

RESEARCH CONNECTION

Impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic on marginalized genders at Brandon University

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Why this research is important

Knowledge of the experiences of gender-marginalized faculty is needed to challenge the patterns and effects of gender marginalization in the university and in society more broadly.

How the research was conducted

Thirty-six people completed an online survey that was distributed through Brandon University's email in December 2020. It was made up mainly of open-ended questions, like "how has the pandemic affected your

What you need to know

The Status of Women Review Committee at Brandon University is studying the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic on the research, teaching, creative practice, and academic service of faculty association members who identify as marginalized by gender. This includes, for example, women, Two-Spirit, trans, and non-binary people. The results of a qualitative survey show that the pandemic has had a major impact on many aspects of work and well-being.

research or creative practice?" and "how has the pandemic affected your caregiving responsibilities?" Based on the survey results, we created questions for in-depth, individual interviews, which are currently underway.

What the researchers found

Some marginalized faculty have found that their research productivity increased during the pandemic. Yet most reported that their ability to get research done had been decreased, even devastated, as one person put it, as caregiving, online teaching, and supporting students have demanded and depleted their time and energy. Gender-marginalized faculty worry about how the decline in research outputs will impact their eventual tenure and promotion applications.

Teaching during the pandemic has demanded a great deal more time to prepare and adapt courses to online learning. Faculty have had to “set up the logistics of handling courses, rather than just teaching content,” as one person said, putting many extra hours into learning new skills and systems. The support provided for online teaching, especially by Brandon University’s Centre for Teaching, Learning, & Technology, was rated positively by respondents. Yet teaching online has been accompanied by stress, anxiety, and exhaustion; many noted that Zoom fatigue is a real factor in their teaching and well-being. At the same time, everyday administrative duties have become more challenging and time-consuming.

The pandemic has impacted the physical, mental, and emotional well-being of gender-marginalized faculty members, who reported being intensely stressed, anxious, exhausted, and unable to access their usual coping strategies. In particular, respondents noted they had been overwhelmed by supporting students and family members through the pandemic. Time off has been consumed by these responsibilities for many gender-marginalized faculty. While some have been able to take a vacation, others described working longer hours and weeks without sufficient breaks.

How this research can be used

Survey respondents expressed gratitude that we are doing this research, as it made them feel that their experiences were heard and acknowledged. This suggests that the research can play a role in raising broader awareness of the challenges that gender-marginalized faculty are facing at Brandon University.

The research can be used to inform future practice and policy. Respondents made extensive recommendations on how Brandon University could provide more support for its faculty members, including compensation for overload, improving emotional and mental health benefits, and flexibility in timelines and deadlines.

The recommendations will be documented in a report for Brandon University Faculty Association (BUFA) and the President's Office, and the research will be submitted for peer-reviewed publication.

About the researchers

The Status of Women Review Committee is a joint committee of Brandon University and the Brandon University Faculty Association. Representation for 2020–2021 is as follows:

Julie Chamberlain (Faculty of Science)
 Candice Waddell-Henowitch (Current Chair)
 Lisa Wood (Faculty of Arts)
 Candy Skyhar (Faculty of Education)
 Nadine Smith (Faculty of Health Studies)
 Gretta Sayers (Faculty of Music)
 Cora Dupuis (BUFA)
 Katie Kerkowich (Board of Governors)
 Katie Gross (Deans and Directors)
 Morganna Malyon (Library/Student Services)
 Chery Fleming (Ex-Officio)
 Cathryn Smith (Past Chair)

<https://www.brandonu.ca/swrc/>

Keywords

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