Foreign-born Counselor Educators: Strengths, Challenges, and Areas of Support

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Abstract

This article features strengths and challenges indicated by foreign-born counselor educators in programs accredited by the Council for Accreditation of Counseling and Related Educational Programs. To gain a deeper understanding of this topic, we utilized a convergent parallel mixed methods design with merged quantitative and qualitative findings. Quantitative results indicated that foreign-born faculty (FBF) experienced more strengths in the personal, spiritual, and health domains while facing more challenges in the social, political, and financial domains. In addition, a thematic analysis identified three overarching themes reflecting FBF's strengths, challenges, areas of support, and the impact of COVID-19: (a) adjustment as a foreign-born individual in the United States, (b) immigration status and procedures, and (c) working as a foreign-born faculty in counselor education. This article presents implications for FBF and stakeholders seeking to support this population, while also suggesting recommendations for future research.

Keywords Foreign-born counselor educators · Strengths · Challenges · COVID-19

Introduction

Foreign-born is a term used when referring to individuals who are not United States citizens by birth, such as naturalized citizens, lawful permanent residents, international faculty, refugees, asylum seekers, and immigrants (U.S. Census Bureau, 2019). Although scholars interchangeably use the terms *international, immigrant,*

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and *foreign-born* when referring to individuals born outside of the United States, we use the term *foreign-born faculty* (FBF) to refer to the participants in our study. This term takes into consideration the four most common paths that faculty take to work in the United States (United States Citizenship and Immigration Services [USCIS], 2020): The Optional Practical Training program, the H-1B visa program, permanent residence, and naturalized citizenship. The Optional Practical Training program (OPT) allows international students on F-1 visa to work in the United States for 12 months after graduation (USCIS, 2020). Most FBF, however, seek employment in the United States through the H-1B program, a temporary work visa offered to highly skilled workers in specialized fields, sponsored by an institution, and valid for up to six years (USCIS, 2020). OPT and H-1B visas have two important limitations for job-seekers: (a) dependability on sponsorship from an employer (in this case, institutions of higher education) and (b) the restriction against seeking any other form of employment outside the sponsoring company/institution. Considering these limitations, many FBF seek lawful permanent residence (i.e., green cards) for up to ten years (USCIS, 2020). Finally, many FBF apply for naturalized citizenship after receiving their permanent residency. All the above-mentioned immigration processes typically require considerable time and money, can be prolonged and arduous, and depend ultimately on approval (or rejection) of USCIS.

Although the exact prevalence of FBF in counselor education is unknown, they appear to be a growing subset of the counselor education professoriate. Between 2013 and 2017, there was an increase, from 0.59% to 0.66%, in the number of full-time faculty in programs accredited by the Council for Accreditation of Counseling and Related Educational Programs (CACREP; 2014, 2018) who identified as non-resident aliens. Yet, FBF in counselor education have received little attention in the counseling literature. A contextual understanding of FBF, including their strengths and the challenges they encounter, could support counselor education programs in their efforts to "make continuous and systematic efforts to recruit, employ, and retain a diverse faculty" (Sect. 1.Q) as required by CACREP (2016) standards.

Given the dearth in published scholarship in counselor education literature on specific assessment tools to evaluate FBF experiences, we reviewed several national studies on FBF, international students, and other minority and underrepresented faculty in higher education (Bradley & Holcomb-McCoy, 2004; Chen & Lawless, 2018; Kim et al., 2012; Magnuson et al., 2001; Mamiseishvili & Lee, 2018; Shenoy-Packer & Gabor, 2016; Thacker & Barrio Minton, 2021). We found that similar to other minority faculty in academia, FBF are often "overlooked" and "underestimated" in research, advocacy, and the promotion of multiculturalism initiatives (Kim et al., 2012, p. 44). FBF report experiencing prejudice and discrimination from students and colleagues, which subsequently influence promotion and tenure processes (Chen & Lawless, 2018; Kim et al., 2012). As a result, FBF can also experience lower levels of satisfaction with aspects of their job, including job security, advancement opportunities, degrees of independence, salary, and benefits (Mamiseishvili & Lee, 2018). Although many of these concerns may also be experienced by persons of color or other minoritized individuals (Thacker & Barrio Minton, 2021), FBF encounter certain additional and unique complexities resulting from their acculturative stress and immigration challenges (Kim et al., 2012). A particular stressor for FBF is

that, in addition to being far away from their social support in their countries of origin, they generally experience an arduous process in securing legal residency or working permits. This results in perpetual anxiety for FBF about losing both their jobs and legal status (Shenoy-Packer & Gabor, 2016). Scholars have also noted important COVID-19 implications for this population such as uncertain timeframes to see family and friends in their country of origin, preoccupation with difficulties re-entering the United States due to heightened travel restrictions (Ullah et al., 2020), and heightened stress due to budget cuts and limited job opportunities (Friga, 2020). Additionally, in the last years certain racial/ethnic minority groups have experienced heightened socio-political rhetoric (e.g., being criticized for speaking Spanish in public, Anti-Black racism, being told to go back to their home country; Gonzalez-Barrera & Lopez, 2020; Wong & Ramakrishnan, 2021).

Despite these challenges, FBF contribute significantly to the "creation of new knowledge" and the "training of future generations of scholars in the U.S. doctoral programs" (Mamiseishvili & Lee, 2018, p. 324). They incorporate global expertise, diverse perspectives, intercultural competence, and international content within the curriculum, thus providing an access to a "world beyond our borders" (Kim et al., 2012, p. 42). FBF report departmental and peer support and an overall positive organizational climate of inclusion and collegiality as significant factors that could increase work satisfaction. Given that CACREP (2018) considers diverse identities essential for professional advancement, further exploring experiences of FBF in the context of CACREP-accredited programs is important.

In counselor education, scholars primarily focused on the international student population (Behl et al., 2017; Interiano et al., 2019, 2021; Interiano & Lim, 2018. These scholars suggested that both master's and doctoral students experience cultural clashes, acculturative stress, language challenges, as well as relationship difficulties and discrimination from clients, peers, and supervisors in counselor education and supervision. To our knowledge, no studies have been conducted that focus primarily on FBF in counselor education programs. The influx of FBF throughout higher education, along with evidence of the difficulties they encounter, supports the need to explore their strengths, challenges, and areas of support in counselor education programs. An inquiry of this nature can help stakeholders (i.e., faculty, department chairs, deans) increase the effectiveness and efficiency of systems established at universities for retaining and recruiting this international talent. Finally, findings from this study can promote the visibility and voice of an underrepresented population in the counseling literature.

Purpose of the Study

Based on CACREP (2016) standards to recruit and retain a diverse faculty, the purpose of this study was to determine strengths, challenges, and areas of support indicated by FBF in CACREP-accredited counseling programs. Seeking to understand strengths and challenges in current times, we also sought to explore the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic. The three primary research questions guiding this study were:

(a) What are the major challenges and strengths perceived by FBF in CACREP-accredited counseling programs? (b) How has the COVID-19 pandemic impacted foreign-born counselor educators? and (c) What areas of support are required for foreign-born counselor educators to succeed?

Method

Research Design

To gain a deeper understanding of this topic, we utilized a convergent parallel mixed-methods design (Creswell, 2013). This design allows the researchers to concurrently conduct quantitative and qualitative elements in the research process, weigh the methods equally while analyzing them independently, and interpret the results simultaneously (Creswell, 2013). This research design was well suited to facilitate a deeper understanding of FBF's strengths, challenges, and areas of support by comparing and corroborating quantitative and qualitative findings together.

Participants

The total sample of FBF ($N=55$) consisted of men ($n=13$, 23.6%) and women ($n=42$, 76.4%). Participants came primarily from countries located in the Middle East ($n=11$, 20%) and East Asia ($n=10$, 18.2%), followed by South Asia, ($n=7$, 12.7%), Europe ($n=7$, 12.7%), North America ($n=6$, 10.9%), South America ($n=5$, 9.1%), Central America ($n=3$, 5.5%), South East Asia ($n=2$, 3.6%), Africa, ($n=2$, 3.6%), Central Asia ($n=1$, 1.8%), and Australia ($n=1$, 1.8%). Participants identified as White, non-Hispanic, Latino, Spanish Origin ($n=14$; 25.5%), Asian Indian ($n=8$; 14.5%), Korean ($n=5$; 9.1%), White of Hispanic, Latino, Spanish Origin ($n=5$; 9.1%), Chinese ($n=3$; 5.5%), Bi-racial ($n=3$; 5.5%), Turkish ($n=3$; 5.5%), Black or African ($n=2$; 3.6%), Other Asian (e.g., Hmong, Laotian, Thai, Pakistani, Cambodian; $n=2$; 3.6%), non-White of Hispanic, Latino, Spanish Origin ($n=2$; 3.6%), Middle-Eastern ($n=2$; 3.6%), Malaysian ($n=1$; 1.8%), Japanese ($n=1$; 1.8%), Persian ($n=1$; 1.8%), Caribbean ($n=1$; 1.8%), Armenian ($n=1$; 1.8%), and Jamaican ($n=1$; 1.8%). Most participants were between the ages of 31- 50 years old ($n=44$; 80%). Almost all participants ($n=53$; 96.4%) obtained their Ph.D. degree and master's degree ($n=48$; 87.3%) in the United States. Fewer participants ($n=18$; 32.7%) obtained their undergraduate degree in the United States. Thirteen participants (23.6%) held temporary work visas, while 15 (27.3%) had permanent residence, and 27 (49.1%) were naturalized citizens. Most participants ($n=36$; 65.5%) had lived in the United States for 7—20 years, while 16 (29.1%) participants had resided in the country for more than 20 years.

Participants worked at institutions across all American Counselor Education and Supervision (ACES) regions: Southern ($n=22$; 40%), North Central ($n=12$; 21.8%), Western ($n=10$; 18.2%), North Atlantic ($n=6$; 10.9%) and Rocky Mountain ($n=2$; 3.6%). Three participants (5.5%) did not specify an ACES region. FBF worked at

institutions with very high research activity (R1; $n=7$; 12.7%), high research activity (R2; $n=16$; 29.1%), universities classified as Doctoral/Professional Universities ($n=11$; 20%) and colleges and universities offering the master's degree ($n=21$; 38.2%). Their professional experience as counselor educators ranged from less than three years ($n=19$; 34.5%), 3–6 years ($n=10$; 18.2%), 7–10 years ($n=12$; 21.8%), 11–15 years ($n=6$; 10.9%), 16–20 years ($n=2$; 3.6%), to over 20 years ($n=6$; 10.9%). Faculty identified as assistant professors ($n=23$; 41.8%), associate professors ($n=9$; 16.4%), full professors ($n=8$; 14.5%), clinical professor ($n=4$; 7.3%), adjunct professor ($n=4$; 7.3%), lecturer ($n=1$; 1.8%), and visitor professor ($n=1$; 1.8%). Six (10.9%) participants did not specify their academic ranks.

Instrumentation

We were unable to identify an instrument designed to explore the specific questions of this study. We therefore created a 62-item self-administered survey with three sections and an estimated 20-min completion time. The first section (items 1–16) gathered demographic information on participants' race, ethnic background, age, country of origin, native language, time residing in the United States, educational background, current immigration or citizenship status, and the number of years as a counselor educator. This section also inquired on participants' institutions, such as its Carnegie classification and its designated ACES region. Considering that grant requirements sometimes exclude non-U.S. citizens, we also asked participants if they ever experienced rejection or an inability to apply for a grant due to their immigration status.

The second section (items 17–59) consisted of 43 multiple-choice questions that allowed participants to determine several items as either strength, challenge, both, or neither. Given the exploratory nature of the study, the first and second author carefully and systematically reviewed articles focused on diverse foreign-born and minority populations and outlined predominant factors highlighted as strengths, challenges, and recommended areas of support (e.g., Bradley & Holcomb-McCoy, 2004; Kim et al., 2012; Magnuson et al., 2001; Mamiseishvili & Lee, 2018). Then we divided factors previously studied into seven domains (social, personal, health, vocational, financial, spiritual/religious, and political) and constructed 43 survey items that resembled surveys used in several national studies on FBF, international students, and other minority and underrepresented faculty in higher education.

The first domain, social (6 items), inquired about participants' experiences of cultural differences and adjustment, support from family and friends at home and in the United States, sense of community and social engagement in the United States, and instances when they are required to be distant from home and family (Cruz et al., 2020; Omiteru, et al., 2018). The personal domain (8 items) attended to personality traits such as flexibility, adaptability, resiliency, grit, determination, and perseverance (Atay, 2019; Interiano & Lim, 2018). It also explored participants' sense of meaning and purpose, sense of hope and optimism, fear of failure, and fear of disappointing others and self (Kim et al., 2012; Mamiseishvili, 2013). This section also included participants' intercultural competency and sensitivity, described as their

ability to incorporate diverse perspectives and global experiences into their form of thinking and work (Mamiseishvili, 2013). The health domain (3 items) assessed their psychological and physical well-being (Mamiseishvili & Lee, 2018; Omiteru et al., 2018), as well as their access to health care services (Tang et al., 2018). The fourth domain, vocational (13 items), focused on participants' English written and verbal proficiency, ability to balance work-life, productivity requirements for promotion and tenure, sense of professional growth and competency, professional identity development, institutional support for professional growth, compatibility between personal values and job responsibilities, and sense of autonomy (Cruz et al., 2020). This section also attended to experiences in mentorship, tenure and promotion, and professional leadership in counseling organizations (Rice et al., 2020). The financial domain (4 items) evaluated participants' current sense of overall financial stability, and institutional financial support for immigration procedures, research projects, and professional travel (Cruz et al., 2020). The spiritual/religious domain (4 items) assessed social acceptance, freedom, and avenues for participants to practice their spiritual/religious beliefs and practices, as well as their ability to use their spiritual/religious beliefs and practices as a coping mechanism (Phillip et al., 2019). The political domain (5 items) focused on participants' personal immigration status, family/spouse/partner's immigration status, institutional and departmental support for immigration status, unfavorable political rhetoric against their racial/ethnic/religious group, and political policies impacting immigration procedures (Shenoy-Packer & Gabor, 2016).

The decision to design a multi-dimensional scale was to capture holistic perspectives of FBF and provide them with flexibility in responses. We noticed discrepancies in the literature regarding what was considered a strength or a challenge. Regarding reliability, the Cronbach's alpha value for all items in the second section was 0.79, considered an acceptable value for internal consistency (DeVellis, 1991). Cronbach's alpha values for each domain consisted of the following: social (0.70); personal (0.57); health (0.49); vocational (0.74); financial (0.58); spiritual/religious (0.75); and political (0.56). It is important to note that Cronbach's alpha values are quite sensitive to the number of items. With short subscales (e.g., less than ten items) it is common to find quite low Cronbach's values (e.g., 0.5; Pallant, 2011). Briggs and Cheek (1986) recommended to report the mean inter-item correlation for short subscales with an optimal range of 0.2 to 0.4. The inter-item correlations were optimal for most domains: social ($M = 0.23$); personal ($M = 0.11$); health ($M = 0.24$); vocational ($M = 0.22$); financial ($M = 0.25$); spiritual/religious ($M = 0.44$); and political ($M = 0.21$). Seeking to analyze the construct validity of the instrument, Pearson's correlations were conducted revealing that all items presented a statistically significant correlation at the 0.05 level with at least one other item.

Section three (items 60–62) contained three open-ended questions. To gather qualitative data on strengths, challenges, and areas of support, we asked three open-ended questions: (a) "Please indicate any additional strengths or challenges you experience currently or in the past not covered in the list above" and (b) "What areas of support do you believe are required for foreign-born counselor educators to succeed?" Additionally, due to the heightened disruption of the COVID-19 pandemic during data collection, we included the question: "Have any circumstances affected

by COVID-19 impacted you as a foreign-born counselor educator? If so, please explain."

Data Collection Procedures

After receiving approval from the Institutional Review Board, we used purposeful sampling to recruit FBF currently employed in CACREP-accredited programs. Because no current databases of FBF in CACREP-accredited programs exist, recruitment began with sending a participation email to listservs associated with the Counselor Education and Supervision Network (CESNET) and the International Student and Faculty Interest Network (ISFIN). We also emailed 423 CACREP department liaisons, asking them to forward the request to FBF in their program. The recruitment email included (a) a brief description of the survey, (b) a link to the complete survey, (c) an informed consent, and (d) the researchers' contact information. Two weeks into the survey collection period, the first author sent a reminder email through both listservs to invite participants who had not initiated or had not completed the survey and sent a third reminder four weeks after the second email. The third author also sent a second petition to CACREP department liaisons who had not responded during the initial contact. From the first and second rounds, 21.8% of department liaisons confirmed the distribution of the email. The survey remained open for a total of nine weeks.

Data Analysis

The authors used two primary procedures for data analysis. To calculate strengths and challenges, we used a descriptive non-experimental research design by means of survey research to calculate descriptive statistics. To analyze the qualitative data provided by the three open-ended questions, we followed a linear, six-phased thematic analysis outlined by Braun and Clarke (2006) that involved familiarization with the data, coding, generating initial themes, reviewing themes, defining and naming themes, and finally writing the results. Thematic analysis is suitable for the purpose of this study as "a method for identifying, analyzing, and reporting patterns (themes) within data" (Braun & Clarke, 2006, p. 79). We chose thematic analysis over other qualitative data analysis procedures (e.g., content analysis) since this method allowed us to search for and identify common threads that extend across a set of data sets. During the qualitative data analysis procedures, we first familiarized ourselves with the data and engaged in all aspects of data analysis. The first and second authors engaged in the line-by-line initial production of codes to capture nuances of meaning. During this process, we used NVivo, a qualitative analysis software, to improve coding consistency and transparency. Coding was an open-communication process where the first and second authors agreed on codes and discussed disagreements until consensus was reached. After the open coding occurred, all three authors met to generate initial themes by refining and interconnecting categories by looking for similarities and differences in the data. Similar

to coding, we constructed themes through discussion, negotiation, exploration, and consensus-building. No theme was created until we all agreed on its name, purpose, and inclusion of codes. This open communication process helped reduce researcher bias through openly challenging each other and ourselves with respect to any conclusions. We then reviewed all codes to ensure they accurately reflected the meanings evident in the data, collapsing certain codes into each other while breaking down other codes into separate codes. During the fifth phase, we defined and named themes to determine what aspect of the data each theme captured. Finally, once all themes were established, we constructed a concise, coherent, logical, nonrepetitive, and interesting account of the data within and across themes provided below.

Researcher Positionality and Strategies for Trustworthiness

Hays & Singh (2012) indicated the essential nature of subjectivity statements informing readers about the process and context of qualitative research findings. We considered our own positionality, as two counselor educators who identified as Honduran and Indian (first and second authors) and a doctoral student from a CACREP-accredited program, who identified as Turkish (third author). We acknowledged that our personal experiences with the American educational system, acculturation, visa procedures, and professional development as foreign-born faculty and students influenced our perspective on the study's findings. For example, we were surprised by some of the participants' responses due to our own challenges or strengths. We also expected more of a conversation around political challenges due to the immigration policies established during the time of data collection (e.g., expansion of visa restrictions) and anti-immigrant rhetoric prevalent during the Trump administration (Gomez, 2018; Lamont et al., 2017).

Therefore, the authors engaged in multiple methods of trustworthiness, such as triangulation of researchers, bracketing meetings, thick description, and the use of two external auditors that provided credibility, transferability, confirmability, authenticity, and coherence to our qualitative findings (Hays & Singh, 2012). We conducted ongoing weekly meetings for four months to bracket our preconceived values and assumptions by discussing our different viewpoints based on personal experience, race, religion, and country of origin. A research team of three members to analyze data and present findings provided triangulation of researchers (Hays & Singh, 2012). We recruited two external auditors as recommended by Braun and Clarke (2006), both counselor educators and non-foreign born, to independently review the data and the manuscript. The first external auditor served as a reviewer of the entire manuscript upon completion of the final draft. The second auditor reviewed codes and themes after the main analyses, helped the coders clarify definitions, coding decisions, and coding procedures throughout. Their feedback included re-calculation of response rate for qualitative data and clarification on the wording of research questions two and three, which we incorporated into the data analysis and findings. Both external auditors supported our data analysis and our reporting of the findings. Finally, we used thick description when reporting the study findings

to increase trustworthiness. We also maintained fidelity to participants' accounts by creating a narrative based on their quotes regardless of the extent to which they aligned with existing literature or our preconceived values or assumptions.

Results

Quantitative Findings

To address the first research question on major challenges and strengths perceived by FBF in CACREP-accredited counseling programs, descriptive statistics were reported. Table 1 reflects the frequency of response for each item included in the survey indicated by all participants ($N=55$) and the overall mean for each domain to demonstrate how it was perceived as a strength, challenge, both, or neither.

Qualitative Findings

Research question two focused on FBF's perceptions of COVID-19's impact on their lives while research question three addressed the areas of support that FBF detailed in their open-ended responses. We incorporated participant quotes from all three open-ended questions to show the connection among FBF's strengths, challenges, the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic, and areas of support. The thematic analysis used to explore responses from all open-ended questions identified three overarching themes reflecting FBF's strengths, challenges, areas of support, and the impact of COVID-19. These themes included (a) *adjustment as a foreign-born individual in the United States*, (b) *immigration status and procedures*, and (c) *working as a foreign-born faculty in counselor education*. It is important to note that 14 participants did not answer any of the open-ended questions. Therefore, the response rate indicated throughout the qualitative data is based on a total of 44 participants.

Adjustment as a Foreign-born Individual in the United States

Over half ($n=28$; 63.6%) of participants shared about their international background providing additional perspectives and a multicultural focus, thereby increasing their intercultural sensitivity. "Our status impacts our ability to strengthen our academic contributions," stated one FBF. Others mentioned "adaptability" and "resiliency" as personal strengths that resulted from adjusting to a new culture. Although participants discussed these positive aspects, many FBF noticed a "lack of comfort that is more subtle than discrimination/prejudice." One FBF stated, "I am quite direct, and in the south, this is interpreted as rude at times." Others believed these differences created "a base for discrimination" and a motivation "to make automatic biased decisions." FBF shared that "hostility from students was sometimes apparent" causing FBF to "fear being discriminated against or losing their jobs when dealing with difficult students…so they don't speak up."

Table 1 Strengths and Challenges Identified by Foreign-born Counselor Educators (N = 55)

	Strength	Challenge	Neither	Both
Social Domain	(M = 25.0)	(M = 23.5)	(M = 9.4)	(M = 4.9)
Cultural Adjustment	37	14	4	-
Cultural Differences	35	15	5	-
Being distant from home and family	5	44	6	-
Support from family and friends	34	15	4	2
Sense of community in the U.S	17	29	6	3
Social engagement	22	24	6	3
Personal Domain	(M = 40.1)	(M = 10.4)	(M = 5.5)	(M = 1.5)
Intercultural competency and sensitivity	51	3	1	-
Flexibility and adaptability	53	1	1	-
Resiliency and grit	53	1	-	1
Sense of meaning and purpose	51	4	-	-
Sense of hope and optimism	47	7	1	-
Fear of failure	9	31	13	2
Fear of disappointing others/shame	10	33	12	-
Determination and perseverance	47	3	5	-
Health Domain	(M = 36.7)	(M = 13.3)	(M = 3.3)	(M = 1.7)
Psychological well-being	43	8	2	2
Physical well-being	36	14	3	2
Access to health services	31	18	5	1
Vocational Domain	(M = 32.7)	(M = 16.7)	(M = 5.1)	(M = 1.9)
Written language proficiency	35	16	2	2
Verbal language proficiency	38	12	3	2
Productivity requirement	22	25	7	1
Professional growth	44	6	2	3
Professional competency	42	10	-	3
Professional identity	49	3	-	3
Institutional support for professional growth	18	27	9	1
Receiving mentorship	16	31	7	1
Autonomy	41	12	2	-
Tenure/promotion	18	27	10	-
Professional leadership in COU ORG	24	24	6	1
Personal values-job fit	45	7	3	-
Balancing work-family life	20	33	2	-
Financial Domain	(M = 13.0)	(M = 31.8)	(M = 9.8)	(M = 1.0)
Current sense of overall financial stability	23	25	7	-
Financial support for IMM PRO	11	27	17	-
Financial support for research projects	9	36	9	1
International travel support	9	39	6	1
Spiritual/ Religious Domain	(M = 34.8)	(M = 11.5)	(M = 8.0)	(M = 1.0)
Social acceptance of SP/R	30	17	7	1
Freedom to practice, integrate, and profess	40	9	5	1

Table 1 (continued)

	Strength	Challenge	Neither	Both
Avenue to practice SP/R beliefs	37	10	8	-
SP/R beliefs as a coping mechanism	32	10	12	1
Political Domain	(M = 11.2)	(M = 31.6)	(M = 12.0)	(M = 1.0)
Immigration status	16	32	6	1
Family/spouse/partner immigration status	17	26	12	-
Institutional support for IMM PRO	13	24	18	-
Unfavorable political rhetoric	6	34	15	-
Political policies impacting IMM PRO	4	42	9	-

COU ORG = Counseling organizations; IMM PRO = Immigration Procedures; SP/R = Spirituality/religion

COVID-19 seemed to have a negative impact on FBF's ability to see or visit family and friends living abroad. One participant elucidated the impact of this travel restriction by stating that "international travel has also been restricted with travel plans and family connection, which is important for well-being and self-care." There was also a particular concern for parents or other family members who were vulnerable to the virus (e.g., family members who were sick, living in countries with poor mental health services, or significantly impacted by COVID-19). These difficulties heightened participants' feelings of stress, fear, and loneliness. A Chinese faculty member reported fear of racial discrimination and concern for the safety of their community.

Areas of support aligned with noted challenges. For example, most participants felt that a sense of community with immigrant groups, their department, their profession, and in the United States provided support. Participants highlighted how these connections not only helped reduce social isolation but could also help FBF obtain "cultural and social capital" to understand social norms and how systems (e.g., medical education) worked in the United States. Other areas of support included "emotional support," "navigating microaggressions," and "awareness and understanding of the unique challenges." Participants also desired more "culture-sensitive pedagogy" and "a global perspective on the part of the field and profession."

Immigration Status and Procedures

Although only 18 (40.9%) participants responded to this question, this theme was important considering that 28 participants (50.9% of the total sample) were non-US citizens of whom by virtue of their temporary work status may be actively involved with immigration procedures. Therefore, discussions around "immigration status, sponsorship, and mixed messaging from institutions during the interview process" were understandably prominent in the data. An FBF expressed that there was a "complete lack of support and guidance and I would add ignorance from the university in terms of application for visa and application for permanent residency…It is very frustrating!" To this point, one participant shared having to gather literature

to prove the need to support their immigration-related processes to college leadership. One FBF shared having to pay "all immigration expenses…for H-1B and green card, including the university attorney fee," although these expenses, typically covered by the university, can accumulate to over $5,000. For participants who worked under an H-1B visa, this opportunity, albeit positive, limited their sources of income and professional development. One participant explained how having a work visa limited their income and impeded their professional growth "as I cannot practice as a counselor/supervisor and therefore my teaching cannot be inspired by real work." Participants felt that their inability to pursue licensure gave "an impression of under qualification although it is influenced by institutional racism."

COVID-19 brought a new layer of complications to participants' immigration status and delays in their immigration procedures. They expressed feeling stressed about budget cuts and their impact on job security and visa status, particularly with regard to the increasing delays in the visa processing time of USCIS. One participant shared, "the university was planning to offer me the tenure track position… The pandemic hit the state and the university decided to hold off all the hiring practices." The FBF later added, "my current position which is a non-tenure track assistant professor position is considered a temporary position…I was informed around the beginning of April that the university may not fund the non-tenure track position either."

When asked about areas of support needed, participants naturally called for more awareness of immigration procedures. Participants wanted more "clarity around immigration" and "financial support" for H1B visas and residency status. Other recommendations included "green card process to proactively start by the university if the university is serious about retention of the faculty," and "well-informed administration (dean, provost and dept chair) about immigration processes and timeline."

Working as a Foreign-born Faculty in Counselor Education

Most FBF ($n = 31$, 70.5%) shared common challenges in academia such as complying with tenure requirements, life-work balance, receiving awards, and research funding. Other challenges related to relationships within their department such as integration into department culture. One participant elaborated, "political and power dynamics at the department/on campus; self-advocacy and assertiveness not to feel discredited, invisible, and less competent." Additional challenges included professional writing and communication. One participant stated that it was difficult "not being able to function verbally at the same level of proficiency as if I had been born here." Another challenge particular to the participants was "finding a voice as an international faculty" in professional leadership. Participants desired an "organization that is not so extremist and exclusive (within ACA)." Another FBF desired a "connection between professional service in the U.S. that also connects to the internationalization of counseling." Finally, nineteen (34.5%) participants reported a rejection or inability to apply for a grant due to their non-US citizenship status in the first section of the survey.

FBF experienced disruptions and shifts as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic similar to those of most professors in higher education. The pandemic forced FBF to move 100% online. Some shared that this change led to unsatisfactory teaching evaluations due to students' disappointment towards online learning. One participant specifically mentioned international professional development and the inability to assist "international conferences and research trips."

Regarding areas of support, most participants focused on mentorship and recognizing the valuable cultural perspective that FBF provides to counseling programs. Faculty believed that their cultural background provided unique and "more global perspectives beyond what social media can offer." Faculty felt that when their environment was "open for diversity and appreciated unique perspectives," they thrived. One participant was thankful that "the institution values diversity, so I have been feeling safe and supportive within the institution." Another FBF stated, "I started to be able to freely express myself more when knowing colleagues truly hear me, value, and respect my opinions." It seemed that FBF flourished when colleagues provided "a safe space where all ideas are included and accepted." One participant elaborated on how this support, particularly from department chairs, made a significant difference. "They can be great mentors." Therefore, recommendations centered on creating a supportive environment for FBF. This begins with mentorship, particularly mentorship "tailored for foreign-born, such as writing, communication, personal development, professional development, and leadership efficacy." Other participants specifically desired mentorship from other FBF. It seemed that many participants felt that these connections could help FBF build a "professional community." One FBF desired "organizations that dedicate to foreign-born needs, students, and faculty."

Discussion

A major purpose of this study was to determine the strengths, challenges, including the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic, and areas of support as indicated by the FBF in CACREP-accredited counseling programs. This study provided the first glimpse into FBF's strengths and challenges. Qualitative data on the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic and areas of support for FBF in counselor education provided further context to their current needs. FBF noted the most strengths within the personal domain ($M = 40.1$), such as intercultural competency and sensitivity, flexibility, adaptability, resiliency, grit, sense of meaning, determination, and perseverance. Similar to findings in other studies (Kim et al., 2012; Mamiseishvili, 2013), FBF in counselor education can provide global expertise, intercultural competence, and international experience that extensively contributes to student development. Descriptive statistics also indicated many strengths within the spiritual domain ($M = 34.8$), which highlights the importance of this area for FBF's overall well-being and quality of life. These results align with previous literature (Phillip et al., 2019). This sample also reported overall positive psychological and physical well-being, as well as access to health care services ($M = 36.7$).

Although the finding of strengths is encouraging, these findings also illuminate the number of challenges that FBF in the counselor education experience. Descriptive statistics in the social domain ($M = 23.0$) indicated this area was the third most challenging aspect. Participant quotes indicated that many FBF struggled with their cultural adjustment to the United States. Most participants had completed their graduate studies in the United States and had lived in the country for 7–20 years. Taking into consideration the quantitative and qualitative data that highlight FBF's numerous challenges while adjusting to the cultural and political context of the United States, these findings are interesting and concerning. Despite living in the country for several years and acquiring a graduate degree, if not two, FBF continued to experience socio-cultural hardships. Similar to Shenoy-Packer and Gabor's (2016) study, our participants also indicated that their families, although far away, were a significant source of support. However, the COVID-19 pandemic greatly limited FBF's ability to travel and visit family and friends living abroad. Although FBF believed that their cultural differences were a strength, participants highlighted that rejection of their cultural differences presented barriers to connection and sometimes a reason for discrimination. Our findings parallel the experiences of female immigrant faculty who reported that negotiations of their cultural adaptation functioned to further disorient, alienate, and marginalize them (Chen & Lawless, 2016).

FBF's difficulties with immigration procedures have been documented (Cruz et al., 2020; Kim et al., 2012); thus, it was not surprising that this topic pervaded our data. The financial ($M = 31.8$) and political ($M = 31.6$) domains had the highest challenge means and were the only two domains where participants marked more items as challenges than strengths. Noted challenges included political policies impacting immigration procedures, unfavorable political rhetoric, lack of departmental support for immigration status, lack of support for family/spouse/partner immigration status, and immigration status. Descriptive statistics also suggested a connection between immigration procedures and FBF's financial stability, with only half of the participants reporting a current sense of financial stability. Participants' quotes described how working visas limited opportunities for additional income and professional growth. These financial vulnerabilities prevented FBF from speaking up when they felt discriminated against. COVID-19 added a new layer of complications and stress including budget cuts and their impact on working visas which are required to work and live in the United States (Friga, 2020).

Finally, participants noted the vocational domain mainly as a strength ($M = 32.7$), and valued their professional growth, professional competency, professional identity, sense of autonomy, written and verbal language proficiency, and how their personal values fit their current job. Participants also represented all five ACES regions, yet less than half worked at institutions with research activity. At the same time, quantitative and qualitative data indicate that FBF experiences several challenges in academia such as complying with productivity requirements, achieving tenure and promotion, obtaining research funding, and balancing work-family life. FBF noted additional challenges such as finding institutional support for professional growth, receiving mentorship, and engaging in professional leadership in counseling organizations. It seemed that participants struggled to find their voice as FBF and they desired mentorship, particularly from other FBF. These findings suggest that

FBF are either choosing to work in other settings (i.e., teaching institutions) or are not hired for positions at research universities. Moreover, one-third of participants reported a rejection or inability to apply for a grant due to their non-U.S. citizenship status. The degree to which tenure acquisition requires grant funding may present a significant barrier for FBF in RI and R2 institutions. Moreover, although most of our participants had been counselor educators for more than seven years, most identified as assistant professors. These findings indicate that FBF may encounter numerous barriers to tenure and promotion and/or are more likely hired for nontenure-track positions. Participants also expressed that many colleagues, department chairs, and deans lacked an understanding of immigration procedures or challenges faced by FBF. Many participants found it challenging to find support among colleagues who were often unaware of the complexities of the immigration process. FBF also expressed a desire to develop their professional identity as counselors through international collaborations and conference presentations. It seemed that travel restrictions due to COVID-19 further impacted FBFs' professional development abroad.

Implications for FB Counselor Educators and Counselor Education Programs

The results of this study provide important implications for FBF and stakeholders in Counselor Education and Supervision. In this study, FBF highlighted characteristics that helped during their cultural adjustment and professional development. FBF need to recognize inherent strengths within several domains that may have developed as a result of being foreign-born (e.g., intercultural competency and sensitivity, flexibility, adaptability, resiliency, grit, sense of meaning, determination, perseverance, cultural differences, professional identity, and growth, adjustment, autonomy, personal values-job fit) as critical factors that facilitate their success. FBF can engage in personal reflection to assess the development of each trait and facilitate intentional strengths-building in areas needing growth. This may also be offered in the form of support groups, similar to the groups available for international students through university's counseling center and international offices (Interiano et al., 2021).

FBF also reported common challenges (e.g., distance from home and family, political policies impacting immigration procedures, unfavorable political rhetoric, immigration status, international travel and research support, fear of disappointing, balancing work-family life). Understanding these challenges may aid current and future FBF to proactively identify, foresee, and seek assistance, thus promoting their cultural adjustment and professional development in the United States. Foreign-born doctoral students in counselor education seeking a job in academia may want to consider additional barriers imposed by the COVID-19 pandemic towards employment and international travel. For example, the inability to travel to their country of origin could impact opportunities to see family and friends and to fulfill impending visa requirements (e.g., closed embassies, renewal).

Considering that many challenges experienced by FBF were external factors, the findings of this study assist stakeholders in identifying supportive strategies for FBF in counselor education programs. While colleges and universities continue to expand their global reach, diversify, and become more inclusive, the results of

this study highlight a need for FBF to find a sense of community within immigrant groups, their department, their profession, and in the United States to reduce isolation and facilitate their cultural adjustment. College Deans and senior faculty may consider initiating programs that cultivate an organizational and department culture of appreciation and collaboration among faculty and students. Counselor Education programs can also promote international collaborations (e.g., conferences, study abroad programs) to increase a global perspective in the profession and explore opportunities for FBF to utilize their strengths and their cultural heritage. Based on participants' feedback, mentorship, particularly from another FBF, was a critical area of needed support. At a departmental level, chairs may consider facilitating mentoring relationships and resources that can best support FBF. Lastly, findings indicated that many FBF in counselor education do not work in research institutions, may encounter numerous barriers to tenure promotion, and/or are hired for nontenure-track rather than tenure track positions. It is critical for counselor education programs to consider any barriers for FBF's tenure and promotion and consider these experiences while striving to develop equitable evaluation standards.

Limitations and Recommendations for Future Research

Findings from this study are subject to limitations. Although the findings of this study shed new and unique light on the FBF's strengths and challenges, the results should be regarded as preliminary. The generalizability of the study's findings beyond the present sample cannot be assumed without further replication with a larger sample. A larger response rate would have yielded more accurate findings. Participants of this study worked at only CACREP-accredited programs. Therefore, findings cannot be generalized to non-CACREP-accredited programs. Additionally, all results derived from self-report responses from a survey developed specifically for this study. Although we intentionally created survey items similar to those used in national studies that investigated the experiences of FBF in other disciplines, international students, and other minority and underrepresented faculty in higher education, we recognize the limitations of our survey. Although the psychometric properties for all items of the second section showed acceptable scores, low Cronbach alphas for some domains raise questions on the internal consistency of the survey; however, this statistic may be improved with more data or further examination of these constructs. Moreover, the data analysis focused on items marked as strengths or challenges, and not on items marked as both or neither. The "both" and "neither" response choices were included to display the complexity of these items observed in the literature. FBF experienced certain items as both a challenge and a strength.

Further research is needed to better understand the barriers that foreign-born counselor educators face in their pursuit of tenure and promotion. Research in this area could focus on foreign-born counselor educators' job satisfaction, coping strategies, and self-efficacy. Qualitative research that explores foreign-born counselor educators' perceptions of their work environment, mentoring relationships,

the publication process, and the tenure process would be beneficial and would fill a void in the literature. Findings related to the political domain also elucidate the need to explore the socio-political impact of the United States with FBF's immigration procedures and cultural adjustment. Finally, this study sought to explore strengths, challenges, and areas of recommendation for FBF as a group. We recognize that although this diverse population can share certain similarities, they are a heterogeneous population where certain factors (i.e., length of stay in the United States, race, gender, English language proficiency) leads to significant differences. We recommend future research to explore the impact of with-in group differences on FBF's strengths, challenges, and recommendations for support.

In conclusion, this current study provides an initial, yet significant, understanding of FBF's unique strengths and challenges. Qualitative data on the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic and areas of support for FBF in counselor education provided further context to their current needs. The findings of this study indicate areas of supportive strategies for counselor educators and supervisors to increase and retain foreign-born faculty in counselor education.

Declarations

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