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Occupational Therapy Students' Time-Use After Transitioning to In-Person Learning

Jhannell Ocampo, OTS; Susan MacDermott, OTD, OTR/L; Karen McCarthy, OTD, OTR/L

BACKGROUND

- There is an *emotional and physical impact* on occupational therapy (OT) and occupational therapy assistant (OTA) students as a result of the pandemic (Bridgland et al., 2021).
- Social isolation in younger population makes them more susceptible to poorer health conditions and behaviors (Hämmig, 2019).
- With increased time at home and social isolation, students lost their occupational "right of autonomy" as they were unable to participate in leisure and socialize outside their homes (Wegner et al., 2022).
- OT's role in post secondary education is still emerging but occupational therapists in this field mostly work in offices of disability services and assistive technology. There's a push to work with more general student population (Keptner & McCarthy, 2020).

PURPOSE

The purpose of the capstone was to research how the pandemic affected OT students' time-use and occupational engagement as they transition back to campus and in-person activities.

METHODS

Research Study

This project utilized a **mixed methods** approach to research OT and OTA students' experiences transitioning to in-person learning. Participants were recruited from USAHS and social media. OT students (n=74) answered a **10-minute survey** which included open-ended and Likert scale-based questions.

- **Survey participants:** 4 associates, 26 entry-level doctorate, 39 masters, and 5 post-professional doctorate students; 85% female, 14% male, 1% non-binary

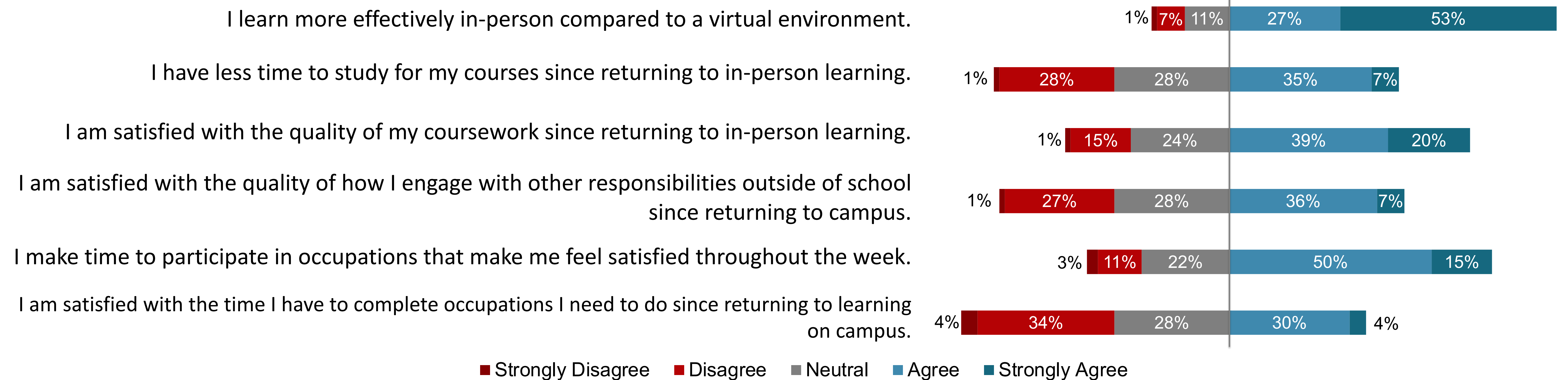
Next, participants (n=12) completed the **Occupational Experience Profile** (Atler & Fisher, 2022) and an **interview**. Student utilized a qualitative descriptive approach using the Braun and Clarke (2006) method for thematic analysis.

Capstone Experience

Student collaborated with **USAHS's Student Success program** to organize student wellness events to increase understanding of OT student's wellbeing and their experiences with in-person learning.

QUANTITATIVE RESULTS

Likert-Based Questions



QUALITATIVE RESULTS

Themes	Subthemes	Quotes
Time Compression	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Loss of "Placeholder Occupations" • Preparatory Occupations • Time and Energy Levels 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • "... I don't do that anymore. I definitely fell off of that. But that's definitely what kept me sane..." • "... It's like my concept of getting to something has really changed..." • "Getting ready to attend in-person events have become more challenging. I have to set time aside to get ready and drive to in-person events" • "I think that commute really impacted me on top of like all the expectations... to complete your course-work... I don't feel like I'm at the gym. But I'm here."
Lessons From Adapting	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • "Mind shift" • Relearning Occupations • Manipulating the Environment 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • "I think it was like that mind shift ... Now I know when to take breaks, when to really listen to my body ..." • "... OT School was just about figuring out where my boundaries were because we started off without any boundaries..." • "I find it easier to go to school earlier..., so that I could study there... I feel like I could get more done there and be productive... So it's nice to have that resource"
Autonomy and Choice	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Freedom to Choose • Tensions Between Polarities 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • "I think we just have a lot more activities available to us now." • "I still have like a lot of obligations, but I still make sure that I balance them out with things that I like to do." • "It was really stressful, because I have other stuff to do at home. Sometimes I drop off my mom to work... and having to find a time for my fieldwork stuff like I push all the way to the end pretty much."

Acknowledgements: Special thanks to Alex Rouse, M.Ed.; Brooke Nelson, MS Ed.; Dr. Karen Park, OTD, OTR/L, BCP

DISCUSSION

With resumption of in-person activities, OT students felt they have less time and needed to relearn past habits and routines.

- Larson (2004) describes this phenomenon of experiencing time compression, which may cause some of their disinterested experiences and lack of presence.

As students learned to adapt to their new in-person environments, they also experience a spectrum of autonomy and freedom through their meaningful occupations and responsibilities.

Some students further developed their self-awareness skills during the pandemic.

- This may have led to the experience of "meta-emotion of occupation" (Royeen, 2020) as they describe feelings of guilt, stress, intention and happiness during meaningful occupations and obligations.

CONCLUSION

This research study explores OT students' experiences through their transition to in-person learning to further provide OT practitioners with ways they can expand how they work with college students in conjunction with other practitioners. OTs can utilize their understanding a student's client factors and utilizing occupation to better their well-being.

REFERENCES



Likert-Based Questions

I learn more effectively in-person compared to a virtual environment.

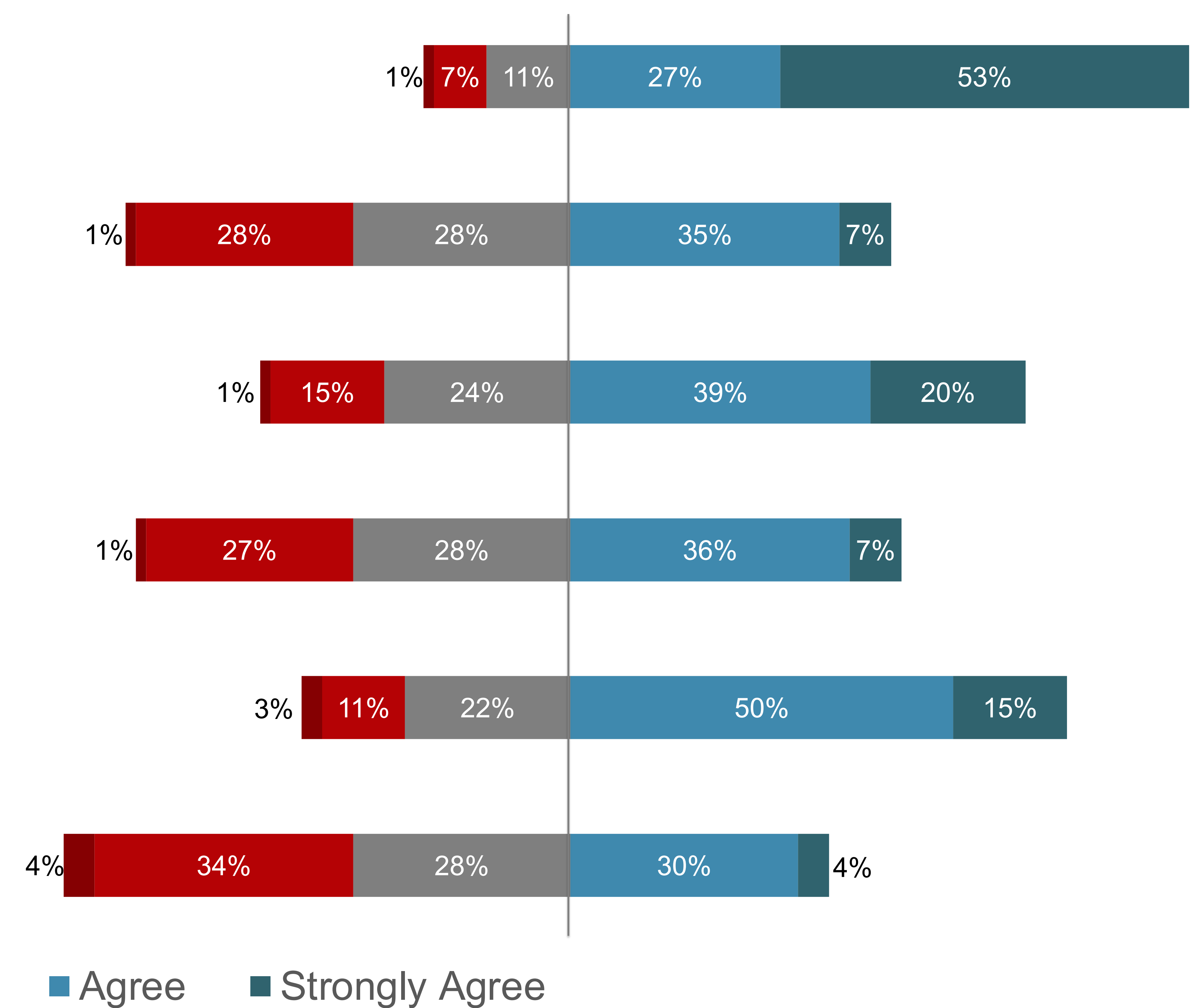
I have less time to study for my courses since returning to in-person learning.

I am satisfied with the quality of my coursework since returning to in-person learning.

I am satisfied with the quality of how I engage with other responsibilities outside of school since returning to campus.

I make time to participate in occupations that make me feel satisfied throughout the week.

I am satisfied with the time I have to complete occupations I need to do since returning to learning on campus.



■ Strongly Disagree ■ Disagree ■ Neutral ■ Agree ■ Strongly Agree

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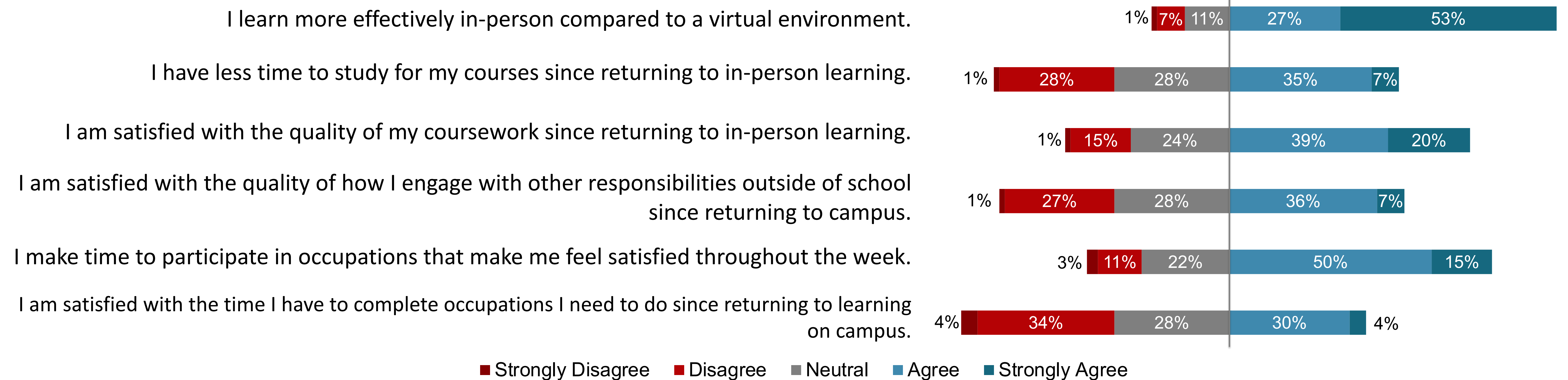
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