate meaningful work experiences for students. One participant shared:

I see it as being an advocate for students to get the kind of experience that they would like in the workplace and really getting to know what kind of experience they want and teasing out some of their skill sets. (P9, Science)

Expanding on the above sentiment in terms of their role and practice, another program coordinator highlighted the actions they take to ensure students have access to opportunities to engage in meaningful work:

Part of the role is delivering a course ... then the other aspect is student support, not necessarily in a direct way, but we do outreach and do job development. So that's trying to find employers and partner with them to create good opportunities for students. It's making sure that those are high quality opportunities because you can just find any opportunity ... and say okay well this is

a job, go do the job. If that job doesn't have the right kind of support and mentorship then students going into those positions aren't going to really learn what they should be ... it's making sure that the work opportunities are quality and they are going to lead students to the types of careers that they want to have. (P8, Business)

Echoing this recognition, a participant offered further insight on how their facilitation of opportunities for meaningful work was an important source of support for students navigating the online WIL landscape:

I support them in trying to identify or select the proposals that they like. I meet with them regularly to understand if they are working towards something that they like and I help them in thinking about their future career and how this internship is positioned within their portfolio for the future. All these phases, especially in these periods, have a heavy component in emotional support. (P5, Arts)

Providing emotional support

Providing emotional support was the final aspect program coordinators discussed about their role in supporting student's wellbeing throughout their online WIL experience. This included checking-in with students, advising them on how to navigate unfamiliar or challenging situations that arose in the workplace and actively recognizing struggling students and intervening where necessary. In line with this, one perspective shared was as follows:

I always check in where they are ... I care about them as a whole. *Oh, today we're talking about cover letters, for sure, but let's check in first how you're feeling about the cover letter and how's the progress and what you feel is challenging*, just to check the temperature to see where they are emotionally. (P11, Science)

In addition to actively checking-in with students, participants also explained how students actively sought them out for support and guidance to address stressors they were encountering through their work experience – this is exemplified by one participant who said:

Within my role I support students a lot even outside of the placement portion of their program... They will come and be seeking support on how to manage stressful situations and challenging situations with supervisors, with peers in class or with faculty. (P10, Arts)

Similarly, another participant shared further insight on what providing emotional support looked like within the context of their role:

Part of the role is also recognizing the signs for students that are not just stressed about an exam or not just stressed about saying the right thing in a cover letter but are really questioning themselves and their situation. It's about looking for the early alerts - we already sent three students to counseling this week – and trying to recognize the two different things. (P7, Business)

Online WIL Wellbeing Supports

Aligned with the theoretical underpinning of this project in the 'Five Ways to Wellbeing' framework (Aked et al., 2008), program coordinators were asked to describe how they support student wellbeing across all five ways. Insights and examples of supports offered in relation to each of the five ways are described below.

Connect

In line with connect, participants recognized the importance of building social connections as a part of the WIL experience and shared their insight on promoting and meaningfully facilitating it in the online environment. Speaking to this, a participant explained:

I proceeded to help students build a co-op education hub that started with the Faculty, and then very quickly spread across the University ... This is an example of how I embed my practice of supporting students' mental health and not just the individual, but by building communities of student learning and connectedness to help the students cope with anxieties and other mental health challenges. (P11, Science)

Moreover, several participants spoke about emulating opportunities to connect inspired by interactions that would take place during in-person learning, such as lectures and conversations between classmates and peers. Aligned with this, one coordinator shared their approach to facilitating connection:

We try to mandate an in-person session so it's live and so students feel like they're actually interacting with someone. When possible, we've also been trying to incorporate their interaction, not just me talking, but by using breakout rooms and getting them to talk with the other students that are there. (P14, Business)

Considering connection within the online workplace, another participant described how they support and encourage students in developing stronger working relationships and connections by recommending workplace specific strategies, including to reach out to managers and colleagues by phone, Microsoft teams or Zoom, as opposed to only communicating by email, as well as coaching students to establish regular communication touch points.

Be active

When asked about how they were encouraging students to be active through various forms of physical activity and exercise, program coordinators had limited examples to draw upon compared with the other ways to wellbeing. In line with the framework by Aked and colleagues (2008), most participants acknowledged the benefits of exercise for feeling good, however, explained that encouraging students to be active was more of an anecdotal personal practice, as opposed to a systematically embedded consideration within the coordination of online WIL programming. One participant shared:

We did send out a tip sheet for working remotely and in that it did talk about, you know ... being active and not sitting at your desk the entire time and making sure that you get up and maybe do some yoga stretches or chair yoga. (P3, Design)

Similarly, another participant explained:

I suggest that they do a commute walk ... instead of commuting to work in the morning, I would do a walk, and then afterwards I would do my commute walk at lunch, so I just say to integrate that into your day as you would normally do, because we all have that time now. (P17, Arts)

Despite the sharing of strategies (i.e. suggestions to go for a walk or incorporating short integrated movements/stretching breaks), a greater proportion of participants explained that encouraging students to be active was not a part of their practice of supporting student's wellbeing, which was summarized by one coordinator who said: "Even when we're in the office, that's never a conversation I would normally have." Further to this point, another participant expressed the following;

I don't know how often we encourage them to be physically active. For example, we're concerned about connecting them with their colleagues, which again, I feel is not physically active it's actually opposite of that because you're sitting on the screen and looking at each other. So, no, I think as a college, and as an organization we're more focused on that in isolation, versus like the physical movement of the body. (P13, Engineering)

Take notice

Reflecting to gain appreciation for an experience is encompassed by take notice. Reflection is often a hallmark of WIL programs and as such, program coordinators shared various ways that students were encouraged to take notice of how they were feeling, what they had learnt and what mattered to them about their experience in WIL. One participant noted how they encouraged student's reflective practice:

We stress reflection. It's a lot of helping them to look at things through that lens and do some kind of thinking about what skills they had coming into a work term and reflecting back on what they didn't, trying to reframe perhaps negative experiences in a positive way or if there was a supervisor that they didn't like how they supervised, you know, taking note of that so that they know what work environments they flourish in or where they struggle. (P12, Arts)

Building on this, another program coordinator explained that encouraging students to take notice was an important element of support within their WIL experience and preparation for career success:

We're always talking about self-care, that's a big piece to our program. We make sure that it's A. in every classroom but B. we make it a big part of our placement process. We're always talking about being mindful and being present, and how important that is to our clients to be in the moment with them and so therefore, we start practicing it in the classroom and with each other. (P10, Arts)

Keep learning

Fostering keep learning, was aided by embedding opportunities to encourage students to explore their areas of interest and promoting engagement with communities of practice. For instance, some program coordinators actively promoted complementary training opportunities:

We had firms and suppliers and organizations hosting wonderful online seminars that the students were welcome to attend ... I posted all kinds of these types of seminars and encouraged them to join these organizations and to try to stay aligned with the industry that way, just to keep the pulse on what was happening. (P4, Design)

In tandem with the promotion of industry events, participants also sought out and hosted guests who could offer students valuable industry knowledge and insight:

We have these In sessions, they're like lunch and learns, so that each student, every week has a one-hour time slot and we always bring in a really cool industry guest, or we bring in some interesting people from the college to talk about what's going on ... So I'll give you an example, this week we have somebody from industry talking specifically about wellbeing, mental health, how to adapt in our industry specifically. (P3, Design)

Give

Considering the final way to wellbeing – give – program coordinators offered various insights on how students were encouraged to get involved and give back within their program and wider communities, with one participant explaining that:

We just try to lead by example ... we try to do things for students that we don't have to do, to go that extra mile ... when you do kind things for other people, they tend to try to pay it forward.

Moreover, aligned with online WIL specifically, participants primarily emphasized how volunteering was a meaningful way to engage in career exploration, gain relevant experience and connect with local stakeholders, all of which could be incredibly rewarding personally and in the job search. One program coordinator shared how volunteering is a valuable experience:

We discuss the fact that volunteering is very important [...]. First of all, the way that volunteering makes you feel; useful, purposeful and with a goal of connection, but also because of the return for the community and the fact that the community can really take some benefit from people with our competencies and knowledge being there to help. (P5, Arts)

Mirroring responses from other participants, another program coordinator further highlighted how volunteering was described as an opportunity to enhance students' wellbeing:

From the co-op office we really encourage students to get as involved as possible and stress that volunteer experience is just as valuable on a resume as paid work experience. We emphasize treating it like that like when they're approaching interviews or trying to explain their skill set ... we are always stressing that it improves their overall experience at university and that they'll find that they are a lot happier and they'll find their people if they follow their interests. (P12, Arts)

Intersectional Considerations for Supporting Student Wellbeing

Lastly, participants highlighted several areas where intersectional considerations were needed to ensure equitable wellbeing supports for all students. One area mentioned was the challenges international students faced with online WIL. One participant shared:

I've heard more from international students, because some of them are trying to do this work in a crazy time zone in the middle of the night, and then they're trying to think about how they can apply for jobs, and even be available for an interview. I mean most of it is over zoom and stuff like that but if it isn't they need to have a local number ... just the logistics of that is extremely challenging for international students who are already fighting a lot of uphill battles in terms of maybe like a language competency, which sometimes gets in the way of their Co Op search, and then doing it all remotely in a different time zone ... It's extremely challenging. (P15, Business)

Expanding on observed challenges facing international students, another program coordinator explained:

There are so many things we never thought of, like the unintended consequences of certain decisions and things that as a university we made assumptions about, like how accessible the technology was going to be for some international students ... our entire system is Google based and so that presents problems for students in China. (P2, Business)

This quote also mirrors further problematization of assumptions/expectations made around the feasibility of online WIL, especially pertaining to the accessibility of technology, and challenges related to multiple people working from home – including sharing Wi-Fi bandwidth and privacy.

DISCUSSION

This study sought to explore program coordinators' perspectives on how student wellbeing is supported through their engagement in online WIL. Findings from the present analysis are interpreted below in light of existing literature on (online) WIL in higher education, student mental health and wellbeing, and supporting wellbeing while working online.

Program coordinators explained that supporting student wellbeing throughout their engagement in online WIL was a priority and described their role as a three-pronged approach including being accessible/available, facilitating meaningful work experiences and providing emotional support. Despite the gap in existing work as it pertains to our knowledge of the program coordinator's role in supporting student wellbeing, we draw on a limited selection of literature to compare and contrast our findings, wherein the terms teacher, academic and officer are used to reference program coordinators. Firstly, participants asserted that the novelty of online WIL coupled with uncertainty linked to the pandemic led to noticeable worry, curiosity and anxiety in students as they tried to anticipate what online work would be like. This contributed to program coordinators indicating the importance of being accessible/available in their role in supporting students by listening and helping them to navigate any queries or challenges.

The role of program coordinators in being available to address these queries was echoed and expanded on in Aničić and Divjak's (2022) findings. Participants in this study suggested that openness to help navigate questions and dilemmas, assist with problems, and help students to address mistakes, was an expectation of WIL teachers. Moreover, scholarly work on online WIL has found that the ease of students transition or integration in the online workplace was aided by the responsiveness of workplace supervisors. This suggests that the accessibility and availability of support is a key element in the success and quality of students' online WIL experiences and wellbeing when participating in online WIL, by decreasing students' feelings of ambiguity and uncertainty (Dean & Campbell, 2020; Pretti et al., 2020; Rowe et al., 2021). Similarly, it has been suggested that preparing students for their engagement in WIL and support throughout their experience is pivotal to enhancing their confidence, which further facilitates students' motivation to fully engage in the learning experience and capacity to successfully navigate uncertainties related to the novelty of the online WIL landscape (Rowe et al., 2021; Zegwaard et al., 2020).

It has been posited that all WIL stakeholders play a unique role in contributing to the quality of meaningful work experiences provided to students participating in WIL (Winchester-Seeto et al., 2016; Zegwaard et al., 2020). Within the present study, program coordinators described their role in facilitating meaningful work experiences for students, including efforts to develop or connect students with online WIL opportunities that aligned with their interests, skill sets and/or anticipated future career plans. These role functions were echoed by academic supervisors (i.e., program coordinators) in Winchester-Seeto and colleagues (2016) research, who also cited matching students' interests and skills to potential positions with host organizations, connecting students with various placement options and ensuring projects were meaningful for students. Interestingly and perhaps foregrounded by Dean and Campbell's (2020) suggestion for WIL design to focus on "creating opportunities for students to practice in authentic work activities and roles" (p. 361), it was highlighted in our study that

collaborating with host institutions for job development can be a valuable approach to further facilitate meaningful work opportunities for students. Back-end efforts to curate job opportunities suited to students needs and desires for meaningful work may be particularly noteworthy within the context of online WIL.

Emotional support was the last aspect program coordinators ascribed to their role in supporting student wellbeing. Participants explained that they checked-in with students to see how they were feeling, actively recognized struggling students and intervened where necessary. Academics participating in Winchester-Seeto et al.'s (2016) research similarly played a role in checking-in, recognizing and supporting students by working through emotional situations such as anxiety and confidence issues, explaining that they are often looked to intervene (Winchester-Seeto et al., 2016). To the latter point, research has indicated that students expect program coordinators or teachers to mediate tension and help to solve problems with employers (Aničić & Divjak, 2022). However, participants in the present study offered a more specific conceptualization of their responsibility to intervene, noting that referring students to formalized institutions or externally available emotional supports was necessary in the context of online WIL.

Participants in this study also explained that they provided emotional support by advising students on how to navigate unfamiliar or challenging situations that arose in the workplace. Aligned with this, it has been suggested that emotional support may be of value to students navigating unfamiliar and confronting learning experiences (Winchester-Seeto et al., 2016), which may be pertinent in this discussion considering stressors and uncertainty associated with the novel context of online WIL. While WIL stakeholders work collaboratively to support students, this indicates the need for further recognition and research attention regarding program coordinators responsibilities, to enhance the quality and quantity of support they can offer to students (Winchester-Seeto et al., 2016), specifically within online WIL. Identifying an agreed upon term to consistently reference program coordinators (i.e., teachers, academics, officers) will be pivotal in increasing the transferability of this research.

Regarding additional wellbeing supports offered to students engaged in online WIL, program coordinators recognized opportunities to foster mental wellbeing through online learning (Shohel et al., 2021) and offered insight on various strategies they employed, aligned with the five ways to wellbeing framework (Aked et al., 2008). Examples of approaches meant to foster each of the five ways included (1) building communication hubs, sharing communication strategies and mandating synchronous learning opportunities, (2) providing reminders and sharing ideas about how to develop and promote physical activity, (3) embedding opportunities (i.e., reflective journals) and reminding students to take notice of how they felt at different points throughout their placement and to be mindful, (4) empowering students continued learning by systematizing opportunities to explore their areas of interest (i.e., learning contracts) and encouraging engagement with communities of practice (i.e., lunch and learns, promoting industry events) and finally, (5) setting an example of being kind to inspire students to pay it forward, encouraging students to get involved and volunteer within their program and wider communities, strengthening students practice of giving to others. Aligned with Shohel et al. (2021), these findings indicate that program coordinators are taking on significant responsibility for creating safe and enriching online learning environments, that aim to address the complex and adaptive challenges faced by students engaging in online WIL (Soria et al., 2020).

Identifying the specific, integrated, and novel approaches to offering wellbeing supports to students in online WIL enables us to conceptualize the findings from this research against the dearth of existing literature on this topic and justify translating them to aid the strategic provision of future supports.

Interestingly, connection and continued learning, appear to address areas of challenge encountered by students participating in online WIL, namely, feelings of isolation, loneliness and lack of connection with peers, difficulty communicating ideas/questions through virtual communications and initiative taking (Bowen, 2020; Soria et al., 2020). Further, as demonstrated by program coordinators' perspectives, fostering connection and continued learning can enhance students' wellbeing, considering their implications for sense of belonging and confidence (Rowe et al., 2021), and motivation to engage in learning opportunities (Perkins et al., 2021; Soria et al., 2020). Interestingly, student motivation was referenced widely across the reviewed literature as a both a facilitator and barrier for engagement in online WIL (Bouchey et al., 2021; Pretti et al., 2020; Rowe et al., 2021; Shohel et al., 2021; Soria et al., 2020); thus, further discussions regarding factors that encourage students to prioritize and integrate each of the five ways to wellbeing in their daily lives is warranted.

Being mindful of the assertions made by Dean and Campbell (2020) and Lomas et al. (2022), we recognize that 'panic-gogy', a term that characterizes "panic about how to maintain teaching" amidst the accelerated shift from in-person to online WIL (Baker, 2020, p.1), has likely informed the quality and quantity of supports program coordinators were able to offer to students. Considering the chaos of this shift, leaving stakeholders limited time to plan and prepare (Lischer et al., 2021), there appears to have been a focus on translating supports based on their perceived centrality to the practice of in-person WIL. Nonetheless, findings of the present study evidenced greater systematic and embedded efforts to foster connection, continuous learning, and students' propensity to reflect and take notice, whereas participants expressed a lesser consensus about strategies employed to promote being active and giving.

Adding another layer of nuance to this discussion, program coordinators also acknowledged the intersections of various axes of power and disadvantage (Cho et al., 2013). They highlighted several intersectional considerations to recognize when designing and evaluating the quality of supports offered to online WIL students such as considering the additional barriers international students face (i.e., differing time zones, language competencies, and the accessibility to technology (e.g., google unavailable in China)). While it is important to recognize that these struggles were observed from the perspectives of program coordinators and not explicitly acknowledged by international students, these findings are significant given the paucity of empirical work that captures the experiences of international students engaging with WIL (Nevison et al., 2017; Paku & Coll, 1999; Stirling et al., 2021) or online WIL opportunities. Additionally, program coordinators reiterated issues pertaining to the accessibility of technology (i.e., laptops, webcams etc.), and challenges related working from home alongside multiple people (i.e., sharing Wi-Fi bandwidth and privacy), which has also been recognized and echoed as challenges by several scholars (Shohel et al., 2021; Soria et al., 2020).

Lastly, some participants discussed intersectional considerations that are in line with recent literature on supporting students' overall wellbeing while working online; such as differences in social class (i.e. lack of access to workspace and technology), sex (e.g. women are more likely to access support), and program of study (i.e. challenge demands unique to specific program of study) (Lischer et al., 2021; Milmeister et al., 2020; Park et al., 2020; Shohel et al., 2021; Soria et al., 2020). Program coordinators may need to consider how these factors impact students' capacity to engage with supports offered and how the above challenges intersect with other aspects of students' identity, including their race, gender identity/expression and ability status. These considerations are crucial when developing and tailoring equitable offerings to support students' wellbeing in online WIL.

IMPLICATIONS AND DIRECTIONS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

Reflecting on the discussion throughout, there are several implications that need to be highlighted pertaining to both the promise and pitfalls of the efforts to support students' wellbeing. Notably, it is imperative that when developing opportunities or supports for online WIL students, stakeholders must be acutely and chronically aware of their potential to impact students' wellbeing (Gillard et al., 2021). Despite the present findings, there remains a paucity of WIL specific and general research which employs the Five Ways to Wellbeing framework. As such, in pursuit of long-term sustainability in the quality of online WIL offerings (Dean & Campbell, 2020), grounding efforts to support students in relation to the Five Ways to Wellbeing is a valuable and feasible approach considering the discussed implications of a 'panic-gogy' and as we emerge from the pandemic. Moreover, greater proactive consideration is needed when developing and evaluating student supports to ensure they are strategically employed and appropriate and aligned with students' needs, given the range of new stressors they are experiencing (Bouchey et al., 2021; Bowen, 2020; Dean & Campbell, 2020).

Participants in our study echoed existing work which suggests that a lack of outlets for informal communication (i.e., during class or outside of class on campus) and conversational learning can ultimately make it difficult to gauge how students are doing (Kim et al., 2021; Lomas et al., 2022; Shohel et al., 2021). Similarly, students have also echoed that the absence of opportunities for spontaneous communication have limited the frequency of opportunities to interact with and/or share emotions with peers (Bowen, 2020; Lischer et al., 2021; Pretti et al., 2020; Shohel et al., 2021), and have generally made it harder to articulate questions and the kinds of support they require (Bowen, 2020; Lomas et al., 2022). Therefore, efforts to foster connection in the online environment are reiterated as an important area for future research (Bouchey et al., 2021; Lischer et al., 2021; Milmeister et al., 2020). Moreover, given program coordinators cited role in assisting students with critically reflecting to facilitate learning (Fleming, 2015), and that the online WIL environment can blur the boundaries between work, school and home life (Bouchey et al., 2021; Bowen, 2020; Pretti et al., 2020), renewed consideration of how the context of online WIL can further complicate students' capacity and motivation to leverage wellbeing supports offered, is needed. Regarding the third well to wellbeing element, take notice, it is specifically recommended that future work explores how the online environment can hinder students' capacity to fully engage in the learning process.

Given the purpose of the present research, 17 participants from different Canadian institutions actively demonstrated their interest in contributing to knowledge on how students' wellbeing was being supported in and through online WIL. Thus, the impassioned perspective about the positive role program coordinators play in supporting students' wellbeing when engaging in online WIL, was highly centered throughout our findings. Despite this, it is recognized that a program coordinators' capacity to do so, may be limited by the need for greater time, space, and financial resources, in order to be creative in the development and provision of support offered to address students' unique and evolving needs (Dean & Campbell, 2020; Milmeister et al., 2020; Pretti et al., 2020; Shohel et al., 2021). While the present work offers foundational insight on the provision of student wellbeing support in online WIL, it also gives way for future research to advance the nuance of this discussion. Importantly, this includes considering the intersections of gender, race, ability and immigration or international status, on experiences of both providing or accessing support for mental health and wellbeing, to shift away from a one size fits all approach. It is imperative that all WIL stakeholders (i.e., coordinators, administrators, mentors/supervisors, teachers, etc.) share in the responsibility to intentionally facilitate and maintain an online WIL environment conducive to supporting students' wellbeing, and collaboratively support each other while doing so (Bouchey et al., 2021; Kim et al., 2021; Shohel et al., 2021).

CONCLUSION

The present qualitative study offers valuable and novel insight into the role of program coordinators in supporting student wellbeing, including being accessible/available, facilitating meaningful experiences and providing emotional support. Additionally, participants shared their experiences of supporting student wellbeing in relation to – connect, be active, take notice, keep learning and give – outlined by Aked and colleagues (2008) as the five ways to wellbeing, and expanded on intersectional considerations needed while doing so. The authors recommend that program coordinators be mindful of the important role they hold in directly and indirectly supporting students' wellbeing. Program coordinators and researchers are encouraged to evaluate existing support- for students against the Five Ways to Wellbeing framework, as well as consider intersectional factors (i.e., student status, sex, gender, race, etc.) when developing support measures to satisfy students' unique and evolving mental health needs. It is recommended that all stakeholders leverage their expertise and collaborate to ensure students are positioned to enhance and maintain their health and wellbeing in and through participation in online WIL.

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About the Journal

The International Journal of Work-Integrated Learning (IJWIL) publishes double-blind peer-reviewed original research and topical issues dealing with Work-Integrated Learning (WIL). IJWIL first published in 2000 under the name of Asia-Pacific Journal of Cooperative Education (APJCE).

In this Journal, WIL is defined as "*an educational approach that uses relevant work-based experiences to allow students to integrate theory with the meaningful practice of work as an intentional component of the curriculum. Defining elements of this educational approach requires that students engage in authentic and meaningful work-related task, and must involve three stakeholders; the student, the university, and the workplace*". Examples of practice include off-campus, workplace immersion activities such as work placements, internships, practicum, service learning, and cooperative education (Co-op), and on-campus activities such as work-related projects/competitions, entrepreneurships, student-led enterprise, etc. WIL is related to, and overlaps with, the fields of experiential learning, work-based learning, and vocational education and training.

The Journal's main aim is to enable specialists working in WIL to disseminate research findings and share knowledge to the benefit of institutions, students, co-op/WIL practitioners, and researchers. The Journal desires to encourage quality research and explorative critical discussion that leads to the advancement of effective practices, development of further understanding of WIL, and promote further research.

The Journal is ongoing financially supported by the Work-Integrated Learning New Zealand (WILNZ; www.wilnz.nz), and the University of Waikato, New Zealand, and received periodic sponsorship from the Australian Collaborative Education Network (ACEN) and the World Association of Cooperative Education (WACE).

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Types of manuscripts sought by IJWIL is primarily of two forms: 1) *research publications* describing research into aspects of work-integrated learning and, 2) *topical discussion* articles that review relevant literature and provide critical explorative discussion around a topical issue. The journal will, on occasions, consider good practice submissions.

Research publications should contain; an introduction that describes relevant literature and sets the context of the inquiry. A detailed description and justification for the methodology employed. A description of the research findings - tabulated as appropriate, a discussion of the importance of the findings including their significance to current established literature, implications for practitioners and researchers, whilst remaining mindful of the limitations of the data, and a conclusion preferably including suggestions for further research.

Topical discussion articles should contain a clear statement of the topic or issue under discussion, reference to relevant literature, critical and scholarly discussion on the importance of the issues, critical insights to how to advance the issue further, and implications for other researchers and practitioners.

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