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COVID-19 and pre-tenure counseling faculty: A collaborative autoethnographic investigation

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Abstract
Higher education faculty worldwide experienced heightened stressors due to the COVID-19 pandemic, from completing their professional roles and responsibilities virtually to balancing personal and professional stressors. Consequently, the pandemic created many adjustments for pre-tenure counseling faculty across research, teaching, and service. In response to this pandemic, we explored the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on the personal and professional lives of four pre-tenure counseling faculty members. Accordingly, we used collaborative autoethnography to investigate our experiences and narratives as pre-tenure counseling faculty, which resulted in seven overarching themes. We discussed the implications for practice, advocacy, education, and faculty training.

KEYWORDS
collaborative autoethnography, COVID-19, pre-tenure faculty

INTRODUCTION

With the onset of the global pandemic, higher education institutions made a series of decisions in response to growing COVID-19 concerns in early 2020 (Gibson et al., 2020; Harrichand et al., 2021; Levine et al., 2021; Malisch et al., 2020), including adapting to online and hybrid formats and developing new policies and procedures. For counseling faculty, this included altering advising, practicum, internship, and clinical supervision, as well as ensuring COVID-compliant programmatic standards and policies aligned with the Council for Accreditation of Counseling and Related Educational Programs (CACREP, 2015) standards.

Many higher education institutions and counselor education programs had previous experience responding to natural disasters or political unrest (Swartz et al., 2018), but the COVID-19 pandemic shifted education online globally (Johnson et al., 2020), leaving many faculty with days to transition from in-person classes to high-quality online instruction (Johnson et al., 2020; Levine et al., 2021). Within the United States, more than 4234 institutions of higher education and 25,798,790

students were impacted by course and university closures (COVID-19: Higher Education Resource Center, n.d.), and more internationally (Farnell et al., 2021). With these changes, faculty faced many challenges, including identifying effective communication methods, internet connectivity and speed issues, limited technology and online teaching training, and lack of preparation to complete responsibilities remotely (Gottenborg et al., 2021; Xie et al., 2021). Working from home produced additional difficulties: caring for family; overseeing children's learning; lacking privacy for research, service, and teaching.

Despite the complex emotions that faculty experienced during COVID-19, university administrators, staff, and students expected faculty to remain positive, calm, empathic, flexible, engaged, and proficient in technology (Johnson et al., 2020; Veletsianos & Kimmons, 2020). Students expected recognition of their hardships, help with learning new technology, and flexibility with due dates, assigned readings, and assignments (Levine et al., 2021). Faculty were expected to seamlessly transition into virtual roles and responsibilities with minimal guidance. A survey exploring COVID's impact on faculty found that most pre-tenured faculty experienced very high to extremely high levels of stress (Tugend, 2020) and fatigue and difficulty building confidence, professional networks, and dossiers (Stephens et al., 2020; Tugend, 2020).

Pre-tenure counseling faculty

In early career, faculty depend on institutionally valued contributions (Brazeau & Woodward, 2012), pursuing excellence in research, teaching, and service while building professional dossiers for promotion and tenure (Gibson et al., 2020; Levine et al., 2021; Stephens et al., 2020). The pandemic exacerbated the challenges (Harrichand et al., 2021): canceled conferences and presentations; minimal guidance in online education; decreased teaching evaluation scores; increased departmental service for addressing COVID concerns; and research stalling as participants, reviewers, and researchers struggled with the pandemic (Levine et al., 2021; Stephens et al., 2020). Pre-tenure faculty encountered exceedingly high expectations from students, administrators, and senior faculty while processing and navigating their own pandemic experiences (Levine et al., 2021; Stephens et al., 2020). These shifts created burdens and barriers (Tugend, 2020), especially for faculty from marginalized communities (Casado Pérez & Carney, 2018), and have significant implications for pre-tenure faculty career, professional identity, and future employment opportunities, which creates a need for more career development literature (Akkermans et al., 2013; National Career Development Association, 2020).

Success in academia requires navigating dynamic expectations of scholarship, research, and teaching (Gasser & Shaffer, 2014; Wester et al., 2019). Research has demonstrated that these expectations are impacted by family stressors (Neale-McFall et al., 2018; Trepal & Stinchfield, 2012), racism and bias (Martinez et al., 2015), oppressive and colonial practices and structures (Casado Pérez, 2019; Casado Pérez & Carney, 2018), and departmental dynamics and resources (Wester et al., 2019), impacting career development, success, and satisfaction (Ponjuan et al., 2011). In existing research, family planning is a concern for pre-tenure counseling faculty, especially given discrimination and lack of support reflected in institutional policy and practice (Trepal & Stinchfield, 2012). Race and ethnicity also impact pre-tenure counseling faculty experiences (Martinez et al., 2015). In the literature, faculty of color identified hurdles: navigating stereotypes, hostility, tokenism, challenges to scholarship, and marginalization while maintaining authenticity, self-advocacy, and service (Casado Pérez & Carney, 2018; Marbley et al., 2011). The research on counseling faculty from minority communities is replete with data on the impact of oppressive and nonsupportive structures: high rates of burnout and compassion fatigue; increased service; low teaching evaluations; lack of professional support and mentorship; increased feelings of isolation; and the undue burden of leading diversity, equity, inclusion, and antioppression aims (Casado Pérez, 2019; Casado Pérez & Carney, 2018).

Counseling faculty have also reported a lack of financial and staff support of research needs (Stupnisky et al., 2015, 2017) and continued training (Wester et al., 2019). Conducting research and seeking external funding are significant struggles (Milsom & Moran, 2015; Wester et al., 2019). Scholarship expectations are often unclear (Parker & Scott, 2010), creating barriers to promotion, tenure, salary, and recognition (Wester et al., 2019). Mentorship, a critical component of job satisfaction (Magnuson et al., 2009) and faculty retention (Blunt & Conolly, 2006; Casado Pérez & Carney, 2018), is sparse for early-career counselor educators (Wester et al., 2019), which can be detrimental to careers, success, and health and wellness, leading to burnout (Woo et al., 2019). Mentorship is essential to role socialization, professional identity, productivity, connectedness, personal and professional balance, and career development, especially for marginalized faculty members (Borders et al., 2011).

Exploring experiences of pre-tenure faculty members, especially those vulnerable due to tenure status, family status, gender, ethnicity, or affectional orientation, will provide the profession with vital data on faculty managing multiple expectations during the COVID-19 pandemic, clarifying the ways administrations and senior faculty can support vulnerable faculty members during promotion and tenure processes occurring amid counseling and education restructuring. This collaborative autoethnography explores personal and professional narratives and experiences of four pre-tenure faculty members in counseling and human development at one university. The following research questions guided this qualitative study: (R1) How are we, as pre-tenure counseling faculty in higher education, working toward integrating our personal and professional roles and responsibilities during COVID-19? (R2) What implications does COVID-19 have on us as pre-tenure counseling faculty in higher education?

Positionality statement

A positionality statement in qualitative research is essential, accounting for researchers' identities, worldviews, and positions concerning a project's social, cultural, and political contexts (Holmes, 2020). Harvey self-identifies as a gay, cisgender, able-bodied, non-Latino white male who is a first-generation college student from a lower socioeconomic (SES) background. Bagmi self-identifies as an able-bodied woman of color belonging to an immigrant community. Mina self-identifies as a cisgender, queer, able-bodied immigrant man and a first-generation college graduate from a lower-middle SES background. Maggie is from an upper-middle SES background. She identifies as a cisgender, heterosexual, able-bodied, non-Latino white woman, and mother of two children. All authors work in a counseling program at the same research-intensive institution in the East Coast Mid-Atlantic region. Our department, housed in the school of education at a predominantly white institution, is Carnegie-classified as a doctoral university with very high research activity. Pre-tenure counseling faculty must achieve excellence in research, teaching, and service, engaging in counseling research, grant writing, and publishing in multiple regional, national, and international journals. We have all served as (a) graduate student advisors and on dissertation committees, (b) department committee members, (c) university committee members, and (d) professional organization members and leaders. Given our roles as researchers and participants, we address, in the study, professional responsibilities coupled with identities, worldviews, and experiences, to account for epistemology and ontology.

METHOD

Given our research questions and position as researcher-participants, we used a collaborative autoethnographic method (Adams et al., 2015; Chang et al., 2012; Ngunjiri et al., 2010; Peel, 2020) to investigate our experiences as pre-tenure counseling faculty during the COVID-19 pandemic. Collaborative autoethnography consists of a research team critically and qualitatively examining social-cultural attitudes, beliefs, narratives, and milieu (Chang et al., 2012; Ellis & Bochner, 2000).

It uses reflexivity to explore relationships the researcher-participants, and between persons, systems, and society (Adams et al., 2015; Poulos, 2021). As pre-tenure counseling faculty with various privileged and marginalized identities, we found in collaborative autoethnography a critical methodology allowing collection and analysis of data, including social, cultural, and systemic implications of the pandemic on personal and professional lives. Given the research paucity and vulnerabilities faced by pre-tenure counseling faculty from minoritized communities, this focus is vital to counseling literature. The four researcher-participant authors engaged inductively, allowing data to direct exploration rather than using a theoretical framework (Hargons et al., 2017). In collaborative autoethnography, the sample size is small, allowing in-depth exploration (Hernandez et al., 2015; Peel, 2020), so we could co-construct our collective and divergent experiences (Ngunjiri et al., 2010; Peel, 2020).

Procedure

In April of 2020, the first author recruited faculty with differing social locations, training, teaching, and research expertise within a counseling program. Given a lack of extant research on the COVID pandemic's impact on pre-tenure counseling faculty, and the method's scope, the first author decided a focus on an individual institution and a more homogenous group was beneficial, resulting in richer, more robust investigation. Single institution use is documented across autoethnographic studies in education (Hernandez et al., 2015; Poulos, 2021). The first author invited multiple team members and, after finalizing the team, we met virtually, exchanging emails to discuss, refine, and finalize the study's scope. We reviewed method and examples, ensuring understanding of the investigation (Hargons et al., 2017). Upon review, our university's Institutional Review Board deemed the study exempt.

Based on the method (Poulos, 2021), capturing multiple facets of higher education during COVID-19 was essential. We developed question prompts to ground the data in memory, observation, story, and conversation, requiring systematic self-reflexivity. Consistent with collaborative autoethnographic studies in counseling (Hargons et al., 2017; Wells et al., 2019), each team member's journal prompt questions explicated the experiences and narratives of our personal and professional roles and responsibilities. We then refined the prompts and selected those providing the richest data, consisting of nine questions (see Appendix A), covering health and wellness, roles and responsibilities, and promotion and tenure. We completed nine journals, documenting narratives, emotions, and memories elaborating on unique, shared experiences, consistent with collaborative traditions of autoethnography (Chang et al., 2012; Poulos, 2021).

Next, we collected data on the abrupt transition from in-person to virtual faculty positions, and, after 12 weeks, we agreed that the research project's parameters were sufficient. Given collaborative autoethnography requiring a research team, we had to reach consensus during each study phase, and each team member agreed that the data were rich, robust, and representative of the phenomena (Hargons et al., 2017; Poulos, 2021). We reached data collection conclusion upon seeing no new emerging concepts, observations, or narratives.

Data analysis

Using Braun and Clarke's (2006) six-step thematic analysis, our team each contributed. Thematic analysis includes (1) familiarization with data, (2) generating initial codes, (3) theme search, (4) theme review, (5) defining/naming themes, and (6) producing a scholarly report. In autoethnography's philosophy and epistemology, data must exhibit richness, depth, vulnerability, deep meaning, and evocative and emotional texture (Engstrom, 2008; Poulos, 2021). Review of coding strategies resulted in use of in vivo, emotion, and values coding (Saldaña, 2016) to ensure each member's data analysis used a methodologically consistent process (Chang et al., 2012; Poulos, 2021). After coding, we discussed data-driven codes and the process, then aggregated the data (Adams et al., 2015; Poulos,

2021). We separately grouped and collapsed codes into themes, then met to discuss, edit, and refine themes (Adams et al., 2015; Poulos, 2021), to capture the richness and nuance of our narratives and experiences. We reached consensus, defining each theme and subtheme, and finalized the study in January 2021 (Adams et al., 2015; Poulos, 2021).

Trustworthiness

To increase validity and enhance methodological rigor, we engaged in various trustworthiness practices (Hays & Singh, 2012; Hays et al., 2016; Richardson, 2000). Trustworthiness provides understanding of each research phase and of the study's credibility, transferability, conformability, and dependability (Hays & Singh, 2012; Hays et al., 2016). Literature exploring trustworthiness in collaborative autoethnography is lacking, so we used literature addressing trustworthiness across all qualitative methodologies (Poulos, 2021). Following Hays and Singh (2012), we engaged in reflexivity throughout data collection and analysis (Ellis & Bochner, 2000), discussing personal and professional experiences during the pandemic. We engaged in memo writing during coding, allowing self-reflection in a different medium. We discussed the memos, creating further prompts. We used member checking (Hays & Singh, 2012), a process embedded in collaborative autoethnography (Hargons et al., 2017). We used thick descriptions for findings (Hays & Singh, 2012), and a positionality statement identifying us as research participants and acknowledging the demographic intersections contributing to our experiences (Hays & Singh, 2012; Holmes, 2020). Trustworthiness included thematic findings from our various perspectives, creating rich and realistic data (Hays & Singh, 2012). We determined that the study provided substantive contribution, aesthetic merit, reflexivity, impact, and expressed a reality (see Poulos, 2021; Richardson, 2000).

RESULTS

We designed the study to investigate how we integrated our personal and professional roles and responsibilities during the initial COVID-19 outbreak, and to understand its implications on us as faculty. Through data collection and thematic data analysis procedures, we identified seven themes including emotional impact, personal stressors, professional stressors, navigating changes, supports, obstacles, and academic immersion (see Figure 1).

Emotional impact

This theme included internal emotional experiences common among our narratives and experiences, and included two subthemes: positive impact and negative impact. The emotional impact fluctuated, with blurring of personal and professional impact on emotions. We rarely discussed emotional impact either/or; instead, it was framed as both/and. We processed and communicated emotional impact differently, ranging from "gratitude," "hope," "pride," "excitement," "optimism" to "fear," "vigilance," "numb," "sad," "guilt," "anxious."

Regarding positive impact, Mina was "excited to engage in a new research method," and "evolve in my research agenda to adapt to the current reality." Maggie was "super grateful for the support of the new faculty." We were "grateful" or "appreciative" as we supported and developed deeper relationships with each other. Negative impact came up more consistently than positive impact. Bagmi's "anxiety around others has heightened." I am definitely concerned that if I do not follow CDC guidelines, someone's death might be my fault. Mina had been growing increasingly concerned about the spread of COVID-19 and have started to notice some anxieties related to its dangers, particularly if my elderly father and mother contracted it. Although differing in focus, they identify personal angst
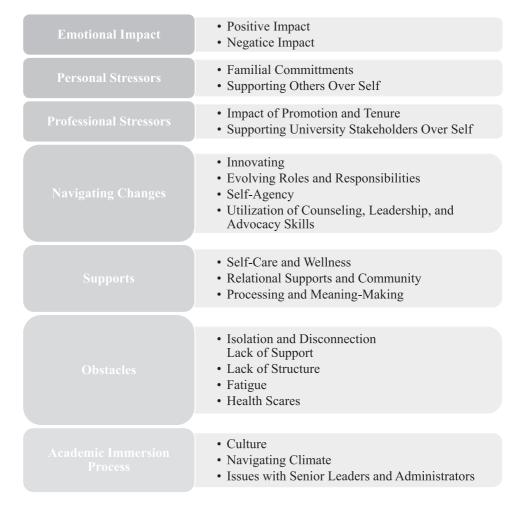
Emotional Impact	• Positive Impact • Negatice Impact
Personal Stressors	• Familial Committments • Supporting Others Over Self
Professional Stressors	• Impact of Promotion and Tenure • Supporting University Stakeholders Over Self
Navigating Changes	• Innovating • Evolving Roles and Responsibilities • Self-Agency • Utilization of Counseling, Leadership, and Advocacy Skills
Supports	• Self-Care and Wellness • Relational Supports and Community • Processing and Meaning-Making
Obstacles	• Isolation and Disconnection Lack of Support • Lack of Structure • Fatigue • Health Scares
Academic Immersion Process	• Culture • Navigating Climate • Issues with Senior Leaders and Administrators

FIGURE 1   The impact and implications of COVID-19 on four pre-tenure counseling faculty

and fear. Harvey reported "an isolative and loneliness process. I imagine this journey is existentially lonely, but I believe COVID has negatively heightened the experience" and was "more anxious, self-deprecating, and negative about COVID and tenure and promotion." Maggie was "anxious about my ability to teach these new [online] classes in a meaningful way" and "I vacillate between gratitude, denial, fear, anger, [and] sadness." These quotes show COVID's impact, personally and professionally.

Personal stressors

COVID-19 had a role as an environmental condition between self, family, and community systems. We identified two subthemes, familial commitments and supporting others over self, showing personal stressors' impact on professional lives. Maggie, mother of two preschoolers, found difficulty serving as her "children's teacher" and "balancing that as an untenured faculty member." Bagmi discussed personal changes: "though I have my office separate, I find it harder to separate personal life and professional life." Working at home merged the personal and professional lives, decreasing meaningful connection.

Supporting others over self meant meeting friends, families, and communities' needs without requesting, accepting, or receiving support. Childcare inaccessibility created difficulties for Maggie: "not only is it just tough to focus, but the ways in which my children interrupt and my husband interrupt. I don't have the ability to have even an hour to myself to just work." Bagmi was "worried about [partner] mental health. He seems grumpy and gray a lot of the time and I just want to cheer him up, but I know I can't be the only one." Such sentiments were shared by Harvey and Mina. Desire to support friends, family, and community members connected to our values and counselor/educator professional identities.

Professional stressors

The *professional stressors* theme regards balancing professor selves with professional resilience, perseverance, and resources. We identified two subthemes: the impact of promotion and tenure and supporting university stakeholders over self. In our experiences, the pandemic's outbreak greatly exacerbated these stressors. The impact of promotion and tenure revealed multiple stressors: productivity, imposter syndrome, uncertainty and powerlessness, and impact on professorial roles and responsibilities. Each of us was concerned about research and publication delay. Harvey's research was "impacted in several ways," including "delays due to reviews and dispositions taking longer" and "participants have asked to reschedule their interviews for up to 2 months." Mina was "continually concerned about the unknown… I am left with unease as to how things would play out." Bagmi has "been very concerned about my performance update … and my imposter syndrome is strong today." We were concerned about productivity amid slowing of research and impact on service, leadership, and student experiences and evaluations, potentially impacting promotion and tenure.

Supporting university stakeholders over self theme reflected our commitment to meeting students, faculty, and administrators' needs by providing support without requesting, accepting, or receiving it. Bagmi gave struggling students extra feedback on clinical work: "they did not sign up for this," and "I want to make sure they understand" and "they get enough feedback." Harvey provided to others but did not ask much in return; he "did not want to be a burden or annoyance." Mina extended his semester 4 weeks "to support [his] students in accruing their hours." Harvey and Mina extended their semesters at students' and senior faculty's request. We each met needs of others with little-to-no support.

Navigating changes

In *navigating changes*, we attempted to understand, adapt to, and address the changes within and between our personal and professional lives. Four subthemes included innovating, evolving roles and responsibilities, self-agency, and use of counseling, leadership, and advocacy skills. In *innovating*, we introduced new andragogical tools and techniques, ways of connecting, and support of students. Bagmi used COVID-19 to innovate: "I've started to incorporate Menti polls in my class, and class is better planned out because I know that delivery of content is quick, but activities take longer." Mina and Bagmi took instructional design courses to enhance innovation. Mina began using an "app [with colleagues] called Marco Polo to connect with and send updates and questions to each." Need for innovation and creativity transformed the landscapes of personal and professional lives.

Evolving roles and responsibilities reflected rapid professional shifting, as adapted roles and responsibilities added more work to busy schedules. Bagmi could not "dedicate my whole time in pursuit of bettering myself as an online educator but that's what I am doing." Maggie had to "give up some control and standards that I usually have for myself and students." We met these roles and responsibilities by adapting to the circumstances.

Self-agency represented intrinsic motivation, tenacity, and resilience. Mina "felt good to be able to contribute to the profession during a time like this." Harvey ensured "following through on my

committed obligations. I think this time requires a lot of gumption, commitment, self-motivation, and self-structure, and agency." Students, colleagues, and personal connections used our agency as support in addressing the tensions associated with COVID.

Connected to navigating tensions was utilization of counseling, leadership, and advocacy skills. Harvey increased his role as a "pseudo-counselor and life-coach" in COVID. Maggie and Bagmi described being a student "cheerleader." For Harvey, COVID required "many skills, such as assessing and addressing issues and inequities, communication, attention to group-system processes, self-reflection, self-care, listening, etc."

Supports

Supports reflected internal cognitive processes and external action-oriented activities and resources contributing to overall wellness maintenance, with three subthemes: self-care and wellness, relational supports and community, and processing and meaning-making. *Self-care and wellness* represented health maintenance across emotional, physical, mental, relational, and spiritual well-being. Mina started "walking daily to get in some exercise." In addition to that, "I decided to buy a mini elliptical for my apartment" and "I also have been cooking at home most of my meals, which do feel healthier from an ingredient standpoint." Bagmi integrated technology, for example, "I'm using my FitBit to get on this." I am recording/logging meals, tracking sleep, and my work outs. I plan to do the "challenges" and "guides." These show the different health decisions we made to attend to our wellness.

Relational supports and community included family members, partners, friends, current colleagues, previous colleagues and mentors, and animals. We had each used technology to connect. For Maggie, "Marco Polo, virtual dinners, and gatherings [are] super helpful, I have connected with people that support and love me, either because they are parenting during COVID or therapists." Mina was "happy to have formed some important relationships during my Ph.D. years that have been supportive throughout my transition into faculty life [and] COVID." These relational supports allowed us time to connect and meet our relational needs.

The final subtheme included processing and meaning-making of the COVID experience. The existential components in our narratives and experiences allowed reflection and coping with the pandemic. Bagmi noted a newlywed relational shift: "I know I have my own family with [partner and dog] but still feels weird." We discussed this research project's value in documenting our experience, narrative, and process. For Harvey, "this project is serving as a helpful tool to process, make meaning, and examine the impact [COVID] is having on me as an assistant professor." Bagmi's "journaling is a help in that I am at least telling someone." This space and process proved essential to self-care.

Obstacles

Obstacles were the personal, professional, and structural barriers impeding present and future roles and responsibilities as pre-tenure counseling faculty. Subthemes included isolation and disconnection, lack of support, lack of structure, fatigue, and health scares. In discussing *isolation and disconnection*, Bagmi said that, during COVID-19, she feels "more distant from my colleagues." Lack of connection also related to the level of extroversion and human connection. For Mina, "as an extrovert, I continue to struggle with not being able to see people." Especially since I live by myself. This is the first time in my life that I can say I feel alone. Maggie felt the struggle "with isolation-something that humans are not built for and no one seems to be addressing the mental health aspects of this." We all felt lack of connection and human contact made functioning in higher education more difficult.

Lack of support was linked to lack of connection, including both the personal and professional. Mina felt "like my close friends and family do not understand the various roles and responsibilities that

an academic engages in" and "this makes it difficult to talk about this transition with people outside of academia." We identified deficiencies in guidance and mentorship. Maggie stated, "I [do not] have a whole lot of people reaching out to check if I am ok or asking to help" from her school or department. She also "reached out to others who taught the classes I am teaching and asked for resources and hear nothing back." Harvey felt "having something in place could further support faculty in attending to their roles and responsibilities, especially for us who are new to the university and professorhood." The institution's lack of support, guidance and mentorship was a barrier, and we found we were not alone. Harvey "consulted with faculty at various institutions as well as explored this topic on Twitter, [and] it seems that there is a lot of uncertainty and lack of support for faculty."

Lack of structure included lack of online teaching structure, understanding and addressing COVID-19-related issues, day-to-day teaching online, and working from home. Bagmi had to transition an in-person clinical skills course to online: "I feel completely unequipped by our department to take on a class like this right now." We desired and/or needed a regimen in place during COVID-19 to accommodate the vast differences in working from home. Harvey "works best with in-person engagement, deadlines, and mutual enforcement of accountability. I feel that this is not happening, which is not an ideal work environment for me or my academic development and trajectory." For Maggie, "Despite my trying to have a schedule for the kids that I can adhere to and provide structure, the ease and difficulty changes depending on the day, kids' mood, my mood, the weather."

Fatigue influenced personal and professional lives. Technology fatigue impacted Bagmi: "being in Zoom meetings [or] Blackboard collaborate is way more exhausting than being there in person." Maggie found it "hard to teach in person online—I hate teaching in the zoom class, it is strange and awkward." Multiple team members felt compassion fatigue: a diminished ability to empathize and have compassion, despite trying to prevent it. In trying to support family, colleagues, and students, Maggie felt "scared and sad and I feel like I am trying to fill all these cups, and I am just empty." The depletion experience was common.

The final obstacle was *health scares*, as personal and professional connections reported health scares amid COVID. A constant feeling of danger and anticipatory loss resulted in a sense of vigilance. Bagmi described "a tough week," feeling "sick and anxious most of the week. On Saturday, I had trouble breathing. This increased on Sunday and by Monday I was worried I had COVID-19." Maggie's "husband fainted and was unconscious for about a minute and we ended up having to take him to the emergency room, having to break quarantine, and he spent the night at the hospital." Harvey had "COVID-19 symptoms and was sick with a high fever, extremely exhausted, had some respiratory-related issues, congested, and hot and cold flashes." COVID vigilance cost emotional space in personal and professional lives.

Academic immersion process

Academic immersion process regards professorial development while navigating academic institutions and systems. We found COVID-19 exacerbated higher education's social, cultural, and political landscapes. Three subthemes predominated: culture, navigating climate, and issues with senior leaders/administrators. Regarding *culture*, Harvey saw "how knowledge is passed down, both within the university and department" and lack of "consistent or proactive engagement, communication, and socialization." Power and hierarchy fostered uncertainty and caution about academic immersion. Maggie wondered "how will others view my work? Is it enough? How do we know what enough is? What is there to show us?" Our experiences showed a culture fostering imposter syndrome with few supports to counteract uncertainty and sense of academic fraud.

In navigating climate, we experienced policy, dynamics, procedure, and politics. Bagmi was "afraid of what the politics of the situation are." Regarding a 1-year extension, Mina was "not sure I want to make the switch though, because I am afraid of what the politics of the situation are. If they see me click yes, but I am the only one, how will that look?" We discussed navigation of institutional climate

with little faculty, staff, or administrator interaction. For Harvey, it was a "difficult process, especially as you cannot see body language or rely on some of the skills I am used to privileging." We agreed that navigating the complexities of professorship while new, online, and untenured is very difficult.

Issues with senior leaders and administrators captured difficult moments, tensions, and unmet needs. When wishing to connect with tenured faculty, Bagmi had "not heard from anybody but the newer faculty in the past two weeks." There was lack of communication, interaction, and support between tenured and untenured faculty. Maggie referred to it as "separate teams." Maggie felt "I am punished for being a young mother or at the very least not supported." Harvey felt a need to pick his challenges of senior leaders: "I don't want to overstep too often, as I feel I need to save my battles, and that I have [been perceived as] already overstepping many times." These quotes illustrate the difficulties and challenges negatively impacting our departmental and institutional immersion process.

DISCUSSION

This collaborative autoethnography explored narratives and experiences of integrating personal and professional roles as pre-tenure counseling faculty during COVID-19, resulting in seven themes: emotional impact, personal stressors, professional stressors, navigating tensions, supports, obstacles, and the academic immersion process. Results contribute to research on higher education faculty during pandemics, providing data on COVID's amplified impact. This study's results support growing literature on emotion's role in the promotion and tenure process. Pre-tenure counseling faculty report higher rates of positive and adaptive feelings toward teaching, while research produces more maladaptive and negative emotions, influencing faculty perceptions, experiences, and successes (Arnold et al., 2016; Hollywood et al., 2020). Research has examined imposter syndrome's debilitating role in the promotion and tenure process and in scholarly productivity for pre-tenure counseling faculty (Wester et al., 2020), paralleled by our results: we found a range of positive and negative emotions influencing us during COVID-19, showing the dire impact COVID had on mental health and wellness and its negative impact on performance (Litam et al., 2021). Our findings, however, differed from earlier studies: our identified emotions remained fluid across research, teaching, and service. Given the unique COVID context, a larger range of personal and professional feelings were heightened. Also, given our various roles and training, we sought to overlook our own emotions, insecurities, and imposter syndrome to support those within our personal and professional lives.

Interdisciplinary research has examined supports and barriers for pre-tenured faculty, including research training environment and preparation; mentorship; psychosocial support; connectivity; environment; self-efficacy; and diversity, equity, and inclusion (Borders et al., 2011; Casado Pérez, 2019; Stupnisky et al., 2017). While our study's results parallel extant research, ours was a unique perspective regarding processing, meaning-making, and innovation in the context of COVID-related health scares, technology fatigue, and lack of structure. Themes of stressors, supports, and barriers provided insight into personal and professional areas providing nourishment, and areas hindering experience, growth, and development, and showed supports and barriers amplified by the pandemic: seeking support and connection, and issues of guidance, mentorship, and communication. Our findings, with existing scholarship (Borders et al., 2011; Matthew, 2017; Stupnisky et al., 2017; Wester et al., 2019), provide counseling with understanding of supports and barriers during COVID, and offer insight for future crises.

Our academic immersion process theme emphasizes navigating the institution's and counseling department's social, cultural, and political dynamics during COVID-19, providing data on the need for an inclusive, relational, community-oriented, strength-based, culturally responsive, and socially-available environment for pre-tenure counseling faculty. Our results extend existing literature's argument: a university and program's culture play a significant role in pre-tenure counseling faculty's career development (Wester et al., 2019). For instance, pre-tenured faculty avoiding expression of fear, frustration, and anxiety because of potential impact on promotion and tenure have reported increased

isolation and disconnection, negatively influencing socialization and creating difficulties in development and promotion (Parker & Scott, 2010). Counseling faculty experiencing issues with immersion to professorship may find difficulty securing promotion and tenure (Hooper et al., 2012). This study's results offer data on our emotional experience and sense of attachment to the program and university, impacting our success navigating the earlier stages of promotion and tenure. While longitudinal impact of COVID on pre-tenure counseling faculty is still unknown, our findings begin to fill this gap.

This study's final contribution involved the result totality in the context of COVID. To date, little research has focused on COVID's impact on faculty in higher education (Johnson et al., 2020; Park et al., 2020) or counseling (Harrichand et al., 2021). The literature on COVID-19 and higher education has hitherto prioritized students and institutions. Documented in the scholarship are institutions experiencing numerous challenges, such as canceling, delaying, and moving classes and related educational activities to hybrid or online (Johnson et al., 2020; Park et al., 2020), and expecting faculty to quickly pivot to online with little warning, training, or support. The study addressed narratives and experiences of pre-tenure counseling faculty and the integration of personal and professional lives, including research, teaching, service, and other professorial facets, such as mentorship, advising, and supervising. Last, we provided clarity on COVID-19's impact and need for support, mentorship, training, advocacy, and research during a global pandemic or similar exigence stressing and restructuring counseling and education.

LIMITATIONS

This study's findings have limitations. First, in collaborative autoethnographic research, the results reflect us as researcher-participants. Despite trustworthiness measures, this limits the finding's transferability (Hays & Singh, 2012). Second, we do not reflect a larger, more diverse sample; however, we hold various identities, academic experiences/training, and research and teaching interests, allowing us to represent diverse perspectives. Third, existing COVID scholarship is minimal, and research on pre-tenure counseling faculty is almost nonexistent, limiting scholarship integration. Fourth, despite in-depth journal-writing for 12 weeks during the initial phase of COVID-19, other longitudinal areas may not appear, given our timeline and process. Fifth, our experiences and narratives as pre-tenure counseling faculty must be understood within the context of our positions, as it may have unintentional effects on the study's results, especially given we did not have an external auditor or noncolleague research team member.

IMPLICATIONS

Findings provide pre-tenure counseling faculty, tenured faculty, administrators, and related stakeholders with data on pre-tenure counseling faculty's experiences navigating changes to personal and professional roles caused by COVID. University stakeholders can use these data to understand needs, supports, and barriers for this population, specifically how these experiences are heightened by global events. This study has implications for pre-tenure counseling faculty's biopsychosocial health and wellness. Advancements are essential, as results indicated that we provided considerable support to others with little to no support, resulting in compassion fatigue, burnout, isolation, and difficulty practicing wellness and self-care. Thus, these results can be used to normalize the experiences for pre-tenure counseling faculty, supporting development of biopsychosocial wellness plans and practices. This study provides data supporting nonsuperficial and structural supports and research on pre-tenure faculty balancing personal and professional roles, health, and wellness (Harrichand et al., 2021).

As advocacy is central to the roles and responsibilities of counseling faculty and administrators (Goodman et al., 2018; Peters et al., 2020; Peters & Luke, 2021a; Peters & Luke, 2021b), this study has multiple implications for future advocacy efforts, potentially accounting for the cultural shift of

academic socialization and mentoring, especially addressing impostor syndrome's impact on pre-tenure counseling faculty career development and productivity (Wester et al., 2020). Departments may assess mentoring and acculturative needs of pre-tenure counseling faculty and provide additional mentoring and developmental support. One implication includes promotion and tenure, using results to assess pandemic impacts: increased demands, roles, and responsibilities, particularly for minoritized faculty and those with increased familial commitments, and for pre-tenure counseling faculty leading across six domains (community, counseling, scholarship, service, supervision, teaching; Peters et al., 2020).

This study has implications for annual, third-year, and promotion and/or tenure dossier reviews; its results coupled with extant scholarship allow argument for COVID's impact across scholarship, teaching, and service (Riley & Subramaniam, 2021). In our experiences, COVID has resulted in significant reallocation of time, energy, effort, and priorities, shifting roles and responsibilities among programmatic and institutional priorities, including canceled conferences, prolonged review timelines, collaborative research difficulties, and shifts in grant and fellowship funding. COVID has caused transitions to teaching and instruction, as well as changes to service, including increased meetings and communication, heightened service responsibilities, and expanded commitments across roles. Accordingly, these changes need documentation within the review processes (Riley & Subramaniam, 2021).

This study has career implications, emphasizing support of pre-tenure counseling faculty career development. In such rapidly changing times, mentorship is critical in career development for pre-tenured faculty (Woo et al., 2019; Woo et al., 2022). This study can assist pre-tenure counseling faculty in navigating professional roles, responsibilities, and barriers impacting current jobs and future employment. With 43% of tenure-track faculty considering leaving academia, mentorship and support can help counteract burnout, fatigue, and career dissatisfaction (Tugend, 2020). Career and employment counseling can be an essential tool for pre-tenure counseling faculty navigating career decisions.

The pandemic continues creating obstacles and supports for pre-tenure counseling faculty. Future studies can explore COVID's broader impact across various academic ranks, Carnegie classifications, foci, and communities, given variations in needs and experiences (Arnold et al., 2016). While this study examined the first months of the COVID-19 outbreak, the pandemic continues 2 years later, and further study of its continuing impact is warranted. Future inquiry can include exploring the pandemic's impact on academic pipelines. Given the importance of academic socialization and mentorship (Borders et al., 2011; Magnuson et al., 2009; Stupnisky et al., 2017; Wester et al., 2019), future studies could develop competencies to assist counseling faculty mentorship during pandemics, crises, and disasters. Further, with multiple new stressors, dependence on pre-tenure faculty contributions may continue, which is concerning, especially as Tugend (2020) found faculty reporting declines in meeting responsibilities in scholarship, teaching, service, and mentorship due to COVID.

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APPENDIX A: JOURNAL PROMPTS

1. How is COVID-19 impacting our health and wellness?
2. How do we perceive the impact of COVID-19 on promotion and tenure?
3. How have we adapted to the personal and professional changes?
4. What messages are we receiving from others regarding our personal and professional roles and responsibilities?
5. What supports and barriers have emerged during COVID-19?
6. How are our professional roles, responsibilities, and relationships evolving each week?
7. How has COVID-19 impacted our teaching?
8. How has COVID-19 impacted our service and leadership?
9. How has COVID-19 impacted our research?