

UPEI Graduate Student Association

# GSA Newsletter

June 2, 2022 Volume 3, Issue 2

*Welcome to the June issue of the  
GSA Newsletter!*



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**UPEI Graduate Student  
Association**

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Spring on Prince Edward Island is a time of renewal and celebration. The island wakes up after a long winter looking forward to longer days and warm sunshine. Every May, UPEI graduates celebrate their accomplishments and start to ponder the next chapter of their personal and professional journeys. In this edition of the GSA Newsletter, we celebrate graduate students who were recognized at the UPEI convocation, welcome a new executive to the GSA, and hear from two PhD candidates in the Faculty of Education. We also want to hear from you. At the end of the newsletter there is a short survey to learn about how the GSA newsletter can be more effective connecting with UPEI students taking masters and doctoral programs.

Your Editors, Diane and Christina



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**Submit your article for  
the next issue**

The next issue will be  
September 2022.

Submission Deadline  
August 15, 2022

Email:  
gsnewsletter@upei.ca

## Essence of a Barmaid

Janet Payne, PhD Candidate, Faculty of Education

*She carried the scent of the smoke and stale beer and kitchen grease  
On her clothes as she peeled off her bar apron on the way into the house.  
Too tired to shower, she flopped down on the couch.  
The little body scurried down the stairs and jumped onto her lap.  
You smell like restaurant. I love the smell of you. I took your red shirt to bed with  
me  
So I could smell you. I missed you.  
It had become her – those lingering scents of the vices of others -  
Pluming clouds of cigarette smoke, fish and parmesan and creole sauce and spice  
Mixed with the yeasty smell of the draught that had sprayed in her face and onto  
her clothes  
When she changed the keg earlier that night.*

*He wrapped his little fingers inside her hand and squeezed,  
Happy to have his mama home again and feeling safe to be beside her.  
He looked up into her eyes, surprised.  
Your pointy finger is so hard and scratchy.  
It feels like it's dead, like a dead finger,  
Like the part of the swing-set leg where the green paint  
Came off and the reddish part underneath is scratchy and rough.  
That's just my old calloused hand, sweet boy.  
That's where my fingers rub against the beer caps as I snap them off each night.  
If the skin doesn't grow smooth, I still have good bones underneath!*

*Their whispers soon woke the baby upstairs,  
Whose ears pricked up when she heard her mama's voice from below.  
It had been nine hours since she held that plump little cherub in her arms  
And by now her body longed for the release that every nursing mother felt  
when separated from her other self.  
The gulping and guzzling and sucking and swallowing came with  
Such need that she didn't even take the time to  
Change out of her restaurant-scented clothes.  
The baby would come to know this scent, just as she  
Recognized the taste of sweet, warm milk as synonymous with love.*

*By now she had two small people on her lap -  
One in the crook of each arm, supported by the roundness of the old wicker  
papasan chair.  
It was the perfect chair for loving more than one baby at a time,  
And it matched the old wooden side station that came from the restaurant.  
It was an antique, but not in the fancy and refinished ways that antique collectors  
appreciate.  
Its sides were marked from years of use with etchings numerous enough to create  
its own pattern -  
Patterns resulting from the gentle penetration of pooling water and the abrasive  
friction of discarded knives.  
She thought of her own face, with lines around her eyes -  
The occasional wounds that caused some deeper lines, the gentle forces that  
worked their magic each day,  
And left her with laugh lines extending deeply from the corners of both green eyes.*



*She closed her eyes as she felt her body sinking deeper into the chair,  
Unafraid of dropping either babe while knowing her instinctive self was on high alert,  
Tapping her almost-still fingers to the sound of the music still playing in her head -  
Songs from a Friday night barroom filled with music and motion, laughter and life.  
It was this energy she loved the most -*

*The vibrating energy of bar-staff and patrons and singers and friends.  
She rarely remembered the words to the songs,  
But she almost always remembered the way songs made her feel,  
And she carried the energy of these songs home with her at the end of each night  
Like stories she kept safe in her heart.*

*He found her in the chair and gently scooped up the largest little body  
As he nudged her and reminded her to go up to bed.  
She soon crawled in beside him, the now-sleeping baby still in the crook of her arm,  
And felt his strong arms around them both.  
Your hair smells like restaurant. How was your night?  
Her night was like any other, none other, all other nights she had worked at the bar  
before,  
As she poured beer and mixed drinks and paid close attention to those who made her  
bar their home.  
She listening to their stories, felt their stories, was changed each time by Retelling  
each story - if only in her mind.  
They told their stories without feeling judged, words set free by the power of the elixir,  
Sensing the empathy that palpitated across the polished bar - the essence of a  
barmaid.*

## Welcome to our NEW Graduate Student Association

| Position               | Name              |
|------------------------|-------------------|
| President              | Paulina Huayamave |
| Vice-President         | Miranda Steeves   |
| Vice-President Finance | Melissa Bishop    |
| Online Education Rep   | Diane Montgomery  |
| Engineering Rep        | Eagan Boire       |
| Science Rep 1          | Devon Lynn        |
| Science Rep 2          | Tony Harris       |
| Science Rep 3          | Drew McLean       |
| Nursing Rep            | Rebecca MacLure   |

There are still opportunities to get involved in the GSA.

Contact [gsa@upei.ca](mailto:gsa@upei.ca) for information.

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# Behind the Scenes of the Decision to Closing Schools during the Covid-19 Pandemic

Mahdi Albishi, PhD Candidate, Faculty of Education

## Abstract

The purpose of this paper is to learn from the educational decision to close schools during the Covid-19 crisis. I synthesized recent peer-reviewed studies regarding the effects of closing schools during the Covid-19 pandemic. The consequences of closing schools are associated with poor child mental health and social media addiction. The fully remote schooling and home isolation restrictions of the most of past two years have led to an increase in child depressive symptoms, sadness, and/or lonely feelings. This paper recommends that childcare centers in schools should not be mandated to close under any circumstances or future crisis.

**Keywords:** *Educational leadership decisions; Impacts of Covid-19 pandemic on student' life; addiction*

## Introduction

As a PhD candidate in education leadership, I have a background in analyzing educational decisions. The most significant educational decision that has been taken recently was the complete closing of schools in most countries of the world due to the global pandemic (Covid-19). I understand that the universal purpose behind making this decision was to stop spreading the virus and avoid teachers and students experiencing severe illness or death. However, several recent studies have revealed the downsides to closing schools during Covid-19. These scholars have criticized the decision to completely close down the schools and believe it significantly increased mental health problems and social media addiction.

## Literature review

### Closure of Schools and Mental Health

More than 1.5 billion enrolled students around the world found themselves away from their school routine and peers with strict restrictions of physical distancing and isolation (Lee, 2020). For many students, losing routines and social interactions caused a decrease in mental health (Thakur, 2020). For example, a Canadian study (2021) involving 231 children from Ontario reported that during the early Covid-19 pandemic, there was a rise in male children's mental health problems when educational policymakers closed childcare centers in schools (Browne et al., 2021). During the closing of schools, Chinese children aged 7-15 years suffered from post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) and depressive symptoms "during the COVID-19 pandemic, we found 1 in five children have PTSD and 1 in 14 children have depressive symptoms" (Ma et al., 2021, p. 1).

Hertz and Barrios (2021) asserted that closing schools and social isolation contributed to the emergence of psychological problems such as sadness, hopelessness, loneliness, and depression whether students have previous psychological disorders or developed new ones. Hertz and Barrios (2021) mentioned that experiencing the trauma of social isolation for children in Covid-19 time has long-term impacts on mental health problems up to 9 years after the strict quarantine. In turn, the closure of schools during the pandemic also impacted parents' mental health. A Japanese study by Yamamura and Tsustsui (2021) revealed that the closure of schools led Japanese mothers with primary school-aged children to worse mental health, especially working mothers who were forced to stay home and take care of their children. We should think twice about the challenges of mental health and emotional problems facing families and children prior to deciding to close schools or deprive social and physical activities.

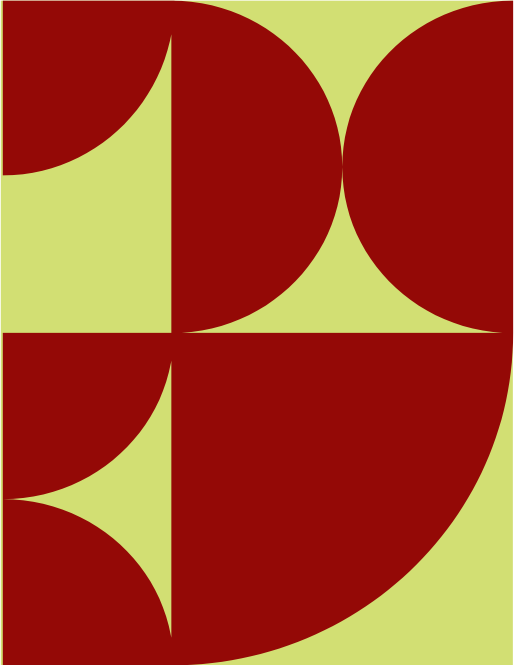
### Social Media Addiction

Another global concern of school closures during the Covid-19 crisis was that children were getting addicted to social media. By forcing millions of students to go into lockdown, digital technology overuse has increased (Gupta & Jawanda, 2020; Montag & Elhai, 2020). The addiction to using social media among teenagers aged 13-18 during the Covid-19 lockdown has been significantly increased, which in turn has caused a high level of anxiety noticed by their parents (Drouin et al., 2020). Gupta, Swami, and Nebhinani (2020) stated that

## Do you know about the Academic Instructional Skills Program (AISP)?

This program is for individuals who are new to teaching at university or those looking for resources and strategies to be a more effective teacher. The program follows a self-study format, whereby individuals can work through the program at their own pace.

To learn more and to register, go to:  
<https://www.upei.ca/teaching-and-learning-centre/learning/academic-instructional-skills-program>



although technology helped schools with remote online learning in Covid-19 life, the decision of closing schools contributed to rising in youth's digital media addiction and screen time use. A study by Zhu et al., (2021) examined 2,863 students from Hong Kong, found that the school lockdown fostered addictive gaming behaviours, caused poor mental health with depression and anxiety, and made children use online games every day during the Covid-19 pandemic. As such, these new habits in children's lives on social media during the Covid-19 lockdown might keep digital screen time and digital media addiction continuing, even post-crisis.

### Discussion

As the lockdowns have eased, educators/parents have noticed symptoms of aggressive violence as well as anxiety and depression in the behaviours of youth (Sun et al., 2021). Previous studies linked these symptoms to students' experiences of living in a pandemic without a positive and confident childcare environment in the classroom (Browne et al., 2021). Despite the fact that students did not stop learning during the pandemic and teachers doubled their efforts through remote learning, the students still stayed at home and missed social and physical activities. The absence of social and physical activities during school lockdown made children spend a lot of time in front of tablets, smartphones, and/or TV, negatively impacting their mental health and well-being. The debate about closing schools during the Covid-19 pandemic is still sustained. Educational policymakers want to keep students and teachers safe from any potential diseases. Other concerned researchers believe that crisis doesn't hit education systems alone, it impacts the education systems, learners' health, and parenting well-being.

In conclusion, educational leadership should be an inclusive process that balances students' learning, safety, health, and any external circumstances. Each educational decision must be undertaken from different perspectives such as individuals with experience and expertise in a childcare center. Also, educational policymakers should welcome new ideas from the school community to figure out how to remotely administer schools' mental health services during a crisis.

In your opinion, do you think that educational leaders took the correct decision of school lockdown for our children during the Covid-19 pandemic? Do you support closing schools as a top priority with any crisis?

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## Governor General's Medal Winner

For more than 140 years, the Governor General's Gold Medals have recognized the outstanding scholastic achievements of students across Canada. At UPEI, the Governor General's medal is awarded to the student graduating from a Masters or Doctoral program who has achieved academic excellence and standing, and whose record in that program is so distinguished as to warrant special recognition.

The winner of the Governor General's medal for 2022 is Deepmala Agarwal, Master of Science graduate at the Atlantic Veterinary College (AVC).

Read the [full story](#) of Deepmala's achievements at UPEI.

## Graduate Studies Award of Distinction Winners

Each year, students at UPEI graduating from a Masters or Doctorate program are recognized by their faculty for the *Faculty of Graduate Studies Award of Distinction*. These students are selected based on high academic merit, contributions to their discipline and contributions to graduate studies. The six winners for 2022 responded to the question:

***What has been a highlight of your graduate degree at UPEI?***

### Adebayo Olubiyi- Master of Arts

The highlight for me was the opportunity to learn in exciting environments and share experiences with like-minded colleagues that would result in lifelong friendships. My time at UPEI was an important period of personal development towards a more rewarding career.

### Jeremy Heartz- Master of Business Administration

The highlight that stands out for me was being able to participate in in-person negotiations with my peers for our *Negotiations Within & Across Cultures* course after nine-months of virtual learning. It was one of the first times in our one-year program that we had an opportunity to collaborate in-person due to the pandemic, and it opened up new ways to interact and learn from my fellow students and faculty.

### Emad Naseri - PhD Molecular and Macromolecular Sciences

Receiving several awards during my Ph.D. studies at UPEI encouraged me to be more dedicated to my academic and life goals. I will really miss UPEI and all the kind people who I met there during the past few years.

### Junaid Maqsood- Master of Sustainable Design Engineering

I have completed my Master of Sustainable Design Engineering from FSDE-UPEI. My research was related to climate change and its impact on potato tuber yield to ensure the sustainability of potato crop in Prince Edward Island. I have published three peer-reviewed journal articles and presented my work at different national and international conferences during my master's degree. I have been awarded the Faculty of Graduate Studies award of distinction based on my high academic standings, publications, and contributions to graduate studies and the discipline.

### Jocelyn Dougan- Master of Nursing

A highlight of my graduate degree was my clinical experiences. It allowed me to apply theoretical knowledge and evidence-based practice in a hands-on environment. I would recommend UPEI for any nurse looking to pursue the nurse practitioner program!

### Diane Montgomery- Master of Education

One highlight during my Masters program at UPEI was being awarded a Mitacs Research Training Award which provided me with the opportunity to explore the impacts of online learning during the pandemic for students in K-12 environments. The paper from this study is currently in review for my first journal publication. I am now enjoying the next stage of my academic journey in the Doctor of Philosophy in Educational Studies program at UPEI.

## **Stay Connected with the Graduate Community at UPEI!**

*In an effort to keep the graduate community connected, it would be helpful to know the best way to reach you. So please complete this one minute survey to let us know your preferred communication channel.*

[Link to survey.](#)

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