

## A Focused Ethnography of Tenure-Track PhD-Prepared Nursing Faculty Members' Teaching Experiences

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## **Introduction**

Navigation of the tenure-track journey is stressful and challenging for new PhD-prepared faculty (Kilbourne et al., 2018; Kippenbrock et al., 2022; Stanfill et al., 2019). New faculty are evaluated on their effectiveness in teaching, research, and service over 4 to 6 years before application for tenure (Green, 2008; Mamiseishvili et al., 2016; Stanfill et al., 2019). Novice tenure-track faculty at the start of their careers are learning new roles and responsibilities; experiencing differing institutional, personal, and student expectations; and learning to balance competing time demands. However, the specifics of these experiences are not well explored in the limited research available regarding the journey of tenure-track new academics (Savard et al., 2023).

Retention of new tenure-track faculty is a crucial focus for institutions facing increasing nursing faculty shortages because of senior faculty reaching retirement, static recruitment into graduate programs, and attrition rates of new faculty (Boamah et al., 2021; Canadian Association of Schools of Nursing, 2022; Vandyk et al., 2017; World Health Organization, 2020). Therefore, a focused ethnography was undertaken to better understand the experiences of new Canadian tenure-track nursing faculty and to illuminate strategies that support new nursing faculty globally. This paper reports only on the findings of a research study specific to the teaching aspect of new faculty's role. Findings about the experience of new faculty in developing a research program and in fulfilling service requirements will be reported in other publications. We present the background, method, study findings, and implications for nursing practice, which adds to the limited research in this area.

## **Background**

Teaching can be stressful for new academics. Teaching involves more than mere delivery of course content (Gosling et al., 2020). Authors have identified a variety of teaching activities associated with the work of tenure-track faculty, including teaching pre-developed content, developing new course content, providing student support, assessing student learning, supervising graduate students, and performing administrative tasks, all while learning the art of facilitating learning in a classroom (Gosling et al., 2020; Gourlay, 2011; Siler & Kleiner, 2001; Young & Diekelmann, 2002). New tenure-track faculty can be overwhelmed when adjusting to these multiple competing demands. At the inception of this study, there was limited literature focused on the teaching experiences of PhD-prepared new tenure-track faculty (Savard et al., 2023); however, some additional literature became available after the study was completed and adds to this growing area of research. Singh et al. (2016) found variable availability of supports for new tenure-track faculty but that mentors were desired. Such mentors were needed to provide advice, constructive feedback, and information to increase new faculty's problem-solving capacity for meeting and balancing the multiple demands of student education and advisement.

Furthermore, Singh et al. (2016) indicated that new faculty desired to feel safe, valued, and respected for what they brought to the learning environment. Being mentored consistently by a trusted colleague who could serve as a sounding board about all academic matters was found to be very useful. Similarly, Etzkorn and Braddock (2020) highlighted that new faculty desire both formal and informal mentoring to ensure support and develop relationships. Having multiple mentors was more effective at increasing job satisfaction and enhancing retention of new faculty than was having a single mentor. Gosling et al. (2020) found new faculty reported feeling under-prepared not only to teach but also to advise students, to alter teaching plans quickly based upon

students' needs and level of knowledge, and to manage the challenges of adapting to a new role and culture. Given this qualitative study was undertaken to understand more deeply the experiences of new tenure-track nursing faculty, we did not use a conceptual framework, which we felt would influence the data through researcher bias. Rather, we chose to allow the data to expose key concepts and themes based upon the participant's experiences.

## **Methods**

### **Research Design**

For this focused ethnographic design study, we examined the following research question: What is it like to be a new (*new* being defined as pre-tenured or within the first 2 years of tenure) tenure-track nursing faculty in Canada? This form of ethnography is well suited for the study of smaller groups and does not require observations as would be the case in traditional ethnographies (Roper & Shapira, 2000). In selecting this design, we made the assumption that individuals being studied are part of, or are joining a subculture, in this case, the subculture of nursing academics.

### **Setting and Sample**

After obtaining initial approval from the University of Alberta research ethics board, Pro00108151, applicable ethics approvals were obtained from 17 other Canadian institutions. Participants were recruited from nine of these universities. To be eligible to participate, an individual had to be a PhD-prepared nursing faculty member who had been hired within the past 6 years into a tenure-track position. Following administrative approval, support staff distributed a study invitation to faculty members by email. Seventeen participants were recruited using convenience sampling and snowball techniques between March 2021 and April 2022. Data saturation or redundancy was reached with these 17 participants.

### **Data Collection and Analysis**

Potential participants contacted the lead researcher by email, and verbal consent was obtained from each participant before data collection began. Data collection tools and methods included virtual semi-structured interviews, field notes, and examination of public documents. The first author conducted recorded virtual interviews that were approximately 1 to 1.5 hours long. The interviews were transcribed verbatim by the first author, and pseudonyms were used to de-identify participants and settings. Any necessary clarifications related to the interview data were completed by email with the participants. The researcher's observations and comments were documented as field notes during and directly after the interviews for accuracy of recall and details.

Data collection and analysis were inductive and iterative beginning with the first interview. Quirkos data management software was used to facilitate the completion of thematic analysis, for decision-making during analysis, and for retrieval of data. We followed Roper and Shapira's (2000) guidelines for thematic analysis for this portion of the study. Lincoln and Guba's (1985) seminal criteria for rigour in qualitative research were followed to establish trustworthiness during the study: (a) credibility or truthfulness, (b) transferability or the ability to apply the findings to a different context because of the fulsomeness of the descriptions, (c) confirmability or the degree to which the data portray a similar experience for participants, and (d) dependability or the audit trail of the process of the research. Rigour was augmented using constant comparison of data, memoing, reflexivity, and triangulation of data techniques (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). Participants' comments regarding tenure criteria and performance expectations were substantiated

by examination of publicly available documents, such as institutional and faculty tenure and evaluation guidelines.

## **Findings**

Participants' ages ranged from 25 to 59 years; 15 identified as female and 2 as male; all but 1 had a partner or spouse; 7 had a child or children under the age of 13; participants were recruited from universities representing 6 provinces; and all participants had had some teaching experience (from 4 to 25 years) before they were hired into their tenure-track positions. The central teaching themes that were evident from data analysis were mentoring, joys and challenges, management of heavy teaching workloads, and institutional supports and processes. Findings are presented next according to themes and sub-themes.

### **Mentoring**

Participants indicated that mentoring was a useful support to gain understanding of the culture of the faculty, become socialized to the academic role, and learn to navigate working in their faculty/school and university. One participant stated: "The mentorship was excellent. However, during the COVID-19 pandemic, (senior) faculty's workloads became too busy, thus reducing support that I could get for questions related to teaching and supervising graduate students or managing undergraduate classes." Another participant mused: "Being involved in teaching teams was one of the biggest supports that helped me to start feeling included in academia. I found that I had different mentors from different teaching teams, which helped me navigate through the different courses."

In addition, another participant ruminated: "Receiving mentorship in the current academic culture is really hard. I have a mentorship group, but I think it would be better to just have one mentor [for teaching-related details]. I feel like I always ask dumb questions." A different participant explained: "I have a peer mentor, which is great! Sometimes, it's hard to be in [teaching planning] meetings as you can feel the tension between other faculty members." An alternative participant wanted a teaching mentor for guidance with teaching-related matters:

I had years of teaching experience, so I didn't need a mentor to teach me how to teach, but I needed someone to help me with administrative things or basic functions. I certainly didn't know what it was like to work here. For example, I had been a student at this university, so the faculty assumed I knew things about what to do or how to do it, but I didn't know even the basic things, like where the photocopier was or the code to the washroom.

Some participants indicated mentoring was essential for navigation of the academic culture. One participant felt mentoring was indispensable:

I had some "older sisters," not my formal mentor but people who helped me with navigating all the unspoken rules in a faculty. They were a safe place for me to ask all those questions so I could avoid all those million little landmines (rules) that you can step on.

Another participant reflected:

I had several people explicitly say the faculty here "eat their young," that they're bullies. I haven't experienced that at all. People have been really lovely and supportive to me. When I ask for help with teaching-related issues, I might not get 100% of what I need but I do get enough help or direction to aid me in solving my challenge.

Some participants who desired to have a mentor focused on teaching were not assigned one. One participant explained: “I haven’t felt as good about my teaching or as well supported in this area in comparison with support to develop my research program. I have grown in everything but I worry about my teaching and teaching evaluations.” Another participant declared: “I struggled because my teaching partner was not available to help develop the course because she was too busy grant writing. I struggled to get through the first semester.” Furthermore, a different participant highlighted the need for mentorship: “I wish that I had been encouraged and supported to teach a class on my own before I came into this job.”

## **Joys and Challenges of Teaching**

### ***Instructing Undergraduate Students***

Participants expressed that teaching students was mainly a joyful and fulfilling experience, which came out in multiple comments from most participants. One participant stated: “Working with the students is a positive aspect for me. When you are working with really keen students and bright minds and you can help them identify a passion for nursing, it’s a huge benefit!” This was further seen in a comment from another participant who extolled: “I think one of the main joys is the sharing of ideas and knowledge. We have wonderful conversations about all kinds of ideas. I find that is the most exciting part of being an academic.” Another participant commented:

You get talented students and dispassionate students. I don’t like students that come just wanting the answers but you do get diligent students that are really engaged, and you can see that they’re going to have influence in nursing. If you can help them be more successful for going out and doing good things, then all things are rewarding.

A different participant expressed her passion and joy for teaching: “I am always thinking about the students. The enjoyment of students makes it easier for me as I’m not in clinical practice anymore. I cared very much about my patients and now I care very much about my students.”

Another participant further discussed their excitement:

I love the teaching component. I know there’s a lot of marking and emails but it mixes up my day. I enjoy getting to connect with undergraduate students. Recently, I was reminded that my extremely limited clinical experience didn’t matter. I could teach foundational nursing skills, and it’s exciting to be teaching students those skills and preparing them to work in the clinical world and “do nursing.”

An alternative participant passionately stated: “Initially, I was teaching a course that I had developed in my post-doc. It’s easier to teach a course that you’ve got experience with rather than starting that new position and having to figure out three new courses.”

Participants also experienced challenges in teaching. These challenges were primarily related to fear of obtaining poor evaluation from students, institutional expectations for tenure criteria, and students’ behaviour. Lecture based teaching, which was not a familiar format experienced in participants’ graduate programs, caused angst for some of them. One participant stated:

The teaching format was lecture. I tried to do some creative flipped teaching and things like that, because I know evidence supports engaging students in their learning. However, the students complained and immediately the administration was questioning me. After having my hand slapped that first term, I never did it again. Now I just lecture. If I was too

different from other faculty, the students would bully me. The class sizes are large, and the students get “groupthink,” so it can be quite challenging. I can manage a class now but [initially] it was really scary. You had to fit in with whatever was expected so you could get “good” student evaluations.

Another participant was anxious about having been told by the faculty administration that “teaching is the most important criteria for tenure here. Make sure that your teaching evaluations are good and showing quality teaching evaluations.”

### ***Teaching and Supporting Graduate Students***

Participants reported differing experiences related to teaching and supervising/mentoring graduate students. While some participants were co-supervising graduate students or expected to supervise graduate students immediately after starting their tenure-track journey, other participants had not had the experience of supervising a graduate student, and some were not expecting to have that opportunity at all as assistant professors. Two participants were at institutions that currently don’t offer graduate nursing programs which limits the possibility of supervising graduate students or teaching graduate courses in their current position.

One participant emphasized:

In this faculty, [in order to supervise a PhD student] you must have an experienced co-supervisor, which is awesome! I wouldn’t want to be on my own. I want somebody as a co-supervisor who will show me the ropes because that’s the only way to learn the hidden aspects of graduate supervision. All I knew about PhD supervision was what I experienced as a PhD student. I think it’s a really good model to have a co-supervisor and mentor when you are learning.

Another participant underscored the importance of being ethically focused on equity challenges during their supervision of graduate students. They stated: “I have international graduate students who struggle a lot because they don’t come with the resources that a Canadian student would have. They haven’t built up their CVs or teaching assistantships.” A different participant exclaimed: “Another thing that motivates me recently, is graduate students. I just had my first master student graduate. I know *cool* isn’t a very scholarly academic word, but it was so cool to see her grow and then graduate!”

Other new faculty members added that they experienced challenges with supervision of graduate students. One participant identified: “I was on my own with graduate supervision, but I would have been more comfortable in a co-supervisory role. My program chair provided mentorship about what I needed to know.” A different participant contended: “I was asked to supervise a PhD student as soon as I started, but I declined as that was not the expectation I had. You must graduate a student, as a co-supervisor, before you take that responsibility on.” Another participant reflected about supervision of students while on parental leave:

Graduate student supervision was a challenge for me because there’s no mechanism to support the supervision of students while someone’s on parental leave. I had to find someone else and to rely on their good graces to supervise this student while I was on leave. That was a really difficult position to be in as a new faculty member. As a result, I was heavily involved but I really wish I hadn’t been while I had a newborn baby.

Participants reported differing experiences with teaching graduate students. One other participant articulated: “I teach undergraduate, master’s, and doctoral-level courses. Sometimes

you are assigned to co-teach courses at all levels. That's a helpful way to get into teaching a course and become closer with another colleague." Another participant stated: "My faculty differs from others. They seem to really hold the graduate courses close. Only tenured faculty teach those courses." A participant indicated COVID-19 influenced their experience: "I did not have a co-supervisor or co-teach graduate students as COVID-19 happened. There wasn't an opportunity to co-teach with more senior faculty because we had less people to spread around but I wished I had co-supervised and co-taught."

### ***Team Teaching***

Participants discussed positives and negatives with team teaching. Team teaching was an experience that several participants had during their initial years. For most participants, the experience was positive and helped with learning the unfamiliar environment, teaching content, and how to teach. A participant stated: "The fortunate thing was that I had to work in a team with very good people to work with, and I was given courses that were related to my area or my background." Another participant indicated:

Being in teaching teams helped me develop as a teacher. It was such a lovely way to help you feel part of a team and supported as a new faculty member. Some faculty just wanted to see new people succeed and wanted to be there to help you.

A different participant was grateful for team teaching:

I found it immensely helpful to teach undergraduate students in a team approach. It provided many informal mentors and as the curricula and examinations were already developed, it was more about learning the "how to," the technology, and those sorts of things for the first term.

Another participant enjoyed their experience:

The team teaching has been the best part for me. I had two really great colleagues, similar backgrounds, and similar intense personalities as I have. That was really enjoyable for me, because I knew I was being allowed to teach in an area where I normally wouldn't.

For others, team teaching caused more stress than support. One participant explained: "I had a horrible experience with team teaching. I felt like it created more challenges than support in the environment of my workplace." A different participant articulated challenges:

It can be challenging to team teach when you have a different philosophical approach or a different organizational approach to the people that you're working with. I'd never really taught an independent course before, and I still had a lot to learn. I was learning a lot about the politics and working within this institution at the same time as how the curriculum was implemented and supported. I didn't feel that I got the best guidance for those specific things that I needed but rather I was told, "This needs to be done in this way because this is how *we* do it." For me, it wasn't a helpful experience.

Also, a participant commented: "I really enjoyed when you each teach a section but you're on a teaching team together. I find if you're totally team teaching, it can absorb too much time." Furthermore, another participant found team teaching to be challenging:

The teaching team developed the new course content as well as the concepts we needed to teach in this course, which was helpful. However, it was frustrating as a new faculty as

well as frustrating for the students because it was not clear enough for the students. I would not say it went well.

### **Management of Heavy Teaching Workloads**

The majority of participants reported having a balanced portfolio of approximately 40% research, 40% teaching, and 20% service. All participants described their workload as being heavy. For those who did not have teaching release, new faculty reported difficulty developing research programs, which is presented more fully in another publication.

Further to the observation of heavy workloads, one participant expressed: “I was on my own in a graduate course with 40 students. We’re supposed to have 2 years of reduced workload, but I’ve had a 50% teaching load, which I think is more than I’m supposed to have.” Another participant summarized their experience: “I’m working an average 50–60 hours a week, just to keep up. I can’t continue this frenetic pace. I have discussed the need for a change to my teaching load.” An additional participant mused: “Without exaggeration, I work 12 hours a day and work on the weekends or I’m behind. I don’t know if the faculty is getting the most out of me. It’s draining.”

When discussing the nuances of a new faculty member’s workload, one participant acknowledged the heavy load was due to their lack of teaching experience:

An important thing I really learned in the first couple terms was I needed to think way more carefully about how I planned assessments and developed rubrics. I spent hours every week meeting students about their assignments. Everything still takes longer than I thought. Teaching time starts to overlap with time I’m supposed to be writing or working on a grant, but I’m learning to be more efficient.

A particular participant recollected:

I remember my supervisor said you should get rid of your teaching workload as much as possible and focus on research. I taught a new course for me, and it was my favourite. I would have regretted not having that teaching experience.

Student support time was reported as frustrating for another participant:

I get more than 50 emails per day. I have my office hours once a week for them and quiz reviews but less than 20% of students show up to the Zoom session. The students just continue to email and then have to wait for my email response. It’s never-ending work and frustrating for me.

Some participants had developed strategies to balance their heavy workloads and life needs. One participant discussed: “I think there’s a bit of flexibility, but I can’t see anybody being in academia being successful if they work less than 50–60 hours a week, and many of us work much, much more. I actively completely block 3 days in my calendar.” Another participant shared: “Sometimes I work on the weekend with marking or planning but I don’t reply to students’ emails. I use my weekends to do my work, if needed, but otherwise spend it with my family.”

Although many participants reported teaching time releases to support research program development, the teaching workload was perceived as very heavy. As the participants were at different stages of their tenure-track journey, some hadn’t fully developed strategies as yet to reduce some of the frustrations of the multiple competing demands of teaching time.

## **Institutional Supports and Processes**

### ***Teaching Resources***

Teaching resource centres were acknowledged as an institutional source of teaching support. However, many participants indicated they did not make use of the service; 8 of them had between 7 and 25 years of teaching experience or indicated that other sources were available for teaching development. This was evident when one participant emphasized:

There is a teaching and learning centre, but you have to actually do it [teach], to learn it. I tried some strategies that I learned at the teaching centre but the students did not appreciate different techniques, and I was criticized by administration for doing something different.

Another participant indicated that they valued the teaching and learning centre: “I ran over to the teaching and learning centre to access information and strategies for teaching and learning and student evaluation (rubrics).”

Another support aspect that came up in interviews was online learning platforms. A participant stated: “We have a learning platform with all kinds of teaching resources. In fact, I was asked to provide my teaching dossier to use as an example for others on that platform.” This participant continued: “There are a lot of really great educational sessions offered at the teaching and learning centre, but I can’t fit them into my schedule because of [my] heavy workload.” Another participant ruminated on the differences in resources between institutions: “I find a lot of the resources that I would have access to at a bigger university I don’t have here. So that is a struggle, and maybe if I had never had it, it wouldn’t be so hard.” Likewise, a different participant confirmed reduced access to resources:

Initially, I found information from other tenure track faculty. I was in the department for about eight months before I was added to the online learning platform that the university uses and that has all the details on the curriculum, and the nursing program, and all the documents that are needed for educators within that program.

### ***Assignment of Courses***

All participants indicated courses were assigned to them by the faculty administrators. For some, this was not a difficulty but for others, they struggled with the assignments. One participant was appreciative: “I was given courses that were related to my area or my background experiences.” A different participant indicated:

You don’t have decision-making power around the teaching assignment. But what you do in the course can affect workload immensely. It’s great being in a team but it also can create challenges because some team members want to do things that are going to create excessive work.

Assignment of courses was difficult and de-motivating for another participant, who commented:

I’m teaching undergraduate courses, which is more difficult than graduate teaching. You have large classes, and the students have a high school mindset of teaching and learning. When the faculty administration asked about course preferences, I requested to teach certain courses but I did not get them. I’m not very motivated about teaching assigned courses.

Furthermore, one participant indicated:

The assignment of courses is not based on your expertise; you are assigned to whatever course needs filling. The faculty expectation is that you have a PhD so you can teach anything even if it is not your area of expertise.

Thus, a consideration for administrators could be aligning course assignments with new faculty's expertise areas for early tenure-track years.

### ***Effects of COVID-19***

For some participants, the COVID-19 pandemic caused little or no angst as classes became virtual. Others had more difficulties with a rapidly transitioning mode of educational delivery. One participant indicated: "From a teaching perspective, the one course that I was teaching during that first semester (when everything went online due to COVID-19 restriction) was actually online already. So, nothing changed for me." Another participant expressed gratitude for the flexibility that was provided by the institution during the height of the pandemic:

When I started, I didn't have to relocate right away because everything was online. I started in the city where we were living, eliminating disruption to my school-aged children, and avoiding a major move during the peak of the pandemic. However, I started with a 4-hour time difference between me and my students.

A participant indicated a shift (from team teaching) in work during the height of the COVID-19 pandemic: "I'm the only person teaching 258 students on Zoom. (Laughs) I feel like I'm in a bubble."

However, for others, the pandemic created more stress for them. One participant commented:

I was so apprehensive. I had never taught online before and we had to shift quickly online. Our teaching team met, divided the work, created narrated PowerPoints, agreed on the content, and discussed students' challenges of having families and how restrictions might affect studying or attending virtual classes.

Another participant explained feelings of being devalued: "With the pandemic, the workload has been even heavier because everything had to go online. We were told to be kind to the students. But nobody's kind to us. I am constantly being asked for more by my faculty." A participant described emotional tolls: "I found out from students that we were going back in person, not from administration. I wasn't given time to prepare, and the students' anxiety was high. I felt my heart sink. That was incredibly difficult!" As well, a participant expressed feelings of disconnection: "Going back into the university as COVID-19 restrictions relaxed, I felt really disengaged as I had not seen anyone (faculty or students) except for online for such a long time." One participant had difficulties obtaining course material, and there did not seem to be a formal process by which they could have obtained them. They stated: "The sessional course instructor, for the course that I was going to be teaching, withheld the previous course syllabus, the course report, and university-owned material. I was distraught over this!"

A different participant acknowledged a unique experience because of life stage:

I started when I had a six-month-old baby who wouldn't bottle feed (which shaped my first few months). I had negotiated working from home and got my feet wet with the research and applied for a couple of grants. I started teaching one course and then COVID-19 hit,

changed everything and, definitely, my experience has been coloured by having very young children.

## **Discussion**

Mentoring, joys and challenges of teaching, management of heavy teaching workloads, and institutional supports and processes were the central themes that were illuminated in our research study. Our study sheds a light on emic teaching experiences of new nursing tenure-track faculty, as well as discussing impacts from COVID-19, which was unexpectedly present during data collection. In agreement with other research studies (Bice et al., 2019; Boamah et al., 2021; Cole et al., 2020; Etzkorn & Braddock, 2020; Singh et al., 2016), mentoring was a crucial support that aided faculty in their understanding of many impacting factors. These factors included the institutional and faculty culture, teaching in academia within a particular institution, and faculty progression towards competency in teaching. Although there were some challenges, the participants were fairly confident about teaching, and team teaching was a great support as well as a practical and effective form of mentorship (even when the participants didn't recognize team teaching as a form of mentorship).

Raymond et al. (2022) examined the effects of a formal mentoring program for nurse educators, which demonstrated positive faculty development as a result. Nevertheless, most of our participants indicated they did not have access to a formal teaching mentor or mentoring program and had to seek out informal mentors to aid in their understanding of their role, which, on occasion, resulted in limited exposure to formal knowledge of institutional practices and values. Overall, participants indicated they felt well supported by teaching teams who functioned as informal mentors. It may be that informal means are sufficient for most faculty, particularly those with many years of previous teaching experience. Although faculty expressed the desire to be mentored, few used the resources offered by university teaching centres. From our perspective, this may reveal a contradiction in the discourse of new faculty. New faculty desire mentoring, and yet they do not use resources offered by their university—or, perhaps, new faculty do not have time capacity to attend educational opportunities that are available during the early years on the tenure track, as one participant in our study indicated.

The findings from this research also illuminated experiences of incivility from both faculty and students. These findings underscore some of the negative aspects of competitive institutional cultures when resources and grant funding are limited, and perhaps where this type of culture can lead to increased incivility (Singh et al., 2016). These findings provide clearer insight into the impact of the academic setting on new tenure track faculty, which is only implied or commented on briefly in other studies (Boamah et al., 2021; Lee et al., 2022; Singh et al., 2016).

From the participants' perspectives, there were overwhelming stress-inducing factors that impacted their role. These factors include workloads, lack of knowledge or experience regarding teaching and teaching related processes, fear of repercussions from teaching evaluations when seeking tenure, and institutional practices (such as assignment of courses) that made their role more complicated. This study supports other research identifying that new faculty need clearer expectations, standardized faculty orientation, and multiple institutional supports to be successful and remain in their positions (Boamah et al., 2021; Etzkorn & Braddock, 2020; Lee et al., 2022; Singh et al., 2016; Young-Bice et al., 2022). Stress-reducing approaches needed to foster work-life balance and retention included learned capacity for managing heavy teaching-related workload

(student mentoring, advisement, curricula development), as well as understanding specific workplace culture (Etzkorn & Braddock, 2020; Rothacker-Peyton et al., 2021).

In this study, participants articulated similar needs for learning strategies to manage teaching-related workload and for time management, as reported in the literature (Boamah et al., 2021; Singh et al., 2016), which increases the body of knowledge regarding the teaching experience in academia. Team-teaching or co-teaching approaches were found to be particularly useful formats for informal mentoring (Etzkorn & Braddock, 2020; Power et al., 2023) and, for our participants, were mainly enjoyable experiences. Participants communicated the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic, which increased the need for supports, but they also acknowledged some individuals had accommodations for teaching based upon their needs. These findings add to the limited literature currently available regarding teaching experiences during the pandemic.

### **Implications for Practice**

Multifaceted support systems are desired, anticipated, and expected by new tenure-track nursing faculty. A comprehensive, formalized faculty orientation and specific support programs such as mentoring are essential for increasing job satisfaction, which is positively correlated in the literature with intention to stay in academia. New faculty expect clear guidance for teaching expectations, approaches, and support. Formal and informal mentoring should be discussed and valued in the academic environment. A culture for success and recognition of success (awards), staged faculty development opportunities, and valuing and promoting of work–life balance would be strategies for increasing job satisfaction and development for new academics.

Although few participants commented on family-friendly processes in regard to their teaching load or setting of boundaries on their availability of time, consideration of family-friendly processes should be explored for future support of new nursing faculty in the childbearing/child-rearing phase of life. Continuing education opportunities focusing on teaching strategies and time management skills would be useful as new faculty navigate the tenure-track process and more emphasis on university supports, such as teaching and learning centres, should be included in PhD programs, as well as more emphasis on the development of PhD students as future teachers, as we know from some findings and anecdotally that teaching is often not emphasised in doctoral education.

### **Areas for Future Research**

Directions for future research from our study include further exploration of student-to-faculty incivility and a deeper study of faculty incivility in nursing, as well as ways to promote civility in academia. Further investigations into the benefits and outcomes of team teaching for new faculty and the implementation and evaluation of formalized and informalized mentoring programs are other projects to consider. Finally, it may also be desirable to conduct a study related to new faculty expectations and the extent to which they are prepared for these expectations while they are enrolled in graduate programs.

### **Strengths/Limitations**

A strength of this study is the rich, thick description of teaching experiences from participants in institutions across Canada (perhaps representing a national voice), which enhances the transferability of our findings to other settings. As institutions are in another phase of change post-pandemic, it is important that the influence of the pandemic be acknowledged as possibly altering the perception of institutional support. The COVID-19 pandemic may have altered

participants' perceptions of institutional support, but some participants highlighted supportive changes made by the faculty or institution for their teaching experiences.

### **Conclusion**

Participants vividly described their teaching experiences as new tenure-track faculty. This research contributes to the body of knowledge concerning nurses' tenure-track experiences in Canadian universities and also about the challenges of teaching during the COVID-19 pandemic. The findings of this study add to what is known about the value of mentoring and supportive practices in post-secondary institutions. The importance of this study is that it took place during the pandemic and may influence post-pandemic approaches to mentoring and retaining new faculty. Implications for practice denote the necessity of supporting new tenure-track faculty, globally, in their teaching role to enhance job satisfaction and academic development, especially in times with pronounced nursing shortages.

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