

Exploring Work-Life Balance of Junior Athletic Training Faculty Members During Role Inductance

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Context: Work-life balance has become a growing concern in athletic training, but little is known about the experiences of faculty and finding it. Challenges in finding work-life balance have been reported among faculty in higher education, and those who are new to a role are often susceptible to increased stress and overload.

Objective: Examine junior athletic training faculty members' experiences with work-life balance during their role inductance.

Design: Qualitative inquiry.

Setting: Higher education institutions.

Patients or Other Participants: Sixteen junior faculty (7 male, 9 female) representing 7 National Athletic Trainers' Association districts participated. The average age of the junior faculty members was 32 ± 3.5 years. Twelve were in tenure track and 4 had non-tenure track positions.

Main Outcome Measure(s): All participants completed phone interviews with one researcher following a semistructured interview protocol. Recorded interviews were transcribed and analyzed following a phenomenological approach. We intentionally selected 3 primary measures of trustworthiness to establish the rigor of the study: (1) peer review, (2) multiple-analyst triangulation, and (3) researcher triangulation.

Results: Three factors were identified as inhibitors of work-life balance for junior faculty: (1) role inductance, (2) research and teaching, and (3) upcoming deadlines. Two organizational strategies (flexibility and mentorship) and 2 individual strategies (time management and personal outlets) emerged as facilitators for work-life balance.

Conclusions: Junior faculty in athletic training can experience conflict in balancing their roles as faculty members as well as their outside and own personal interests. The data support previous literature, and illustrates that organizational factors precipitate imbalance and a combination of organizational and individual strategies promote balance.

Key Words: Organizational socialization, role learning, conflict management

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Full Citation:

Mazerolle SM, Bowman TG, Kilbourne BF. Exploring work-life balance of junior athletic training faculty members during role inductance. *Athl Train Educ J*. 2018;13(1):21–32.

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KEY POINTS

- Junior faculty in athletic training programs can experience a reduced work-life balance due research and teaching expectations.
- Despite the challenges of being a new faculty member, mentors can role model work-life balance strategies that the new faculty member can emulate.
- The flexibility of higher education can help increase the work-life balance for these new faculty members, as it increases the control over their work schedules.

INTRODUCTION

The concept of work-life balance centers on the ideology that a harmonious relationship can exist among all facets of an individual's life.¹ At the core, it means a person can engage in various roles (eg, spouse, parent, friend, professional), and gain satisfaction from each role. This satisfaction is independent of time spent engaged in a role, but rather is experienced from the enrichment opportunity provided by performing the role.^{2,3} Satisfaction can, however, be jeopardized when engagement in various roles requires time, energy, and resources that compete against one another and create conflict.^{4,5} Although the concept of work-life balance has been studied extensively in clinical athletic training and in the general faculty population, the concept has not been investigated in the athletic training academic settings. There is growing evidence that higher education institutions provide an environment that can create conflict between professional and personal lives because of the demands placed upon faculty members, especially newcomers.^{6,7}

The perception that an academic career is simple is outdated and fictional. Continued literature has identified that faculty, especially new faculty, struggle to appropriately allocate their time and manage their responsibilities. The difficulty of managing the multitude of tasks required of faculty members can result in a spillover effect, where negative aspects of work spill over into their personal lives.^{8,9} The spillover effect often leads to faculty members neglecting personal interests, hobbies, and home life, which results in a struggle for individuals to find what researchers call work-life balance. Although work-life balance has been discussed as a bidirectional concept, most often the spillover is facilitated in a unidirectional manner, as work roles most often limit time for family, personal hobbies, and leisure.³⁻⁵

Common organizational variables leading to conflict include work schedules, work-week hours, and the nature of the job (ie, demanding, stressful).¹⁰⁻¹³ Additionally, age has been directly linked to experiences of work-life conflict. Literature suggests that a larger portion of millennials (20-35-year-olds) as compared with Generation X (34-53-year-olds) and baby boomers (54-70-year-olds) seek chances for improved work-life balance.¹⁴ New and junior faculty are among those

millennials entering into higher education for the first time, which perhaps speaks to their increased desire for work-life balance but also to the struggle to find it as they navigate the roles associated with academia. The millennial's desire for work-life balance¹⁴ speaks to the shift in mindset, but also the individuality that exists within the interface between work and home life. Simply, one's own personal interests, family and marital status, and outlook can influence pursuit of balance.¹¹

New and junior faculty may experience a reduction in their work-life balance for a variety of reasons.^{9,15} Factors that can negatively impact their work-life balance include expectations to secure grant funding, publish regularly, teach courses, and engage in service-related activities simultaneously. Confounding the ability of the new faculty member to find work-life balance is the ambiguity that exists related to appropriate allocation of time/resources, as well as limited exposure to all areas of academy life.¹⁶ Despite reports that women in general experience greater conflict, as they often spend more time during the workday caring for and managing domestic obligations, men and women both desire balance.^{17,18} Factors that contribute to conflict for men and women may be different; however, both male and female faculty require the time to balance and engage in personal interests, family activities, and hobbies. Work-life balance has become a central focus for all disciplines, as today's working professionals crave it and report challenges with finding it.^{4,15} Disparity in work-life balance leads to dissatisfied individuals, which negatively impacts productivity and commitment to one's work.¹⁹ Early interventions, therefore, to help junior faculty members or any newly transitioned employees to develop strategies to achieve balance, can mitigate the negative outcomes reported with work-life conflict.^{19,20}

Work pressures and work-life conflict have been reported by faculty,^{21,22} but the literature has not fully examined the experiences of those who are new to the faculty role in athletic training. The experiences of new athletic training faculty are of particular relevance as they may experience more stress and overload due to role inductance, which can serve as a platform for uncertainty and self-doubt as they learn their new role. We draw this hypothesis as in the athletic training literature there has been discussions of incomplete doctoral socialization, whereby not all aspects of the faculty role have been explored, leading to increased stress once a faculty member has transitioned to the role full time.^{7,16} The purpose of this study was to learn more about the experiences of junior athletic training faculty regarding their work-life balance. We believe this population is at risk for increased experiences of imbalance, because of role transition and demands of the faculty role itself. The study was founded by 2 primary questions: (1) What factors inhibit work-life balance for junior athletic training faculty members? (2) What helps support work-life balance for junior athletic training faculty members?

METHODS

Research Design

Our study was founded on a qualitative paradigm that used an interpretative phenomenological approach^{23–25} to better understand junior faculty as they navigate role transition into higher education and attempt to create work-life balance. Selecting a phenomenological approach was purposeful, as we believed it would allow us to capture the experiences of our participants in the moment, as they were living it. A fundamental aspect of the approach is understanding how a person makes sense of a particular concept, in our case work-life balance. Work-life balance^{5,9} is a concept that is rooted in individuality, and thus capturing each participant's own narratives about his or her experiences as a junior faculty member would be appropriate and beneficial.

Participants

At the outset of the study, we established the following inclusion criteria for our study: (1) athletic training faculty appointment within a higher education institution sponsoring a Commission on Accreditation of Athletic Training Education–accredited program with an associated terminal degree, and (2) 1 completed year of full-time employment in their faculty appointment, but (3) not more than 3 years of experience (ie, participant had not earned tenure yet). Our inclusion criteria were founded on the concept of role inductance versus role continuance; that is, we wanted individuals who were still transitioning into their role (ie, inductance) in contrast to those who were embedded (ie, continuance). All recruited participants met our inclusion criteria, and a purposive sampling technique²³ was followed to gain access to these individuals. We gained access to our participants by using the professional networks of the authors ($n = 6$), and then followed a snowball sample ($n = 10$)²² to reach the remainder of our participants for saturation.

Sixteen junior faculty (7 male, 9 female) representing 7 National Athletic Trainers' Association (NATA) districts participated. The average age of the junior faculty members was 32 ± 3.5 years. All 16 participants had completed doctoral degrees that were accompanied by a doctoral assistantship. Twelve were in tenure track and 4 had non-tenure-track positions. Nine held 9-month contracts, 3 held 10-month contracts, and 4 were on 12-month appointments. Ten of the participants were married to spouses who had responsibilities outside of the home as an employee or a student (7 full time, 3 part time). Five participants had children. At the time of the interview, each participant was within his or her first 3 years of a full-time faculty position. Data saturation was reached within our sample of 16 faculty members. The Table illustrates individual demographic information for our 16 junior faculty members.

Data Collection Procedures

After securing institutional review board approval, we began our recruitment of junior faculty members. Initially, we used a convenience sampling strategy, which allowed us to contact individuals who we believed met our sampling criteria. Consent was gained before the interview sessions, and each semistructured phone interview was audio recorded and transcribed immediately after completion. Interviews lasted

between 35 and 60 minutes. We used a semistructured interview protocol, which was facilitated by one researcher throughout the data collection procedures to ensure consistency with each session. The interview protocol was crafted before data collection using current literature^{11,20,26,27} as the primary guide, as well as the researchers' expertise in the areas of work-life balance and faculty development. Specific questions that were the primary focus included "Can you share with me your experiences with work-life balance?," "What factors have influenced your work-life balance?," "What have you found as effective ways to manage all your responsibilities?," and "What role, if any, does being a faculty member play in your work-life balance?"

Data Analysis and Trustworthiness Measures

We followed the stepwise approach for phenomenological analysis.²³ Before engaging in those steps, S.M.M. and T.G.B. discussed the data analysis plan, agreed upon it, and then followed it independently before comparing the results. First, we used a holistic read of the data as a means to become familiar with our participants' experiences. Each transcript was read in its entirety before any labeling and coding was completed, a process that is considered to be immersive and foundational to the phenomenological approach. Using a constant-comparison approach, upon each subsequent read of the raw data, we placed codes upon the margins of the transcripts to identify the meanings of the participants' experiences. These codes were identifiers to the main point of the data being labeled (ie, time management). Then, common codes and experiences were grouped together and defined. We were able to identify the common experiences of our junior faculty members as they related to challenges and strategies related to work-life balance (ie, facilitators of work-life balance).

We intentionally selected 3 primary measures of trustworthiness to establish the rigor of the study: (1) peer review, (2) multiple-analyst triangulation, and (3) researcher triangulation. Our peer was intentionally selected because of her training in qualitative methods, her perspectives as a junior faculty member (ie, living the experience under investigation), and her background as a researcher in regards to socialization processes. Before data collection, our peer reviewed our semistructured interview guide for content, clarity, and flow. She was able to provide grammatical edits, revisions regarding question order, and constructive feedback regarding the questions used to better understand work-life balance for junior faculty members. She was also used as a final check in the data analysis procedures, as she was able to draw upon her own personal experiences as a junior faculty member, to ensure an unbiased presentation of our participants' experiences. As described previously by Creswell,²³ our peer provided an interpretative credibility check by reviewing transcripts and our coding strategies to ensure accuracy of the analyses. The data analyses as previously described were completed by S.M.M. and T.G.B. independently, as a means to meet the steps outlined by Pitney and Parker²⁸ regarding multiple-analyst coding and triangulation. Moreover, S.M.M. and T.G.B. had previous experience in the coding strategies used. Finally, the study's design, analyses, and final presentation of the findings were done collaboratively as a team effort, which inherently reduces researcher bias and satisfied the concept of researcher triangulation.^{23,28}

Table. Individual Junior Faculty Member Demographic Data

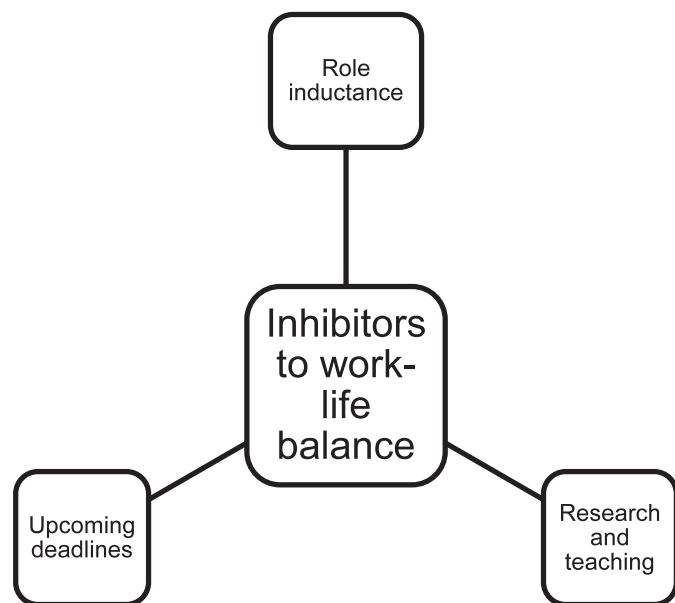
Junior Faculty Member	Sex	Age, y	Years BOC Certified	Years Current Position	Position Type	Institution Type	Doctoral Degree	Marital Status	Family Status, No. of Children	Spouse Employment
Emma	F	29	8	1	Nontenure	DU—highest research	PhD	Married	0	FT
Olivia	F	34	12	2	Tenure	Master's colleges and universities	PhD	Single	0	n/a
Ava	F	30	8	1	Tenure	DU—highest research	PhD	Single	0	n/a
Sophia	F	34	12	1	Tenure	Master's colleges and universities	PhD	Married	2	FT
Isabella	F	29	7	2	Tenure	Master's colleges and universities	EdD	Married	0	FT
Mia	F	32	10	1	Nontenure	Master's colleges and universities	PhD	Engaged	0	FT
Charlotte	F	34	12	2	Tenure	DU—highest research	PhD	Married	2	FT
Amelia	F	32	10	1	Tenure	DU—highest research	PhD	Single	0	n/a
Harper	F	30	8	1	Tenure	DU—highest research	PhD	Married	0	FT
Liam	M	30	8	1	Nontenure	DU—highest research	PhD	Married	0	FT
Noah	M	32	9	1	Tenure	DU—highest research	PhD	Single	0	n/a
Ethan	M	43	20	2	Nontenure	DU—highest research	DAT	Married	2	PT
Caden	M	29	7	1	Tenure	DU—highest research	PhD	Married	0	PT
Mason	M	33	11	1	Tenure	Master's colleges and universities	PhD	Married	2	PT
Oliver	M	28	6	1	Tenure	Master's colleges and universities	PhD	Single	0	n/a
Aiden	M	32	10	2	Tenure	DU—highest research	PhD	Married	1	FT

Abbreviations: BOC, Board of Certification; DAT, Doctor of Athletic Training; DU, doctoral universities; EdD, Doctor of Education; F, female; FT, full-time employment; M, male; n/a, not applicable (since the spouse was not working); PhD, Doctor of Philosophy; PT, part-time employment.

RESULTS

We found 3 inhibitors of work-life balance (Figure 1). These inhibitors appeared to be a result of role inductance (ie, learning and adapting to one's new role), specifically employer expectations in various aspects of the faculty role. Creating balance appeared to be a result of organizational and individual strategies (Figure 2) such as workplace flexibility,

Figure 1. Inhibitors for junior faculty members to creating work-life balance.



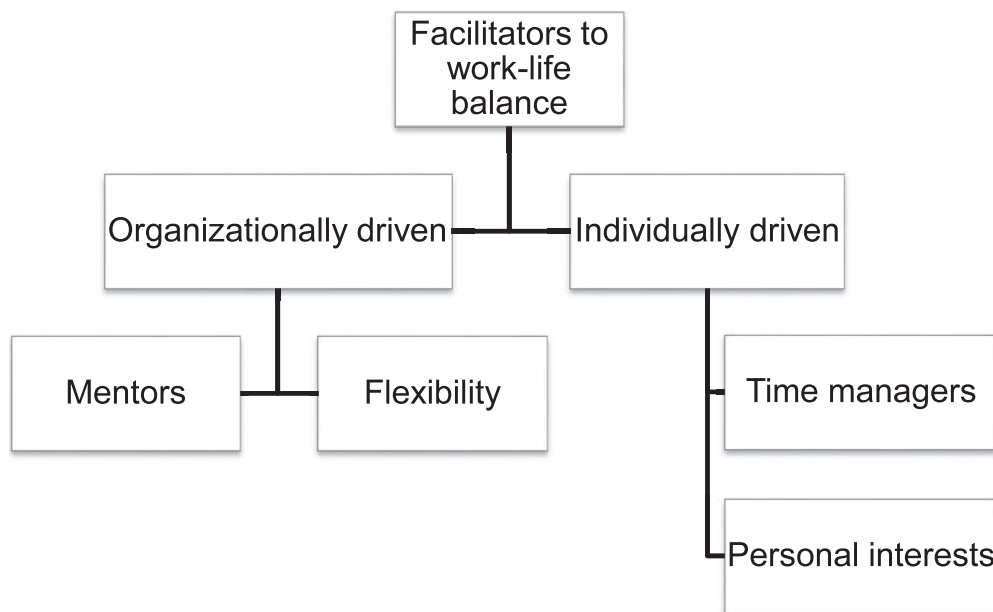
mentorship, time management, and outside hobbies. We present each theme next with data to support the analyses.

Inhibitors of Work-Life Balance

Hindrances to work-life balance were isolated to organizationally based factors that were specifically related to the expectations of being in a faculty role. For our participants, these organizationally driven factors were related to (1) role inductance, (2) balancing the demands of teaching and research roles, and (3) navigating deadlines that can arise related to the various roles assumed by the faculty member.

Role Inductance. Our participants shared their challenges with work-life balance from a role acclimation and ambiguity perspective, a process that was part of learning their new role in higher education. Role inductance is part of the socialization process whereby an individual becomes acclimated to the workplace environment and the expectations related to that environment. Despite a general awareness of the roles and responsibilities of faculty members gained as graduate assistants during their doctoral education, attempting to fulfill these independently now as a faculty member created inhibitors of work-life balance. For example, Amelia illustrated the uncertainties that accompanied her transition from a doctoral student to a faculty member and how that contributed to her struggles creating work-life balance. She said, when discussing how she could manage all her expectations, “Yeah, I mean I’m still trying to figure it out [how to balance things], especially now that I’m going to be teaching more.” Mason’s experiences with struggling to find work-life balance was related to the unknowns of the faculty

Figure 2. Strategies used by junior faculty members to stimulate work-life balance.



role that he had not been fully exposed to during his doctoral education. He shared, “I think just the many surprises that happened during the first year.” Isabella simply mentioned “I think the uncertainty of what was happening” in regards to her struggles with finding a balance. Isabella’s comments reflect that role inductance is a process that includes unknowns, which is a direct inhibitor of finding work-life balance.

The role inductance process is one whereby the individual must acclimate and adapt to a new environment and gain an appreciation for the role in that new setting. To illustrate how the role inductance process can impact work-life balance negatively, Sophia shared that she struggled the most trying to acclimate to her role and better understand the expectations that would lead to success. She shared about her thoughts on balancing academic expectations as she was asked to discuss her thoughts on her ability to create and find work-life balance in higher education. Her reflection speaks to her work extending beyond her contract length:

Well, I don’t know. For somebody that’s on a 10-month contract, I’ve spent a lot of time in my office this summer. I think, and this may go back to sort of your new faculty question, that’s been one of the hardest aspects for me here, as I haven’t fully grasped the expectations for success. So, I am not sure I can fairly say that I have been able to balance them or not, yet.

Many of our junior faculty members talked about learning the culture of the workplace, gaining awareness of the expectations of the role as well as the program they were entering. Mia was able to adequately describe this process and the experiences of our participants. Her comments were directly related to the fact that, to learn her new role, she needed time and commitment, factors that at times impacted her ability to create balance. Mia shared, when asked why she was struggling to create work-life balance,

For me it was very much learning our curriculum as far as the sequencing of classes. So, I was sort of thrown into that right

away. And I felt—I’ll be honest, I was a little bit nervous when I first had my first advising meeting that I was going to give them the wrong advice or I was going to tell them to take a class out of sequence. So for me it was sort [of] learning our system. That took a while.

Role inductance, the process of learning a new role, was identified as a source of increased stress for our participants, which was perceived to negatively impact our junior faculty’s ability to find work-life balance.

Balancing Research and Teaching. Our junior faculty shared their struggles with trying to appropriately allocate their time between their research and teaching responsibilities, expectations they viewed as equally important, yet very time intensive. Our participants were aware of the expectations for research and teaching, but the ability to execute them simultaneously while learning their new role stimulated conflict. The amounts of time needed for both of these aspects of the faculty role were viewed as focal points of their responsibilities, and often the most important tasks they sought to achieve. The time pressures and time management aspect were new to them; when they were doctoral students, the expectation was not as intense, as many did not have to teach as well as balance research expectations. Olivia, who described her teaching load as “12/12 credits” for the academic year, expressed concern related to her research obligations. Olivia said her struggles were related to her ability to maintain “continuing scholarships in your field” in a position that has a teaching focus. Olivia recognized that her doctoral studies gave her experience in these areas of higher education, but did not require the full expectations she experienced now as a faculty member. When asked more about that specific struggle to balance teaching and research, she said,

So, there’s some conflict [between teaching and research] and so I’m still trying to work that out and my biggest fear with that is when I run out of dissertation material to publish, what will my next step be because I’m hopefully fully integrating more research with our students. And if you don’t

have a lab and stuff, that's really hard but either that or working on other collaborations.

Olivia's comments were reflective of many of the participants when asked to describe how they balance their time and roles in their life. Our participants had been in their roles less than 3 years, and only a few ($n = 4$; 25%) had children, indicating a possible work-centered focus as their life stage was that of an early-career individual.

Many of the junior faculty members were surprised by the amount of teaching that accompanied their roles; this was something they recognized as impactful to their work-life balance. Oliver said, "I guess the teaching load is really heavy. So I think the ability to prep for class and grade things definitely is the fact that it keeps me in the office the longest." Liam also shared concerns with his teaching expectations and the role they had in trying to balance it all. When directly asked about his ability to balance his workload, he shared,

Right now the quantity of teaching. It's a lot of preparation, so there will be weekends or nights where I'm prepping classes and doing that stuff. Research, again, for me, just because of my position to a lesser extent.

Aiden talked about managing his teaching expectations and described it as challenging. He reflected that he was not prepared for the amount of time that was needed to manage a 3-credit course, and how to dedicate time to address that part of his role. He shared,

That amount of prep time that goes into the full 3-credit course I guess was unexpected. One of the things that helped was they actually gave me a reduced teaching load the first year and so that was helpful as well from [an] institutional support type of situation. But I don't think I expected how much prep time it would take to do 3 lectures a week and do that whole thing from scratch, you know, because that's kind of what I had to do. An eye-opening experience that first semester. Well, I definitely need to leave myself 7 hours prep time for an hour in class, you know. Not every PowerPoint's going to be perfect.

Based on the statements shared related to the time dedicated to research and teaching, it is apparent that they are roadblocks to work-life balance, something predicated on the amount of time that is necessary to fulfill those responsibilities.

Upcoming Deadlines. Time needed to complete tasks (ie, teaching, advising, research) was discussed as an impediment to work-life balance for our participants, but activities that were viewed as important but supplementary also created conflict. Several junior faculty struggled with the management of deadlines in regards to grant and paper submissions. Liam, when reflecting on his role and finding balance in his life, said, "There are times when a deadline for a review that has to get done, or I am trying to get a manuscript out to coauthors or submitted to a journal, so things like that (can impact it)." Aiden, much like Liam when discussing his work-life balance, shared concerns for approaching deadlines that are outside of the daily grind:

You know, I put more stress on myself than other people put on me. You know, I have in my head that I have a deadline coming up and so I need to get that done. Clearly there's things like, well, class on Tuesday, I need to prep for that

class, but manuscripts don't really have deadlines inherently unless you have a revision that needs to come back and the journal says there's a deadline.

Sophia talked about the challenge upcoming deadlines can pose to balancing responsibilities when added onto other important obligations (ie, teaching, advising, and life):

Sometimes it gets hard 'cause you've got things like you've got a grant due, you've got an article review that just came up and that you have to do and you put it off because you thought it was a bit—you didn't know it was going to be so bad. And so when you review the article—so, there are things that come up. So, yeah there are some nights you work long.

The results indicate that upcoming deadlines increased the possibility for conflict in regards to managing professional and personal obligations; these deadlines were viewed as outside of the teaching role, and focused more on service and research expectations and activities. Our participants' reflections also indicate that these deadlines were important, and thus created less time for other activities, including personal interests and family time.

Facilitators of Work-Life Balance

The identified facilitators of work life balance were organized into 2 larger concepts: organizationally driven facilitators and individually driven facilitators (Figure 2). We define each next.

Organizationally Driven Facilitators. Workplace flexibility and mentorship emerged as the 2 organizational facilitators for junior faculty finding work-life balance. Flexibility was described as a perk and a natural aspect of a faculty member's role in higher education. Mentorship was viewed as a means to witness senior faculty navigating their careers and personal lives. Mentorship was discussed as something gained during doctoral education, or from current supervisors or peers.

Flexibility. The nature and culture of academia were described as flexible by our participants, which afforded them the chance to gain work-life balance. The flexibility was centered on autonomy over work schedules and flexible workplace arrangements. Mia said, "I have a lot of autonomy over my own schedule, and that really helps me." Amelia, when discussing her work-life balance, acknowledged the flexibility of being a faculty member. This flexibility provided her the chance to create a teaching schedule and make time to carry out some of the other roles of a faculty member. Amelia said,

It [my department] is super flexible. We, as faculty, have to make sure we teach our classes, complete our research and get our stuff done, but it's really flexible. And I make time to do things that I want to do. And I'm still getting my work done. And I'm still doing everything I need to do at a high level, so it's okay.

When discussing work-life balance for a junior faculty member, Caden identified "just the freedom" of his job as a helpful aspect to creating his work-life balance. He had similar reflections on the flexibility and autonomy with work schedules to Amelia: "The teaching schedule, and workday, it was left up to the individual for where I work. No one said I had to be here all the time, and no one said go home either."

Caden also appreciated the freedom he had to allocate his time and energies in his various interests and responsibilities. “I appreciated that I knew what I had to get done and there was no one going to be there to say that you have to do it this way.”

Flexible work arrangements were also important for these junior faculty members. That is, they could complete their work, most often writing or lesson planning, outside of the office. Liam discussed “getting away from his office” as a way to get things done that facilitated more time for home and personal interests. He shared,

I actually get out of the office a lot to do work and I did more I think last year than I'm going to be able to do this year as program director. You know, I would go to a local coffee shop and just write some afternoons and things like that certainly is helpful from the research standpoint and writing standpoint. They do have a faculty study at the library here, which I found is a nice quiet place as well to get out and do some work if I have to.

Mentorship. Several of the junior faculty members discussed that they had a mentor, or someone whose experiences and advice they valued; this translated into implementation of the mentor's strategies as a way to find work-life balance. Mentorship was gained from doctoral education, in some cases, and those relationships carried over since the transition into higher education. Isabella shared, “I don't know if it's a strategy, but trusting my mentor who said it's going to be okay, just focus on this. So, I was like okay I just have to trust what she says.” In Isabella's comments, she was referencing her academic advisor from her doctoral studies, sharing that she viewed her as a mentor and valued her advice and recommendations regarding managing her work and life expectations. Her mentor relationship provided her support as a faculty member now. Caden reflected on his mentors' work-life balance strategies, and used their advice as a way to balance things. Comparable with Isabella's use of her doctoral advisor's advice, Caden used the knowledge and experiences of his doctoral advisors to manage his workload and find balance. He shared during his interview,

I would say that I took their advice, my mentors'. I can't say that I was able to instantly implement it. They definitely have their work experiences. I think they've consistently told me if you're going to do this for the rest of your life, you should find a routine early on because it's going to be tough to undo it once you set that. And they strongly advised that routine be normal workday and understanding that there may be busy times during the year that you might have to extend those hours a little bit.

Amelia reflected on the importance of role modeling and borrowing effective practices from her supervisors and mentors. She stated,

Trying to really kind of pace myself, which is why the time blocking and planning has been great. And I really feel like our older faculty in our department really do a good job of modeling that.

Much like Amelia, Liam shared the importance of mentors as he discussed work-life balance, saying, “Surrounding myself with people who are going to give me good advice, guide me through a situation if I don't know what I am doing, and let me know how to get it done.” Junior faculty members used

current and past mentors to develop work-life balance strategies. Mentors, from our faculty members' current places of employment as well as from their doctoral studies, provided guidance and support in developing the knowledge and skills in how to balance it all.

Individually Driven Facilitators. Time management and non-work-related outlets emerged as individually driven facilitators of work-life balance for our participants. Ways of being an effective time manager, such as the use of to-do lists and effective planning strategies, were discussed as ways to find work-life balance. Personal interests and outlets were viewed as time away from the job, and included a variety of activities.

Time Managers. The importance of effectively managing one's time emerged as a way to create work-life balance as junior faculty members. Isabella, a second-year faculty member, relied on lists to maintain balance. She said, “I do have my lists, I make lists, that's how it gets done.” When probed further about organization and time management strategies, Isabella detailed,

So, planning it out. I do have my little number spreadsheet where I've got, okay this is the research that's going on now, this is the phase of it and making sure I've got what's going on. Making lists, like here is my current sticky list for what I have to do this week. So, I always have little sticky notes everywhere, but just really kind of focusing on those other areas instead of focusing on what I couldn't control.

Mia went as far as to describe herself as “an obsessive planner person.” Her strategy reflected the need to have codes and schedules for the day, including time for herself. She described her methods of planning,

So, I have a color-coded planner and it's hour by hour where I need to be, what I need to do 'cause I do find that—because my first year, I really said yes to a lot of things you're not supposed to do. But I did it anyway, because I need to do service, I need to do this, I need to do everything. And having it all kind of like that helped, but it helped me also get perspective to see, okay this is why you were so stressed.

Consistently, our sample of junior faculty identified themselves as planners, and used these skills to balance it all. Planners, agendas, and technology were methods to support the time management skills of our junior faculty members. Aiden admitted, “I live and die by Google.” When asked to elaborate on his planning strategies, he shared,

My Google calendar is extremely important. So like this week, I've had to block off specific times for things like class—because this is our down week. You know, we finish summer class on Friday and then we have a week off and then we start class next week. So I had to specifically block out my calendar time to prep for a class next week because we have so many faculty meetings and things like that this week. So certainly I use that—certainly there are specific meetings that I have to be at that are on my calendar but—so my wife can see I've got this time blocked out for full prep time work for me to see that I've got this time blocked off, that this is the time I need to turn off e-mail and just sit there and do that.

Aiden's strategy also reflected an idea of setting aside time to complete tasks, a means to protect time to tackle important

tasks and responsibilities in both aspects of life, work and home.

The concept of *time blocking* emerged as a component of being a time manager. Time blocking represented specific, planned chunks of time dedicated to specific aspects of the job such as writing a grant or publication or planning for classes. Mason shared ways he manages his responsibilities, saying, “I’ve got the time blocked off for other things on the beginning and end of the week.” Mason also shared his use of a shared calendar with his wife to create balance at home,

I try to get on a routine with my wife and kids’ schedule. If I need to help out in the morning and go in a little later to the office, say like 9, I’ll help with the morning chores. But then we’ll have our week scheduled—devised on when I need to be home for certain responsibilities with the family. Then I’ll put my work schedule around that and then whenever I get home in the evening, it’s back on the family schedule. So that I take pretty seriously. So I’m at work longer than I need to be and it affects some of the life balance stuff. Then I just cut the day off at that point and take off of that all night—my majority of responsibilities. Then if it’s some research I’m working on or something like that, then I’ll take off. But it’s the time blocking and all that.

Our participants classified themselves as time managers, individuals who used planning and scheduling to achieve balance within their lives.

Personal Interests and Outlets. Junior faculty members discussed having personal interests, such as working out or walking their dogs, and support from friends and family to create work-life balance. Isabella and Olivia shared the importance of exercising, as well as spending time with their significant others, as a means to reduce stress and balance their lives. Olivia said, “I always try to find time to exercise, whether it be by myself or I just started mountain biking with my boyfriend, so we can do things together, so we can kind of balance it out.” Isabella discussed “walking her dogs every day,” but also having a few “personal interests,”

I found a running group in [city name], which is actually kind of far away from [institution name], but close to where I live, it’s probably about a half hour away. But I would go there once a week and that’s where I kind of developed my friends.

Ava said, “I do martial arts, so that’s always an outlet for me. Martial arts is certainly one of those, to go and work out and go and do that several times a week.” Ava stated that martial arts was “a good way to make friends outside of work, which I know a lot of people struggle with is their only friends are work friends. So, that’s nice to be able to do that.”

Mason, much like our other junior faculty, shared his approach for balance, including time with friends and family and time for exercise:

We, my wife and I, have Friday night potluck dinners that we have every—almost every week with friends and we have a game night—rotating game night with some friends. I play softball on Thursday nights at a local league.

Several participants also discussed support from home, and in 2 specific cases, having a spouse navigating similar academic expectations and roles was viewed as helpful in creating balance. For example, Harper said,

I think I’m in a pretty unique situation given that my spouse is navigating the same thing. So, I don’t know necessarily if I’ve used that great of a personal strategy because, yeah I don’t know if I have used a personal strategy. I think it’s just kind of you have somebody that’s in the trenches with you so you can relate.

Time to get away from the faculty role, as well as having supportive individuals around them, was important to our participants.

DISCUSSION

At the outset of the study we wanted to know what factors hindered work-life balance as well as what factors contributed to it for new faculty members. We found that 3 primary factors were culprits in limiting work-life balance; all factors related to the role of the faculty member. We did find that stimulation of work-life balance was done at the organizational level (nature of the job) as well as at the individual level (internal to the person).

Inhibitors of Work-Life Balance in Junior Faculty Members

Role Inductance. Role transition is inherently stressful; newcomers must assimilate to their new role and the expectations that are associated with that role. In athletic training, role transition has garnered great interest,^{1,2} but mostly because of the concerns related to autonomous clinical practice and newly credentialed athletic trainers. Literature suggests that doctoral education is incomplete,¹⁶ which can increase stress related to the transition from student to faculty member. Role ambiguity, a form of role strain, manifests when employees are unaware of or unclear regarding expectations they must fulfill in the workplace—an antecedent linked to work-life imbalance.²⁰ Although our participants were doctorally trained and had participated in graduate assistantships, they were not fully prepared for the time investment needed to balance their responsibilities. This idea of incomplete socialization was first reported in a study examining doctoral education socialization of athletic trainers.¹⁶ Therefore, with our results in conjunction with findings that socialization may be incomplete, there appears to be a need for doctoral education to include a more robust focus on the time investment needed for students to learn faculty roles, as well as more candid discussions between mentors and doctoral students regarding the best ways to balance it all.

Role modeling and mentorship was found in our study to be an important part of the work-life balance construct, and has been linked in previous literature about its importance in not only creating balance but also developing effective practices that can lead to balance.^{29–31} We also believe that our results suggest a need for organizational support in the transition to academia. Navigating institution-specific expectations and policies can be stressful as well, and therefore mentors who are equipped to share their experiences can help junior faculty in navigating their responsibilities as well as gaining work-life balance.

Balancing Teaching and Research. Work-life balance was negatively impacted by the time that is needed to adequately prepare for teaching, but also to engage in scholarship and grant writing. Role overload^{31,32} is a common

source of conflict for a working professional. This is often because the expectations associated with a person's role can be demanding; in our case, teaching and research are demanding responsibilities independently, but when coupled can be overwhelming. Previous literature in athletic training has linked role and work overload to work-family conflict,^{12,20} as providing patient care, supervision of students, and administrative tasks are demanding expectations. Therefore, finding that the amounts of time needed to plan lessons, grade student work, write papers, and submit grants were catalysts to conflict is not surprising among this group of faculty members. Simply speaking, large workloads and long hours, regardless of the athletic trainer's role (ie, clinician, faculty) can be an inhibitor of finding work-life balance. In previous studies examining the work-life balance phenomenon within higher education institutions,³³ and for our sample, entering into the faculty member role for the first time is stressful and new, and a platform to reduce work-life balance.

Teaching and research are the primary tenets of higher education, and therefore it is no surprise that these 2 specific roles are stressful, time intensive, and a source of conflict for our participants. As outlined by Greenhaus and Beutell,⁴ sources of work-life conflict include time (hours needed to complete the work/role) and the demands (energy/resources) associated with engaging in multiple roles in life; because of the importance placed upon these roles for a faculty member, they require more time and effort. We did not ask our participants to quantify time engaged in each of these roles (something for the future), but it was apparent that great time and effort were necessary to complete these aspects of the teaching and research roles. Recent evidence suggests that on average faculty work 61 hours per week, and about 10 hours per weekend. Those hours are spent engaged in teaching-related activities (ie, lecturing, lesson planning, grading student work) and research activities such as data collection, grant writing, meetings, and manuscript development.³⁴

Upcoming Deadlines. Our participants shared that expectations that extend beyond teaching and research can lead to work-life imbalance. Often, deadlines were related to their service obligations and activities such as peer reviews, obligations that added to their large workloads and long work hours.³² Time away from home has been cited as a source of conflict for athletic trainers,^{11,12} and although slightly different in regards to upcoming deadlines, the premise is comparable, as upcoming deadlines extend the workday or work week in regards to hours needed to complete those tasks, reducing the time for outside activities and family.

Facilitators of Work-Life Balance in Junior Faculty Members

Flexibility. Workplace flexibility has become a popular work-life balance initiative whereby more and more working professionals are seeking opportunities to have more control over their work schedules.³⁵ Faculty roles have been described as flexible, and when working in an environment that supports it, there is flexibility with work scheduling and moderate control over where work can be completed.^{36,37} Our participants were grateful for supervisors who were supportive and allowed them to manage their own schedules. The autonomy afforded to our participants was recognized as helpful in finding work-life balance, as they were able to control when

and where they completed their work and home tasks. Control over work schedules through flexible workplace arrangements has become a central policy to many organizations, as they view this as a means to encourage balance and seem supportive, initiatives that translate to productivity and satisfaction.³⁶ In higher education specifically there is a push to establish policies that can support faculty members' pursuits of ambitious career goals as well as satisfying personal lives.³⁸ The most common policy is one that allows for a flexible work arrangement.

A flexible work arrangement³⁹ is a spectrum of structures that allows for an individual to have the flexibility to schedule hours worked (40 hours are scheduled based upon employees' needs), flexibility in the amount of hours worked (part-time work, or sharing of the work), and/or flexibility in the place of work (home, telecommuting, etc). Based upon our participants' experiences, a flexible work arrangement looked like one that allowed flexibility in work scheduling and location of work. The flexibility of the workplace afforded our participants also facilitated a culture of support—a more informal means to find work-life balance,³⁶ but something that has emerged in athletic training as a way to provide control over work scheduling.^{12,30,40}

Mentorship. Our participants discussed the importance of mentors as a means to find balance. That is, they relied on the guidance of their mentors to figure out how to create work-life balance in their own personal lives. Mentorship has emerged in athletic training as the link to role inductance,^{13,26,39} as mentors are able to impart their knowledge and experiences to their mentees to support role understanding and successful acclimation. Mentorship has been specifically linked to improved productivity for faculty members as well as career and personal satisfaction.⁴¹ Therefore, the connection between work-life balance and mentoring makes sense. We know that supervisors, particularly head athletic trainers, try to informally model balance and encourage work-life balance by engaging in strategies viewed as successful.^{13,42} Having the chance to observe effective work-life balance practices,²⁹ but also to have someone to encourage work-life balance, is important. For our participants, mentors from their doctoral studies and current place of employment served as resources for help managing their work expectations as well as their personal lives. In a recent study examining the NATA Faculty Mentor Program, Nottingham et al^{43,44} discovered that a critical aspect of the relationship cultivated was a personal connection between the mentor and mentee. The connection was founded upon connectivity to family life and the development of a balanced lifestyle.^{43,44} The NATA Faculty Mentor Program is designed to support junior faculty members as they navigate their roles in higher education, regardless of position title. The program is formalized through the pairing of junior faculty members with experienced faculty who align with the goals and needs of the junior faculty member, who applies to the program and shares those goals and needs. More research is needed to fully appreciate the outcomes of the program and its true impact on faculty development and work-life balance; however, mentoring has been suggested as a beneficial feature for role adoption⁴⁵ and work-life balance.²⁹

Time Managers. Intuitively, it is apparent that to make it all happen individuals must have time management skills, where they can execute decisions that allow them to engage in

and enjoy all their obligations, responsibilities, and interests. Jeff Davidson,⁴⁶ a work-life balance expert, suggests that time management is 1 of the 6 key ingredients to creating work-life balance. Time management is established via effective planning and established priorities. Our participants discussed being time managers, persons who relied on to-do list and calendars in order to stay focused and on top of their priorities as well as obligations to work and family. Athletic trainers have described themselves in previous studies as time managers, and have reported the need to have daily priorities as a means to find work-life balance.^{13,30} Athletic trainers in general appear to recognize that time management and organization are fundamental to managing the demands of their roles in the health care setting, and thus, as discussed by Greenhaus and Powell,³ those traits learned positively spill over into other roles, allowing for balance to happen.

Habit 3 as outlined by Stephen R. Covey⁴⁷ in his book *The 7 Habits of Highly Effective People* is the habit of execution, through focus and effective planning and priorities. Our participants shared a strategy we termed time blocking, whereby they scheduled their time daily/weekly to address their needs, obligations, and upcoming activities and deadlines. Time blocking, as described by Covey,⁴⁷ speaks to the ability of our participants to “put things first” and to make time for the important things, and in this case it was not just work-related activities, but also family activities and personal time. Using the idea of blocking out time for specific tasks allowed our participants to fully engage in each role, but also to feel accomplished and satisfied by each role.

Personal Interests and Outlets. Creating a separation from work through outside interests and hobbies is not a unique strategy to our participants for facilitating balance, but does speak to the continued relationship between work-life balance and role disengagement.⁴⁸ Our findings suggest that it is important to invest in personal interests and family time as a way to feel connected and balanced. Pitney⁴⁸ described the importance of disengaging from the role of the athletic trainer as a means to remain focused, rejuvenated, and balanced. Athletic trainers often use a variety of leisure activities as a means to disengage from their role,^{13,30} and having outlets such as friends and family has been reported consistently as an important management strategy.^{13,30,31}

Separating your workspace from your home space can reduce the infiltration that can happen when workloads and stress increase.⁴⁹ A clear distinction, that is, between working hours and nonworking hours can help create greater satisfaction in each role and facilitate greater balance.¹² Work-life researchers contend that although work and life have permeable, but definable, boundaries,^{50,51} too much integration can reduce satisfaction, and that a degree of demarcation is necessary between work, family, and life in order to fully gain balance.⁵⁰ Therefore, as discussed by our participants, boundaries are necessary as they can allow for focus and enjoyment while participating in one role and decompressing from the other.

Limitations and Future Directions

We recognize some limitations within our study, as our primary focus was junior faculty members in athletic training. Overload and stress have been linked to role transition within the higher education communities, and we believe that our

findings contribute to the current landscape of higher education and the experiences of all faculty regardless of discipline. However, future research should include a broader sample to make some comparisons between disciplines. Previous research examining work-life balance has included a metric of conflict; that is, participants were often asked to quantify their level of conflict. We, in this case, did not have our participants complete the work-family conflict scales as done previously.¹¹ Thus, we do believe this could provide a bit more substance to our findings among the level of conflict among in faculty members.

The athletic training faculty role presents a unique possibility for increased administrative responsibilities, as accreditation requires the roles of program director and clinical education coordinator. We did not seek to isolate these roles, but rather explored the perceptions of our participants in regards to areas that created challenges to work-life balance and ways they attempted to achieve it. Therefore, we do believe future research needs to ascertain if these administrative roles impact work-life balance for all athletic training faculty.

Finally, we did not seek to make comparisons between faculty appointments (ie, tenure versus non-tenure track). Expectations related to securing grant funds among other aspects of tenure could influence work-life balance. Furthermore, institution type inherently could also directly or indirectly relate to experiences of work-life balance, and therefore should be considered in future studies. Our sample also reflected a small portion of faculty who had children, a known source of conflict, as they require time and commitment that can be just as demanding as the faculty role. Thus, future studies may examine a sample that includes faculty members who are married with children.

CONCLUSIONS

Junior faculty in athletic training can experience conflict in balancing their roles as faculty members as well as their outside and own personal interests. Interestingly, the junior faculty in our study rarely shared a spillover effect from their nonwork responsibilities, yet noted that many of their work-related obligations could limit time for outside interests, family time, and other hobbies. From an organizational perspective, higher education institutions can continue to provide support to new faculty through mentorship programs that allow for support and guidance, something that may cultivate work-life balance. Individually, the new faculty member should develop effective time management skills and remember to always make time for personal interests, friends, and family, as that can help create balance and satisfaction.

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