ORIGINAL RESEARCH

# Psychosocial Hazards Faced by Teachers during the COVID-19 Pandemic Period

## COVID-19 Pandemi Döneminde Öğretmenlerin Karşılaştıkları Psikososyal Tehlikeler

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**Abstract**

This study aims to analyze teachers' views about psycho-social hazards faced by teachers who took active roles in the distance education process in the period of the COVID-19 pandemic. The study was performed with the qualitative research method. In the study, a semi-structured interview form created by the researchers was used as a data collection tool. A face-to-face interview was conducted with 19 of the 20 teachers who participated in the study, and a telephone interview was conducted with one. The interviews were recorded with a voice recorder. After records were transcribed, the content analysis was conducted on records. By using the interview form composed of 18 questions, the raw data of the research were collected and analyzed. The themes, "COVID-19 Measures", "Technical Problems", "Change in the way of working", "Relations with School Administration and Co-Workers", "The Effect of Teleworking on Work-Life Balance", and "Negative Effects of Teleworking on Health", were created as per the analysis. Upon the examination of themes, it was concluded that the teachers who were obliged to telework in the period of the pandemic were confronted with several psycho-social hazards such as adapting to a new instruction method, preparing lessons at home without receiving any technical support, not being in communication with school administrators and co-workers, and feeling anxiety about covering all topics in the curriculum in due time. In addition, it was observed that none of the teachers participating in the study received technical support. Therefore, according to the results of the study, it can be recommended that teachers receive technical support for changing working styles to cope with these dangers they face during the pandemic period.

**Keywords:** Psycho-Social Hazard, Pandemic, COVID-19, Distance Education, Technical Support.

**Öz**

Bu çalışmada COVID-19 pandemi döneminde uzaktan öğretim süreçlerinde aktif rol alan öğretmenlerin, karşılaştıkları psikososyal tehlikelere yönelik görüşlerinin incelenmesi amaçlanmaktadır. Çalışma nitel araştırma yöntemi ile yürütülmüştür. Çalışmada veri toplama aracı olarak araştırmacılar tarafından oluşturulan yarı yapılandırılmış görüşme formu kullanılmıştır. Çalışmaya katılan 20 öğretmenden 19'u ile yüz yüze, biri ile telefonla görüşme yapılmıştır. Yapılan görüşmeler ses kayıt cihazı ile kayıt altına alınmıştır. Kayıtlar transkript edilerek içerik analizine tabi tutulmuştur. 18 sorudan oluşan görüşme formu ile araştırmanın ham verileri toplanmış ve analiz edilmiştir. Analiz sonucunda "Covid-19 tedbirleri", "Teknik problemler", "Çalışma Şeklindeki Değişiklik", "Yönetim ve iş arkadaşlarıyla ilişkiler", "Evden çalışmanın iş – aile dengesine etkisi" ve "Evden çalışmanın sağlığa olumsuz etkileri" temalarına ulaşılmıştır. Temalar incelendiğinde, pandemi döneminde evden çalışmak zorunda kalan öğretmenlerin, yeni bir öğretim yöntemine uyum sağlama, teknik destek almadan dersleri evden hazırlama, yönetici ve iş arkadaşları iletişim halinde olamama, müfredat yetiştirememe kaygısı gibi birçok psikososyal tehlike ile karşı karşıya kaldıkları sonucuna varılmıştır. Ayrıca çalışmaya katılan öğretmenlerin hiçbirinin teknik destek almadıkları görülmüştür. Dolayısıyla, çalışma sonucuna göre öğretmenlerin pandemi döneminde karşılaştıkları bu tehlikelerle başa çıkabilmeleri için değişen çalışma şekillerine yönelik teknik destek almaları önerilebilir.

**Anahtar Kelimeler:** Psikososyal Tehlike, Pandemi, COVID-19, Uzaktan Eğitim, Teknik Destek.

**Introduction**

The distance education method was used in Turkey as well to ensure the continuity of education in the period of the pandemic just as in numerous countries across the world (The Ministry of Education, 2020). Going beyond being simply a choice for teachers, distance education and teleworking became a compulsory way of working confronting teachers in the period of the pandemic. Before the pandemic, distance education was used as a technique allowing large masses to access information more quickly and easily. The distance education method that enables individuals to benefit from education and instruction facilities independently and at their own learning speeds by saving time and space and by lowering education costs seems more advantageous than formal education (Demiray, 1999; Cavanaugh, 2000; Elitaş, 2017). However, as distance education has shortfalls in terms of communication and interaction, it is asserted that it brings about certain disadvantages such as the fall in the individual's motivation, social development problems experienced by the individual, and limitations regarding practical courses (Yurdakul, 2015; Elitaş, 2017). The distance education method that is compulsorily implemented in the period of the pandemic is viewed by teachers as the best method to supersede face-to-face education (Sindiani, 2020). However, along with the pandemic, several problems emerged in the distance education process. According to the studies performed in light of the teachers' views in the period of the pandemic, the problems encountered in distance education can be listed as the increasing workload, time management, fall in the work motivation, trouble in accessing course materials, and the rise in costs of technological devices and internet (Giovennalla et al., 2020; Purwanto et al., 2020; Allen et al., 2020; Chang & Satako, 2020). Besides these problems, the circumstances such as having a change in ways of working, having heavy work conditions, using an unconventional instruction method, working longer, and designing course materials different from those in formal education exposed teachers to several psycho-social hazards in the period of the pandemic. As a matter of fact, in previous studies, it was stated that the teachers had anxiety about adapting to this compulsorily changing way of working and instruction method (Košir et al., 2020; Truzoli et al., 2021). The uncertainty arising from the quick transition to distance education negatively affected the teachers who were not technologically and psychologically prepared for this process. The setbacks such as the increase in workload (MacIntyre et al., 2020), lack of technical and pedagogical support (Trust & Whalen, 2020), absence of previous experience, technological incompetence, work-life imbalance, and the inability to focus on work were sources of stress for teachers (Rubin, Nikolaeva, Nello-Deakin, & Brömmelstroet, 2020). In a study, investigated the psychological effects of the problems teachers faced during the Covid 19 pandemic period. They concluded that there are both positive and negative effects. They emphasized that there are effects such as anxiety, family conflict and despair among the negative effects (Eşici et al., 2021).

Upon the review of studies performed during the period of the pandemic, it is discerned that the challenges faced by teachers in the distance education process were examined, however, a small number of studies were performed to identify psycho-social hazards. Thus, examining teachers' emotions, opinions, and perceptions about psycho-social hazards in the process of the pandemic is considered important to the measures to be taken. In this context, this study aims to examine the views that the teachers, who took active roles in the distance education process, had about psycho-social hazards encountered in the period of the pandemic.

The research questions serving as the basis of this study are as below:

1. What are the teachers' views about COVID-19 measures taken at the workplace in the process of the pandemic?

2. What effects do the technical problems experienced by teachers in courses offered via the distance education method have on routine life?

3. What sort of problems does the change in the way of working produce in daily life?

4. How are the teachers' relations with the school administration and co-workers in the period of the pandemic?

5. What are the effects of teleworking system on work-life balance in the period of the pandemic?

6. What are the negative effects of teleworking system on health in the period of the pandemic?

## Method

The study aiming at examining the views that the teachers, who took active roles in the distance education process, had about psycho-social hazards encountered in the period of the pandemic was performed by using the qualitative research method. The qualitative research method that aspires to understand a social event from participants' perspectives provides participants with the opportunity to express their views and opinions freely (McMillan & Schumacher, 2010). As the research targeted to conduct an in-depth analysis by examining the factors about a case with a holistic approach by focusing on how the factors affected the case and how the case affected the factors (Stake, 2003), it was designed as a case study based on the qualitative research method. Thus, in this study, teachers' views and opinions about being exposed to psycho-social hazards in the compulsory distance education process in the period of the pandemic will be deeply analyzed.

The study was examined by the Scientific Research Ethics Committee of Ağrı İbrahim Çeçen University, and the ethical endorsement for the research was granted as per the decision issued on 28 June 2021 (No. 171).

### Study Group

The study group of this research is comprised of volunteer teachers from different branches and at various levels. In the research, the criterion sampling method, a purposive sampling method, was used for the selection of participants. This sampling method is based on the satisfaction of a series of previously specified criteria. The criterion or criteria can be created by the researcher (Yıldırım & Şimşek, 2011). Hence, the criterion designated for the selection of the sample of this research is whether a teacher performed online distance education activities with students in the period of the pandemic. In this respect, 20 teachers who performed online distance education activities in the process of the pandemic were included in the sample. As the case study is a detailed and comprehensive research method, the number of participants and accordingly the sample size will be relatively small (Yıldırım & Şimşek, 2011). Table 1 displayed participants' socio-demographic characteristics as well as the codenames assigned to participants in the process of analysis.

**Table 1**

*Participants' Socio-Demographic Characteristics*

| Codename | Gender | Marital status | Branch | Age | Work duration (Year) |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **T-1** | Male | Married | Primary school teaching | 30 | 1 |
| **T-2** | Male | Married | Primary school math teaching | 28 | 4 |
| **T-3** | Female | Single | Turkish language teaching | 27 | 3 |
| **T-4** | Female | Single | Turkish language teaching | 23 | 1 |
| **T-5** | Male | Single | Social science teaching | 27 | 1 |
| **T-6** | Female | Single | Art teaching | 35 | 1 |
| **T-7** | Female | Single | Math teaching | 24 | 1 |
| **T-8** | Female | Single | Religious culture and moral knowledge teaching | 27 | 3 |

**Table 1**

*Participants' Socio-Demographic Characteristics (Continued)*

| Codename | Gender | Marital status | Branch | Age | Work duration (Year) |
|----------|--------|----------------|--------|-----|----------------------|
| T-9 | Male | Single | Religious culture and moral knowledge teaching | 28 | 3 |
| T-10 | Female | Single | Psychological counseling and guidance teaching | 25 | 2 |
| T-11 | Male | Married | Physical education and sports teaching | 34 | 9 |
| T-12 | Female | Single | Science teaching | 25 | 2 |
| T-13 | Female | Single | English language teaching | 27 | 1 |
| T-14 | Male | Married | Technology and design teaching | 39 | 11 |
| T-15 | Male | Married | Primary school math teaching | 27 | 3 |
| T-16 | Female | Single | Turkish language teaching | 29 | 4 |
| T-17 | Male | Married | Physical education and sports teaching | 30 | 7 |
| T-18 | Male | Married | English language teaching | 40 | 10 |
| T-19 | Female | Married | Primary school teaching | 39 | 12 |
| T-20 | Female | Married | Primary school teaching | 27 | 5 |

As per the review of Table 1, 11 of 20 participants were female while the rest of them were male. These participants were from the branches of primary school teaching *(f=3)*, psychological counseling and guidance teaching *(f=1)*, social science teaching *(f=1)*, Turkish language teaching *(f=3)*, religious culture and moral knowledge teaching *(f=2)*, physical education and sports teaching *(f=2)*, technology and design teaching *(f=1)*, art teaching *(f=1)*, English language teaching *(f=2)*, science teaching *(f=1)*, and math teaching *(f=3)*.

Table 2 exhibited the participants' work-related data.

**Table 2**

*Participants' Work-Related Data*

| Codename | Having administrative duties | Course hours per week | Average work hours per day | Having any technical training about distance education |
|----------|------------------------------|-----------------------|----------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------|
| T-1 | — | 15-30 | 4-6 | — |
| T-2 | — | 15-30 | 7-9 | — |
| T-3 | — | 15-30 | 4-6 | — |
| T-4 | — | 15-30 | 4-6 | — |
| T-5 | — | 15-30 | 4-6 | — |
| T-6 | — | 15-30 | 4-6 | Yes |
| T-7 | — | 15-30 | 4-6 | — |
| T-8 | — | 15-30 | 4-6 | — |
| T-9 | — | 15-30 | 7-9 | — |
| T-10 | — | 15-30 | 4-6 | Yes |

**Table 2**

*Participants' Work-Related Data (Continued)*

| | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| **T-11** | — | 15-30 | 4-6 | — |
| **T-12** | — | 15-30 | 7-9 | — |
| **T-13** | — | 15-30 | 7-9 | — |
| **T-14** | — | 15-30 | 4-6 | — |
| **T-15** | Yes | 1-15 | 7-9 | Yes |
| **T-16** | — | 15-30 | 7-9 | — |
| **T-17** | Yes | 15-30 | 7-9 | — |
| **T-18** | — | 15-30 | 7-9 | — |
| **T-19** | — | 15-30 | 4-6 | — |
| **T-20** | — | 15-30 | 4-6 | — |

Upon the review of Table 2, it is discerned that only 2 teachers had administrative duties, 19 teachers had 15-30 course hours per week whilst 1 teacher had 1-15 course hours per week, 12 teachers had 4-6 work hours per day while 8 teachers had 4-6 work hours per day, none of the teachers received psychological support in the period of the pandemic, and 3 teachers had technical training about the distance education technology whereas 17 teachers had no technical training.

**Data Collection Tool and the Process of Data Collection**

In the study, the interview method was used as a qualitative data collection method. This method was selected as it was a reciprocal and interactive communication process based on asking questions and giving answers (Yıldırım & Şimşek, 2011) and aimed to collect detailed data.

In the research, the semi-structured interview was utilized to analyze the views that the teachers, who took active roles in the distance education process, had about psycho-social hazards encountered in the period of the pandemic. The semi-structured interview is frequently used in education research as it provides flexibility and standardization for participants (Ekiz, 2009). In this study, the semi-structured interview form was prepared with due attention to the research questions and had three parts. In this respect, the interview form contained 7 questions addressing participants' demographic data in the first part, 5 questions finding out about participants' work-related data in the second part, and 6 open-ended questions designed to identify psycho-social hazards in the third part. In the preparation of semi-structured interview questions, opinions were received from expert teachers, faculty members, workplace doctors, and workplace safety experts. Alternative questions and probing questions were added to the semi-structured interview form. The shortfalls in the semi-structured interview form were identified after the form was applied to 2 teachers in the context of a pilot study, and upon making the necessary corrections, the latest version of the form was created.

After identifying the periods when the participants were available, the semi-structured interview form was applied to participants. The interviews were held face-to-face with 19 teachers and via a phone call with one teacher. Taking approximately 10-15 minutes, each interview was recorded with a voice recorder upon receiving permission from each participant. The texts of statements made in interviews were created without making corrections and adding comments to the statements. As the teachers were to be quoted in research findings, a codename was assigned to each teacher (T-1, T-2, and so on).

**Data Analysis**

The collected data were analyzed by using the qualitative data analysis method. The qualitative data analysis is utilized to make a general evaluation of the relationship between the categories of data (Marshall & Rossman, 1994). The content analysis, a qualitative analysis method, was used to find out concepts and relationships that would explain the data collected in the study (Yıldırım & Şimşek, 2011). To organize the research data, the categories and codes were created with inductive analysis. The categories were produced along with the classification of obtained concepts under a specific theme whilst codes were generated by giving names to meaningful parts in the collected data (Yıldırım & Şimşek, 2011).

**Validity and Reliability**

To ensure the validity and reliability of the research, efforts were made to enhance credibility, transferability, and consistency (Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Merriam, 1998). In the context of promoting the credibility of the research, the directly quoted statements were included in the study, next, the coding was performed also by other experts, and efforts were made to reach a consensus on coding, and also, participation in the research was voluntary for teachers. Besides, the participants were told that the confidentiality of the collected data would be protected and the collected data would not be shared with any third party or institution. To ensure transferability in the study, the reason for using the above-mentioned method in the research was explained, the characteristics of the study group were presented in detail without violating the principle of confidentiality, and also, the application process of data collection tools and the data analysis were addressed in detail. All interviews were recorded, and each researcher separately controlled the collected data, and hence, efforts were made to enhance consistency in the analysis. To measure consistency, the formula by Miles and Huberman (1994) was used [Reliability= Agreement / (Agreement+Disagreement) * 100], and the codes with the level of agreement above 0.70 were deemed reliable. The codes were created individually by 3 researchers from raw data. The first researcher produced a total of 45 codes, the second researcher created 44 codes, and the third researcher identified 40 codes. The first and second researchers agreed on 38 codes and disagreed on 8 codes, the second and third researchers agreed on 35 codes and disagreed on 5 codes, and lastly, the first and third researchers agreed on 40 codes and disagreed on 6 codes. In this context, the level of agreement between the first and second researchers was 0.83, the level of agreement between the first and third researchers was 0.87, the level of agreement between the second and third researchers was 0.87, and the level of agreement between the three researchers was around 0.86. Thus, it is discerned that the codes were created on the basis of research questions, and there was an agreement between all three researchers who performed coding with the thematic coding approach.

The validity of the data collection tool should be assured by taking into consideration that the data collection tool would include all variables to be measured (McMillan & Schumacher, 2010). The development process of the data collection tool was based, in general, on the relevant literature and, in particular, on the informative guideline prepared by the World Health Organization to eliminate psycho-social risks. Besides, in the preparation of the data collection tool, opinions were received from expert teachers, faculty members, workplace doctors, and workplace safety experts. By making the necessary arrangements, it was assured that each question in the data collection tool reflected the intended opinion. The questions in the data collection tool were prepared in a manner to cover the research aim and research questions.

## Findings

The findings based on the analysis of the data that were collected to identify the psycho-social hazards encountered in the process of the COVID-19 pandemic according to teachers' views were presented successively in parallel to research questions.

**Teachers' Views about Covid-19 Measures Taken at the Workplace in the Process of the Pandemic**

The views of teachers regarding the covid-19 measures taken in the workplace during the pandemic process are presented in Table 3.

**Table 3**

*Participants' Views about Covid-19 Measures Taken at the Workplace in the Process of the Pandemic*

| Theme | Category | Code | Frequency |
|---|---|---|---|
| **COVID-19 measures** | Measures taken by the school administration | Adequate | 13 |
| | | Inadequate | 7 |
| | Problems stemming from students | Not abiding by the rules about mask use and hygiene | 6 |
| | | Not being attentive to social distancing | 7 |
| | | Having crowded classrooms | 7 |
| | Emotional effects | Uneasiness | 11 |

As viewed in Table 3, participants' views about COVID-19 measures taken at the workplace are grouped under three categories. These categories are, firstly, the measures taken by the school administration, secondly, problems stemming from students, and thirdly, emotional effects.

Alongside the examination of the first category, ***measures taken by the school administration***, it was found that 65% of the teachers said that the measures were adequate whereas 35% of them told that the measures were inadequate. Examples of view reflecting teachers' answers are as below:

> T-2 :*"We took the necessary measures at our school. However, I do not find them adequate. The hazard continues. Regarding students, there are certain things that escape our attention, however hard we try. This, in turn, inevitably leads to uneasiness."*

Upon the review of the second category, ***problems stemming from students***, it is discerned that all participants said that they experienced problems stemming from students in the process of the pandemic. In this regard, 6 teachers told that the students did not abide by the rules about mask use and hygiene, 7 teachers said that the students were not attentive to social distancing, and 7 teachers stated that they experienced problems as the classrooms were crowded. Examples of view reflecting teachers' answers are as below:

> T-10: *"In general, as the school administration and teachers, we took the measures that were supposed to be taken at the school. However, they were not adequate. There were things that could not be done due to certain impossibilities that went beyond our control. Besides, solely taking measures is not enough. It is necessary to inform the student about measures. Problems are experienced in the practice of measures. We wonder whether the student will infect us with the virus or the students will infect each other with the virus. Students do not pay attention to social distancing and mask use.".*

As per the analysis of the third and last category, ***emotional effects***, it is identified that 55% of the participants asserted that they felt uneasy due to the problems at the workplace. Examples of views reflecting teachers' answers are as below:

> T-3: *"At the workplace, measures were taken but I felt uneasy as the school was crowded. I wonder if I was infected with the disease or not".*

*T-5 :"We have a crowded school. We are always in contact with students. We took the necessary measures on this topic. Even so, problematic situations are experienced. People become uneasy. I constantly feel myself at risk."*

According to the analysis of participants' views about COVID-19 measures taken at the workplace as per Table 3, the majority of teachers find the measures of school administration adequate. On the other hand, all teachers state that, on the topics of mask use, social distancing, and hygiene, they had problems stemming from students, and hence, they felt uneasy.

**Effects of Technical Problems, Which are experienced by Teachers in Courses Lectured with the Distance Education Method, on the Routine Life**

Effects of technical problems, which are experienced by teachers in courses lectured with the distance education method, on the routine life are presented in Table 4.

**Tablo 4**

*Effects of Technical Problems in Distance Education on Daily Life*

| Theme | Category | Code | Frequency |
|---|---|---|---|
| **Technical problems** | Emotional effects | Getting tired | 4 |
| | | Having stress | 6 |
| | | Getting bored | 5 |
| | | Feeling angry | 4 |
| | Attitude toward the course | Motivation deficiency | 8 |
| | | Decrease in willingness to teach lessons | 7 |
| | | Anxiety about covering course topics in due time | 4 |

As viewed in Table 4, teachers' views about the effects of technical problems in courses in distance education on routine life are grouped under two categories. These categories are, firstly, the emotional effects, and secondly, the attitude toward the course.

Along with the examination of the first category, ***emotional effects***, it is found that 95% of the participants got tired, stressed out, got bored, and felt angry due to the technical problems that they encountered. Examples of views reflecting teachers' answers are as below:

*T-8: "I experienced problems with the internet connection. When students experience connectivity problems, you cannot teach the lesson, you stress out, and you cannot make progress on the topic, or Zoom (software) log you out of the course, you try to log in. These challenges stressed me out."*

*T-18:"Even if I live in the city center, we always have internet problems. Internet connection is lost. Zoom constantly logs students out. When students logged in again, they had already missed the topic. Repeating the topic for students missing the topic due to the technical problem caused people to feel too tired and bored after a while.".*

*T-19: "We are faced with technical problems almost in every lesson. Either the internet connection is unavailable or there is a problem with the connection. I have six hours of course per day. Individually, I need to create each lesson online. When we create the lesson online, we experience connection problems. Sometimes, I had to wait for minutes so that the web page of the Educational Informatics Network of Turkey*

*(EBA) could be refreshed. Sometimes, I got bored with waiting. Believe me, sometimes, I fell asleep while waiting and forgot to create the lesson for the course. As soon as I wake up in the morning, I hastily create the lesson. This sort of disorganization made me highly tired. I do not go to school, I am always at home, but I get more tired in comparison to the past.".*

Upon the review of the second category, **attitude toward the course**, it is identified that 40% of the participants said that they had motivation deficiency due to technical problems. Examples of views reflecting teachers' answers are as below:

*T-10: "We experienced technical problems. In the village, there is an internet problem. The students could not participate actively in the lesson. Lecturing a lesson solely to one student, rather than 30 students as in normal circumstances, wore us down both motivationally and psychologically. This affected all our organizational patterns. I have a course curriculum to teach. There is a mass of students to whom you need to lecture. However, you cannot reach them. This situation, in turn, makes us feel uneasy alongside the following questions: 'How will I cover the topics in due time, how can I reach the student?".*

Also, 35% of the teachers put forward that their willingness to teach lessons decreased due to experiencing technical problems.

*T-20:"In the 30-minute lecture, constantly, there were technical problems, and this situation induced me to be an aggressive person. Due to the problems that I encountered, my willingness and eagerness to teach a lesson in distance education decreased.".*

Besides these problems, 20% of the teachers asserted that they had anxiety about covering course topics in due time.

*T-10: "The students could not participate actively in the lesson. Lecturing a lesson solely to one student, rather than 30 students as in normal circumstances, wore us down both motivationally and psychologically. This affected all our organizational patterns. I have a course curriculum to teach. There is a mass of students to whom you need to lecture. However, you cannot reach them. This situation, in turn, makes us feel uneasy alongside the following questions: 'How will I cover the topics in due time, how can I reach the student?".*

**Problems That the Change in the Way of Working Created in Daily Life**

Problems that the change in the way of working created in daily life were presented in Table 5.

**Table 5**

*Problems That the Change in the Way of Working Produce in Daily Life*

| Theme | Category | Code | Frequency |
|---|---|---|---|
| **Change in the way of working** | Work-related circumstances | Increase in the workload | 15 |
| | | Difficulty in focusing on the work | 2 |
| | | Decrease in work tempo | 2 |
| | | Health problems | 1 |
| | Personal circumstances | Obligation to communicate with student's legal guardian/parents | 4 |
| | | Disturbance of life order | 12 |
| | | Decrease in the time allocated to family and daily life | 8 |
| | | Increase in technology use | 6 |

As viewed in Table 5, two categories were created based on teachers' views about problems that the change in the way of working produced in daily life. These categories were, firstly, work-related circumstances, and secondly, personal circumstances. In this context, the codes of "increase in the workload", "difficulty in focusing on the work", "decrease in work tempo", and "health problems" formed the category of work-related circumstances. Next, the codes of "obligation to communicate with student's legal guardian/parents", "disturbance of life order", "decrease in the time allocated to family and daily life", and "increase in technology use" constituted the category of personal circumstances.

Upon the review of the first category, ***work-related circumstances***, it is discerned that 75% of the participants told that lecturing lessons in distance education increased their workload whilst only 2 teachers said that their work tempo slowed down, and also 2 teachers stated that they had difficulty in focusing on the work. Besides, it was discerned that one of the teachers had back and low back pains and eye pains due to using the computer constantly in the distance education process. Examples of views reflecting teachers' answers are as below:

*T-16: "Our job did not get comfortable in comparison to the past because the task of creating the lesson online fell upon us. First, you create the lesson and then launch it. This is a burden. As we lectured with the distance education method, we were obliged to look through and find more images. This was also a burden on us."*

*T-17: "In distance education, the process of getting prepared for the lesson took us longer. We experienced problems such as arranging the technological devices, setting up the platform, and also, transferring the resources to students. We spent long hours on distance education. As we could not know exactly whether the students understood the topic or not, we sensitively addressed certain topics twice or three times. This became more tiring for us."*

*T-1: "In face-to-face education, there was an order. The time schedule for coming to school and leaving it was the same for everyone. However, in distance education, you have to teach the lesson in the period convenient to students due to some students' time conflicts with the time schedules of their brothers and sisters. You are obliged to arrange your time schedule according to them. Unavoidably, this, in turn, was affecting my daily routine. Most of the time, I was starting to lecture the lesson in the morning, and my lecture was continuing until evening. This, in return, was affecting my social life. It takes me very long to prepare, add, and create lessons online. This increased my workload."*

*T-7: "Mostly, it had negative impacts. The topics could not be covered in due time. Away from school, at home, we had to prepare the documents that we did not use to prepare at the school. Our workload increased. Initially, as I did not know what to do in the lesson preparation process, I had hardships."*

*T-9: "...In face-to-face education, we did not use to have any connection with the school after we left the school. On the other hand, in the distance education process, controlling students' homework assignments and communicating frequently with students' legal guardians/parents increased our workload and affected our daily lives considerably."*

*T-16: "Firstly, the routine works were interrupted. Additionally, the impossibility to get out of home was a problem. Lecturing a lesson and looking at a computer by constantly sitting down created physical problems such as eye pain, low back pain, and back pain."*

In the context of the examination of the second category, ***personal circumstances***, it is identified that 60% of the participants said that lecturing lessons by using the distance education method disturbed their order. Also, it was discerned that the change in the way of working created the obligation for teachers to communicate with students' legal guardians/parents. Besides, 40% of the teachers told that the time allocated to family and daily life decreased. Moreover, 30% of the teachers stated that they used technology more frequently in this process. Examples of teachers' views are as below:

*T-20: "The process of preparing the lesson was considerably prolonged for us in distance education. Firstly, we create the lesson through Zoom and EBA and then inform students' legal guardians/parents. This is really a time-consuming process. Controlling homework assignments with a phone also takes longer."*

*T-5: "In the past, we used to come to school in the morning and we used to have the afternoon for us. We could spare some time for ourselves. We could spend time with our families. We could find different alternatives. In distance education, we have a lesson in the morning on a day and we have another lesson in the afternoon on the next day. Therefore, distance education changed our entire life. In distance education, a heavier workload was placed on us. The process of preparation for the lesson takes a long time. You prepare the topics. You think about how you will teach the lesson to the student through EBA and make efforts about it. We made more preparations. So, more workload was on us."*

*T-9: "We started to spend time mostly with the phone. The phone began to be a focal point of our lives."*

*T-10: "It changed our life order totally. We had to move the work to home. The order at home, our lives, plans, and programs changed completely. Our workload increased even further. In the past, it used to go on in a more planned, programmed, and routine manner. In the new system, the student does not attend the course, and you have to repeat the lesson. We had a more disordered life. In comparison to the past, getting prepared for the lesson is harder because you will create the lesson online and inform the student. It has a more challenging aspect."*

*T-13: "Our course hours, work hours, and our order suddenly changed. The work never ended. Our work setting was moved to our home. When we left school for home, the work used to stay at the school. However, in distance education, this is not the case. Our work lives occupied the seat of honor in our home. We had trouble allocating time to our family. We had difficulty focusing on our work. Moving the school to our home did not have quite good consequences."*

**Teachers' Relations with School Administration and Co-Workers in the Period of the Pandemic**

Teachers' relations with school administration and co-workers in the period of the pandemic are displayed in Table 6.

**Table 6**

*Participants' Relations with School Administration and Co-Workers in the Period of the Pandemic*

| Theme | Category | Code | Frequency |
|---|---|---|---|
| **Relations with school administration and co-workers** | Communication | Having a lack of communication | 11 |
| | | Being obliged to meet in the virtual platform | 7 |
| | | Having difficulty in solving problems | 3 |
| | | Not having so close relations as in the past | 6 |
| | | Being unable to find the person to consult with | 6 |
| | | Being obliged to work alone | 7 |
| | | Being misunderstood | 2 |
| | | Having no communication problem | 2 |

As viewed in Table 6, all teachers' views about their relations with school administration and co-workers in the period of the pandemic were addressed under the category of ***communication***. The codes of "having a lack of communication", "being obliged to meet in the virtual platform", "having difficulty in solving problems",

"not having so close relations as in the past", "being unable to find the person to consult with", "being obliged to work alone", "being misunderstood", and "having no communication problem" constituted the category of communication. Upon the review of these codes, it is discerned that 55% of the participants had a lack of communication with the school administration and co-workers. Also, a non-negligible number of teachers stated that the relations were not so close as in the past. Moreover, a part of the teachers mentioned problems created by the obligation to meet in the virtual platform. Additionally, 30% of the teachers stated that they were obliged to work alone and were unable to find the person to consult with. Besides these problems, 2 teachers said that they did not have a communication problem. Examples of teachers' views are as below:

*T-9: "Under normal conditions, we used to come to school every day and communicate with each other about students. However, as we could not see each other in the distance education process, we had a lack of communication. This affected our interdisciplinary relationship."*

*T-14: "We suffered from the lack of communication with our co-workers since we were not so close any longer. In the period of the pandemic, it is never the same as it used to be when the school was open. In the past, communicating used to be easier, now it is more difficult. As communication gets more difficult, certain setbacks can emerge."*

*T-15: "In the period of the pandemic, our relations with our co-workers unavoidably began to get a little colder because the opportunity to have face-to-face meetings was limited. Our work did not go along as in the past. Always something was missing."*

*T-2: "In face-to-face education, reaching our administrators and co-workers was easier. We had closer relations. As everyone was at home in distance education, we were disconnected. This, in return, had negative effects on the way I did my work."*

*T-6: "We cannot say that it got better. In this period, people can experience psychological problems. People turn in on themselves. We become stress-oriented. We experience communication failures. When there is a problem, we can solve it easily face-to-face whereas solving the problem gets harder from a distance.*

*T-1: "We had good relations with the school administration but we were not very connected with our co-workers. We were at home and we did not have the opportunity to meet. When we were at school, on the basis of the problems, we were exchanging views at least with my teacher group about which technical method to use. However, after distance education was put in place, unavoidably, there was a lack of communication.*

**The Effect of Teleworking System on the Work-Life Balance in the Period of the Pandemic**

The effect of teleworking system on the work-life balance in the period of the pandemic are displayed in Table 7.

**Table 7**

*The Effect of Teleworking System on Work-Life Balance*

| Theme | Category | Code | Frequency |
|---|---|---|---|
| **Effect of teleworking on work-life balance** | Work-related problems | Difficulty in focusing on the work | 4 |
| | | Inability to create a classroom setting | 5 |
| | Family-related problems | Family members' demands as obstacles to working | 5 |
| | | Fall in the time allocated to the family | 13 |
| | Experiencing no problem | Living alone | 3 |

As viewed in Table 7, participants' views about the effect of teleworking system on work-life balance in the period of the pandemic were grouped under two categories. These categories were, firstly, work-related problems, secondly, family-related problems, and thirdly, having no problem. The category of work-related problems was comprised of the codes of "difficulty in focusing on the work" and "inability to create a classroom setting". Next, the codes of "family members' demands as obstacles to working" and "fall in the time allocated to the family" formed the category of family-related problems. Lastly, the category of experiencing no problem was composed of the code of "living alone".

Alongside the examination of the first category, **work-related problems**, it is discerned that teachers had difficulty in focusing on the work and creating a classroom setting in the teleworking system. Upon the review of the second category, **family-related problems**, it is identified that 65% of the teachers could not allocate a long time to their families in the teleworking system. Besides, 25% of the teachers stated that their families' demands prevented them from teleworking. As per the analysis of the third category, **experiencing no problem**, it is found that only three teachers said that there was no change in their lives as they lived alone but the teleworking system could disturb the work-life balance in the case of teachers living with their families. Examples of teachers' views are as below:

T-17: *"The live lectures can start at 10:00 am and continue until 7:00-8:00 pm. Providing live courses at home affected particularly the lives of married couples, they could not allocate enough time to each other. My spouse is a teacher, and she also had live lectures. As the work hours lasted from 10:00 am to 8:00 pm, we arranged our lives in line with this situation. Everyone arranged his/her breakfast, dinner, and responsibilities taking the live lectures into consideration. In this process, I had difficulty finding enough time. My spouse and I could not allocate a long time to each other. After all, when I did not have a live lecture, I reserved my time for my personal rest."*

T-16: *"We had imbalances and certain challenges as each household had its own particular order in the family setting, and as there was no classroom setting. As we could not provide a classroom setting. You cannot stop the ongoing home life just to teach a lesson."*

T-10: *"It affected negatively. In the previous order, when we came to school, focusing on work by leaving our home life aside completely was easier. We could devote ourselves to the work %100. As home life and professional life are combined at the moment and as I am a woman, I am obliged to do housework in breaks. Or, if there is a problem at home, of course, I need to deal with it in the break. Therefore, it had a negative effect. It decreased my motivation."*

T-13: *"It was hard. It was hard to allocate time from work to family. It was hard to allocate time from family to work. In the middle of the house, in the middle of the sitting room, we had both our family and work. Keeping the two in balance was hard."*

T-14: *"As I have a spouse and two children, in any case, they demand something when I lecture a lesson at home. Therefore, I cannot get adapted. I was inhibited from doing my work."*

T-6: *"As I live alone, I have no problem. However, those living with their families can experience problems."*

**Negative Effects of Teleworking System on Health in the Period of the Pandemic**

Negative effects of teleworking system on health in the period of the pandemic are displayed in Table 8.

**Table 8**

*Negative Effects of Teleworking System on Health*

| Theme | Category | Code | Frequency |
|---|---|---|---|
| **Negative effects of teleworking on health** | Health problems | Eye problems | 10 |
| | | Muscle and joint problems | 8 |
| | | Headache | 7 |
| | | Stomach problems | 1 |
| | | Psychological problems | 1 |
| | | Insomnia | 5 |
| | | Increase in cigarette smoking | 2 |
| | | Distortion in the dietary pattern and gaining weight | 3 |

As viewed in Table 8, all teachers' views about the negative effects of the teleworking system on health were grouped under the category of ***health problems***. The category of health problems was comprised of the codes of "eye problems", "muscle and joint problems", "headache", "stomach problems", "psychological problems", "insomnia", "increase in cigarette smoking", and "distortion in the dietary pattern and gaining weight". Upon the review of these codes, it is discerned that 50% of the participants had eye problems in the teleworking system, 40% of them had muscle and joint problems, and 35% of them had headaches. Besides, 25% of the teachers said that they had irregular sleep patterns due to the irregularities in course hours. Additionally, 2 teachers told that they smoked cigarettes more frequently in this period, and 3 teachers said that they constantly wanted to eat because of staying at home, and thus, they gained weight. Examples of teachers' views are as below:

>T-1: *"As I was always at home, I was eating some foodstuff during breaks. In this process, I gained too much weight.*

>T-7: *"Due to looking at the screen, I had headaches. As we are constantly seated in the same position, I also had muscle pains."*

>T-13: *"Because of being seated in front of the computer, I had low back pain."*

>T-15: *"I am a cigarette smoker. It is not all right to say that, but I started to smoke a lot. I began to be more addicted to smoking. Of course, I also began to have a variety of health problems associated with smoking."*

>T-18: *"I already had eye problems. In this period, my eye problems aggravated. Due to having a herniated disc, I had a surgical operation. So, due to constantly being seated, my pains increased. During breaks, I sometimes have to do exercise."*

## Conclusion and Discussion

This study aimed to identify the psycho-social hazards encountered by teachers who took active roles in the distance education process in the period of the pandemic. The changes in both instruction processes and ways of working in the period of the pandemic can induce teachers to give psychological reactions to the work.

In this study, the majority of participants found that the COVID-19 measures taken at workplaces were adequate, however, they stated that they felt uneasy due to problems stemming from students (mask use, social

distancing, and hygiene). Even though hygiene conditions satisfied the needs at the school, the teachers felt uneasy as the students did not abide by the rules about mask use and social distancing.

Moreover, in the current study, it was discerned that the teachers who experienced technical problems in the period of the pandemic were exposed to emotional effects such as getting tired, having stress, getting bored, and feeling angry. These emotional effects came into play due to reasons such as internet connection problems experienced in the instruction process, the lack of student participation in the class, and anxiety felt about covering the topics in the curriculum in due time. In parallel to the current study, the study by İnce, Şahin, and Yentür (2021) stated that the lack of student participation in the class and internet connection problems were the reasons preventing teachers from lecturing the lessons efficiently. In the studies in the relevant literature, it was put forward that, according to teachers' views, some of the disadvantages of distance education were the inadequacy of infrastructure and technological facilities (Paydar & Doğan, 2019; Bakioğlu & Çevik, 2020; Başaran, Doğan, Karaoğlu & Şahin, 2020; Demir & Özdaş, 2020; Avcı & Akdeniz, 2021), difficulty in having access to technological devices and internet (Baek, Jones, Bulger, & Taliaferro, 2018; Fidan, 2020), and the inability to get technical support (Muilenburg & Berge, 2005; DePaepe, Zhu, & DePryck, 2018). Besides, in the study by Casacchia et al. (2021), it was asserted that the biggest problem encountered by educators in distance education during the COVID-19 pandemic was the internet connection problem. Next, in the current study, the teachers said that, due to technical problems, they felt worried about covering the topics in the curriculum in due time in the distance education process. In a similar vein to the current study, previous studies indicated that the educators were worried about covering the topic in the curriculum in due time as they were under pressure to provide online instruction, the work setting was not suitable, the student participation in classes was inadequate, and the time was insufficient (Dempsey & Burke, 2020; Bakioğlu & Çevik, 2020; TEDMEM, 2020; Can, 2020).

Furthermore, in the current study, upon reviewing whether the change in the ways of working affected participants' daily lives, it was identified that the teachers were confronted with psycho-social hazards related to work and personal circumstances. Teachers told that their workload increased along with the change in the ways of working during the compulsory distance education process. It can be asserted that, along with increasing workload, the teachers had difficulty in focusing on work, and their work order was disturbed in comparison to the period of formal education. Together with these changes, the time allocated by teachers to the family decreased because the teachers were obliged to make extra efforts to both manage the distance education process and continue their social lives. Teachers who had to work at home had difficulty in meeting family members' needs fully (Casacchia et al., 2021). Likewise, in the study by Metin, Gürbey, and Çevik (2021), it was stated that the teachers got more tired and had a heavier workload in the distance education process than they did in face-to-face education.

Besides, in the current study, it was discerned that the teachers had difficulty in enabling the entire class of students to focus on the lesson and had trouble in creating a classroom setting in the compulsory distance education process. The study by Fidan (2020) stated that the teachers expressed negative views about the management of the classroom due to the difficulty of enabling the entire class of students to focus on the lesson in the compulsory distance education process. The study by Iwai (2020) indicated that a large number of educators could not teach lessons due to the challenges of managing a classroom by using a screen and microphone. Next, in the current study, teachers asserted that they had a lack of communication with administrators and co-workers during the period of the pandemic. As a consequence of the decrease in interaction in the teleworking process, the teachers could not find the person to consult with to solve problems, and most of the time, they were obliged to work alone. In a similar study, it was put forward that teachers' and students' interactions with their peers decreased in the distance education process (Metin et al., 2021). Likewise, in the study performed by Çakın and Akyavuz (2020) to identify school administrators' views about the effect of the pandemic on education, it was found that the school administrators had problems due to the lack of communication with teachers.

Also, in the current study, the participants put forward that the negative effects of teleworking system on health were eye problems, muscle and joint problems, and headache. In a similar study, it was stated that the musculoskeletal pains, stress, emotional exhaustion, desensitization, and burnout perception increased due to limited physical activities in the period of the pandemic (Kutlutürk & Yıkılmaz, 2021). Besides these effects, it is discerned that the teachers experienced sleep problems. In the study conducted by Casacchia et al. (2021) to analyze how the teaching staff coped technically and emotionally with the challenge of adapting to a new instruction method in the quarantine period in Italy, it was stated that, at varying degrees, the teachers had emotional problems such as depressive symptoms, sleep problems, loss of energy, and difficulty in concentrating.

Additionally, in the current study, the disturbance of work-life balance due to the increase in workload in distance education in comparison to formal education induces teachers to have stress. In studies performed about the work-life balance, it is stated that the disturbance of this balance had a negative effect on mental health in employees (Phillips, Sen, & McNamee, 2007; Shimazu & Bakker, 2009; Sanz Vergel, 2011; Pu, Hou, Ma, & Sang, 2017; Neto, Chambel, & Carvalho, 2018; Silva & Fischer, 2020; Oakman et al., 2020; Wang, Ma, & Guo, 2020). Furthermore, it was asserted that the excessive workload to which the employees were exposed in the period of the pandemic caused stress by affecting the work-life balance negatively (Ozamiz-Etxebarria, Santamaría, Mondragon, & Santxo, 2021; Lizana & Vega-Fernadez, 2021). The heavy workload and stress highlighted in the pre-pandemic period in studies performed on teachers (Blix, 1994; Delcor et al., 2004; Shernoff et al., 2011) increased further and affected the quality of teachers' lives negatively in the period of the pandemic. Besides, in the studies in the relevant literature, it was put forward that the workload increasing in the period of the pandemic affected the work-life balance more in female teachers and caused female teachers to have extreme stress (Klapproth, Federkeil, Heinschke, & Jungmann, 2020; Silva & Fischer, 2020; Lizana & Vega-Fernadez, 2021; Kara, Günes, & Tüysüzer, 2021). It can be said that this situation is associated with the fact that female employees have more roles and responsibilities in the family (Lizana & Vega-Fernadez, 2021). In another study, it was identified that the employees' unpreparedness for teleworking system influenced the work performance, the prolongation of the work period affected the workplace discipline, and having meetings at homes of families with children was difficult and the workload increased (Akbaş Tuna & Türkmendağ, 2021).

In conclusion, it is discerned that the teachers who were obliged to telework in the period of the pandemic were confronted with numerous psycho-social hazards such as adapting to a new instruction method, preparing lessons at home without receiving any technical support, not being in communication with administrators and co-workers, having anxiety about covering the topics in the curriculum in due time. The need to get both technical and psychological support arose for teachers to cope with these hazards. As the increasing workload on teachers affected the work-life balance negatively in the period of the pandemic, the technical training to be offered to teachers should be planned to ensure that the workload will be reduced. Also, by identifying the psycho-social problems experienced by teachers in the period of the pandemic, support services should be provided to teachers based on their needs.

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