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## Teaching in Uncertain Times: What Does Teacher Wellbeing Look Like During Covid-19?

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**Abstract:** While the World Health Organization claimed a pandemic in March 2020, different online platforms started to be used all over the world, including Turkey. The increasing workload with distance education and the health concerns affected the psychological health of teachers. Even though enhancing well-being support to increase the quality of work and physical health gains importance, the psychological perspective is ignored during the covid-19 pandemic. The aim of this study is to understand the effects of COVID-19 on teachers' well-being. Emotional changes, personal experiences, and the situation of their work were analyzed to understand the teachers' perspectives on their well-being. The mixed-method research design was used to understand the nature of the existing state. Quantitative results were analyzed by using a t-test. As a result of the content analysis of the semi-structured interviews, there are four main themes emerged, coping mechanisms, positive emotion, interaction with school components, and areas that need to be improved. This study demonstrated that the psychological needs of teachers should be taken into consideration during the outbreak. Well-being programs should be developed for teachers in the scope of their in-service training to support teachers and meet their psychological needs.

**Keywords:** pandemic, wellbeing, teaching, distance education, covid19

### Highlights

What is already known about this topic:

- The covid-19 pandemic had an impact on educational process all over the world including Turkey. This period of uncertainty and rapid change brought remote teaching and distance education opportunities.
- During this uncertain situation, teachers expect to change their own actions to meet their students' educational needs. Changes, uncertainties and new problems faced during distant education have their both positive and negative effects on teacher well-being.

What this paper contributes:

- This study focuses on the teachers' well-being during the covid-19 outbreak. It presents the personal experiences of teachers to develop support programs and regulations for teachers.
- This article presents that teachers cannot use their old coping mechanisms during the covid-19. Thus, they need new strategies and help from their peers during the crisis.
- This article indicates that the teachers who are working at state schools demonstrate better well being than their peers who are working in private schools in Turkey.

Implications for theory, practice and/or policy:

- Psychological health is crucial for the work performance of teachers. During this period of uncertainty, teachers cannot use their old coping mechanism and their communication with the administration and the students was changed. New programs to support the teachers' well-being should be developed and applied.
- Prioritizing the well-being of teachers at schools had a vital role in increasing the efficiency of the lessons and adaptation to distance education.



## Introduction

Distance education has been gaining popularity all over the world since the increasing use of digital tools and technologies. While distance education was not so popular at the preschool, primary, secondary, and tertiary levels in Turkey before the outbreak of COVID-19, it became a necessity for educators and students to attend distance education. Sudden changes in education planning required regulations that teachers found difficult to adjust. This study looks into how distance education during the COVID-19 pandemic affected teacher well-being by analyzing internal and external factors.

## Literature

With the outbreak of COVID-19, many countries including Turkey have switched to online education (UNESCO, 2021a; UNICEF, 2021) as soon as the World Health Organization announced a pandemic in March 2020 (WHO, 2020). Since then, distance education has started through different online platforms for students at the preschool, primary, secondary and tertiary levels in Turkey. Students at the primary, secondary and high school levels have attended classes on the online national education platform called EBA, and the Ministry of National Education has also started broadcasting lecture videos on TV channels for the students who do not have access to the internet (Özer, 2020). One week of school closure duration in Turkey equals approximately 23 hours of the compulsory curriculum (OECD, 2020a). This requires regular participation in lessons and follow-up of assignments through learning platforms. Studying and attending lectures from home did not affect just students but also affected the daily lives of teachers and parents around the world both academically and psychologically.

Adapting to unusual situations of the pandemic and new technological systems in learning calls for a significant amount of psychological effort. MacIntyre, Gregersen, and Mercer (2020) indicate that the overall psychological health of teachers is affected by their workload and family health as the key stress factors. Acceptance, planning, and re-framing come out as the main coping approaches used by the teachers, while unclear and uncertain plans about work and personal life follow the key stress factors. While Yi and Jang (2020) emphasize that increasing work time and restricted situations for detailed communication come forward as problems for teachers, Kim and Asbury (2020) indicate that a sudden shift in education led to vague situations for planning and once this vagueness in educational planning ends, teachers expect to change their own actions to meet their student's educational needs. Changes, uncertainties and new problems faced during distance education have their both positive and negative effects on teacher well-being.

## What is Well-being?

There are many definitions of well-being (Dodge, Daly, Huyton, & Sanders, 2012). However, Seligman's definition of well-being is used in this study which is a course of developing a human capacity, consisting of five dimensions: positive emotion, engagement (being in the flow), relationships, meaning (purpose in life), and accomplishment (PERMA). Thus, Seligman focuses on not just developing positive feelings or emotional well-being, but also on developing the elements that a person can achieve for their own sake involving health, safety, security, hope, and control over their own lives (Seligman, 2011).

Studies focusing on improving mental health rather than the treatment part have gained importance in recent years. The new aim of mental health research is to enhance the well-being of people (Seligman & Csikszentmihalyi, 2000; WHO, 2005). The main types of well-being are subjective and psychological well-being. Subjective wellbeing concentrates on the positive and negative experiences of a person, striving for positive experiences and seeking a balance between positive and negative emotions (Diener, 1984). On the other hand, Ryff and Singer (1996) came up with the concept of psychological well-being. This concept was extended and stated that meeting basic psychological needs is crucial for psychological well-being (Hone, Jarden, & Schofield, 2015).

## **Covid-19 and Teachers' Well-being**

Students' life at home has affected distant education processes and this has become a concern for teachers' well-being. Kim and Asbury (2020) indicate that some students attending distance education have family problems in their own homes. OECD (2020b) states that especially people who are less educated are prone to domestic violence and mental illnesses, therefore students from such families can be neglected or have discomfort at home and may not attend distance classes. Kaden (2020) states not having all the students participate is a significant problem of online education. UNICEF (2021) reports that closing the schools has worsened the situation of learning especially for underprivileged children. Such children do not usually have access to technological devices or a good internet connection, and it becomes difficult for them to attend distant classes (Drane, Vernon & O'Shea, 2020). As children with economic or social advantages continue their education and improve their skills, the ones who are disadvantaged remain deprived of such educational growth, and a distance in achievement levels will be unavoidable, especially among younger students (Poletti, 2020). In Kim and Asbury's study (2020) teachers voice their concerns about underprivileged students who do not have access to technological resources. Therefore, teachers feel more need to reach out to their students to overcome the obstacles to academic and psychological improvement during the pandemic.

Some studies have shown that teachers feel the need to give support to their students to overcome distant education problems during the pandemic. In Orhan and Beyhan's study (2020) teachers stated that when they help their students psychologically and carry out the process of education, they feel more motivated. They also indicate when parents help their students and hold positive perspectives about distance education, teachers become more content with distance education processes. Student participation in the class is an important element for teachers to perform an effective lesson process. Even before the pandemic, it has been reported that teachers mostly used e-mails or discussion boards to establish rapport with the students, and they complained about the difficulty of using gestures or facial expressions during online classes, so they felt the need to share personal experiences to form bonding to overcome such difficulties (Huss et al., 2015). This barrier in communication also restrains giving feedback to students and receiving their feedback which reduces the quality of teachers' work (Popa, Repanovici, Lupu, Norel, & Coman, 2020). Apart from student-related factors, teachers' emotional well-being during a pandemic can be affected by changes in their personal life, the amount of support from the workplace, and the efficiency of their academic or technological skills. Thus, there are new critical issues arises within the educational field to focus on and develop (Bozkurt & Sharma, 2020).

Changes brought by the pandemic have had some negative effects on teachers' well-being. Anderson, Bousset, Katz-Buoincontro, and Todd (2021) also emphasize that not having face-to-face communication with students and uncertainties during Covid-19 increases teachers' stress. In Allen, Jerrim, and Sims' (2020) study, teachers in England felt more anxious the week before school closures in March and the week before school reopening in June due to uncertainties of plans. The distribution of household chores has also put a strain on gender equality at home during the pandemic. As a result of uncertainties and increasing workloads at home, women are more prone to the negative effects of the pandemic (Malisch et al., 2020). Especially if these women are mothers, they feel more stressed about workload and unclear boundaries between responsibilities for work and home, which create more stress, confusion gender inequalities, and less productivity (Guy & Arthur, 2020; Parlak, Celebi Cakiroglu, & Oksuz Gul, 2021; Allen et al., 2020; Krukowski, Jagsi, & Cardel, 2021; Penado Abilleira et al., 2021).

The transition to a distance education process was abrupt for most of the teachers, so the need for technological training and an adaptation process increased. Prior to the pandemic teachers indicated that they considered assistance with technological tools and sources necessary (OECD, 2020b). During the pandemic, one of the biggest issues in distance teaching is the sudden change from face-to-face to

distance teaching, along with the incompetence or obstacles in integrating technology into the teaching process, so there is a negative perspective among teachers (Rap et al., 2020). These obstacles are reported to result from students' lack of attendance in distant classes, the difficulty of adapting some classroom activities to distant lessons, and the inadequacy of communication between teachers and students (Rap et al., 2020). Especially teachers with higher years of experience are less content with distance education and overall contentment with the education system prior to a pandemic is much higher (Alves, Lopes & Precioso, 2020). Bubb and Jones (2020) point out that when teachers enhance their skills in the use of technology and get support from local authorities or from school, lessons become much more effective both for students and teachers.

The situation of teachers and their opinions about technological skills in Turkey was different during the pandemic, as it turned out that the teachers felt more proficient in terms of the need for technology training compared to other OECD countries (OECD, 2020a). The teachers indicated they had prior formal training and believed that they might help students through technological tools (OECD, 2020a). However, this may not be the same for every teacher as students' lack of connection and absence, the inadequacy of online lesson content, and the lack of support are emphasized as the points that are stated by teachers in Turkey (Canpolat & Yıldırım, 2021). In addition to problems in teacher-student interaction, teachers' worries regarding restricted social life, prejudices against the teaching profession by other members of society with the start of distance education, and uncertainties about the future are indicated to be among the main problems of teachers in Turkey (Kavuk & Demirtaş, 2021).

Teachers need support during the distance education process to improve their skills in technological tools and get efficient training, and psychological help also needs to be provided to teachers, students, and parents (UNESCO, 2021b). Technology needs to be regarded as an essential part of teaching and learning while taking the pedagogical and social selves of teachers and students into account (Carrillo & Flores, 2020).

When it comes to positive effects, having more spare time and feeling more relaxed during lockdown were pointed out (Allen et al., 2020). Adding creativity in teaching, creative self-efficacy and environmental support had positive effects on teachers' well-being. In Bubb and Jones' (2020) study teachers state that with more time spent at home during the pandemic, teachers could focus on creative activities as they were not concerned that much about classroom management. Even outside the classroom context, when teachers focused on creative activities like taking up new hobbies, they experienced more positive effects and less anxiety (Talidong & Toquero, 2020). Implementing technological tools successfully, using new techniques in teaching, and getting assistance from local communities or parents enrich teaching and learning. Kraft and Simon (2020) emphasize that with helpful communication with authorities and colleagues, teachers felt more positive than the ones who did not get such support during the pandemic. Collie (2021) also stated that when teachers had positive encouragement with their decisions at work, they felt less stressed and when they faced obstructions, they felt more emotional exhaustion. Teachers also felt more positive when they made sure that the education was carried out according to the plans and education materials were accessible to everyone (Orhan & Beyhan, 2020; Canpolat & Yıldırım, 2021), and when they saw improvements in their teaching skills through digital tools (Kavuk & Demirtaş, 2021). Compared to employees in other work fields during the COVID-19 pandemic, teachers are stated to be more capable of dealing with stress and have better psychological strategies (Mari et al., 2021).

The schools in Turkey were closed due to the announcement pandemic in March 2020, and since then depending on the severity of the pandemic, full-time distant education or a hybrid educational model in which students have face-to-face education for two days and distance education for the rest of the week has been implemented. Due to these changes and alternating decisions between face-to-face and distance education, teachers were affected psychologically. The purpose of this study is to examine the

effects of COVID-19 on teachers' well-being. Emotional changes, personal experiences, and the situation of their work were analyzed to understand the teachers' perspectives on their well-being.

## Methodology

### Research Design and Research Process

This study aims to understand the online education experiences of teachers during covid-19 and their resiliency and stress factors related to wellbeing. Both qualitative and quantitative data were collected concurrently in order to meet this aim. Semi-structured interviews were conducted with teachers while they have been asked to fulfill the questionnaires. Since both qualitative and quantitative research elements were used in the same phase of the research process, the convergent parallel design which is a type of mixed-method research was used as a research design (Creswell & Pablo-Clark, 2011).

The research process can be symbolized as qualitative and quantitative (QUAL + QUAN; Morse, 1991). Thus, the qualitative findings of the study were compared with the statistical results of the quantitative statistical results. Both research processes were conducted and analyzed separately. At the end of the analyses, triangulation of the data was done by comparing two different datasets (see Figure 1).

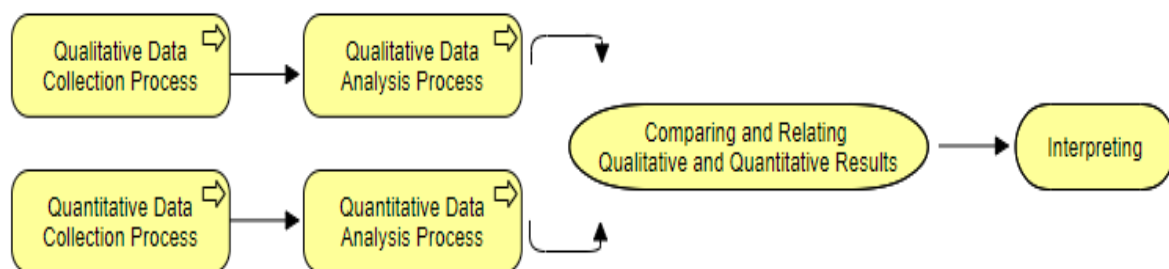


Figure 1. Research design process

Researchers developed a semi-structured interview protocol to get in-depth information about the teachers' experiences during covid-19. This protocol was reviewed by one academic from the Guidance and Psychological Counseling Department at Marmara University and one from the Guidance and Psychological Counseling Department at Middle East Technical University. In addition, two pilot interviews were conducted with two primary school teachers to understand the validity of the questions. After the pilot interviews and feedback from academics, the interview protocol was finalized by adding probe questions about distance education experiences of teachers. .

After deciding on the instruments for quantitative research in line with the study's aim, qualitative and quantitative data was started to be collected simultaneously. Nine teachers were interviewed during the qualitative data collection process by using semi-structured questions. Interviews lasted between 40 minutes to 90 minutes with a mean of 65 minutes and a median of 70 minutes. A quantitative descriptive research design was used to profile the current situation of teachers for the qualitative part of the study since the descriptive studies aim to represent the updated state. In addition, descriptive research helps researchers to comprehend the need and provide insight for further research (Creswell, 2014). After getting the necessary permissions to use the surveys, the research was announced through social media platforms and shared with teachers in order to meet the aim of the study. Data collection was conducted between February 2021 and May 2021. The whole procedure went in accordance with ethical codes and after having received ethical permission from Middle East Technical University Applied Ethics Research Centre Ethics Committee.

## Participants

Semi-structured interviews were conducted with ten participants whose tenure ranged from 5 years to 12 years with a mean of 7.78. The participants were selected by using snowball sampling to ensure diversity in terms of age, and level of education. However, the diversity couldn't be reached in terms of gender since there was just one male participant and eight female participants for the interviews. Teachers were contacted via email or phone. Interviews were conducted on zoom and the recruitment process was finalized when the patterns started to be repeated.

Participants' age range was between 26 and 36 years with a median of 31. Three participants had a masters' degree in their field and seven participants had a bachelors' degree. The weekly class hours of the participants ranged between 17 hours and 30 hours with a mean of 22.23 and a median of 28. Four participants were English language teachers, one was a Turkish Language Teacher, one was an Arabic Language Teacher, and one was a school counselor from different schools. Four teachers were married. The demographic profiles of the participants were summarized in Table 1.

Table 1. Demographic profile of participants

<i>Participant</i>	<i>Gender</i>	<i>Age</i>	<i>Education</i>	<i>School Type</i>	<i>Branch</i>	<i>Tenure</i>
P1	Female	32	Bachelor	Secondary School	Turkish Language Teacher	7
P2	Male	36	Bachelor	Primary School	Classroom Teacher	12
P3	Female	30	Masters	Secondary School	Mathematics	6
P4	Female	29	Bachelor	Secondary School	English Language Teacher	6
P5	Female	31	Bachelor	Secondary School	English Language Teacher	10
P6	Female	35	Bachelor	Secondary School	English Language Teacher	11
P7	Female	26	Bachelor	Secondary School	English Language Teacher	5
P8	Female	28	Masters	Secondary School	Arabic Language Teacher	6
P9	Female	27	Masters	High School	School Counselor	5

Three scales as the PERMA Profiler, Brief Resilience Scale (BRS) and Teacher Subjective Wellbeing Questionnaire were shared with participants on social media. 74 participants (32 male and 42 were female) were reached. The age of participants ranged from 25 to 60 with a mean of 40 and a median of 37. In addition, 41 participants were married and 30 of them had children. 52 participants were working at state schools and 22 of them were working at state schools in different parts of Turkey. 29 participants were working at primary schools, 28 were working at secondary schools, 13 were working at high schools and only 4 participants were working at pre-schools. The tenure of participants ranges from 2 years to 37 years with a mean of 7.61 and a median of 3.

## Instruments

Interview Protocol. A semi-structured interview protocol with open-ended questions about the teachers' experiences during the transition to the online education process and covid-19 pandemic was developed by researchers referring to the four areas; a. Demographic information, b. Current situation and the



needs and issues of teachers, c. Personal situation of participants, and d. Suggestions. Two academics, one from the Guidance and Psychological Counseling Department at Marmara University and one from the Guidance and Psychological Counseling Department at Middle East Technical University were consulted and the interview protocol was revised considering their feedback.

**Brief Resilience Scale.** (Smith, Dalen, Wiggings, Tooley, Christopher & Bernard, 2008). This 6-item self-report questionnaire was designed to screen the bounce-back ability of the adults. It contains one subscale on a 5-point Likert scale. A validity and reliability study was done by Doğan (2015). The internal consistency coefficient for the Turkish adaptation of the scale was found as .83. Thus, it is a valid and reliable scale for Turkish speakers.

**Teacher Subjective Wellbeing Questionnaire (TSWQ).** (Renshaw, Long & Cook, 2015). This 8-item self-report questionnaire was designed to assess teachers' subjective wellbeing by considering school connectedness and teaching efficacy. It contains two subscales as psychological distress and teacher distress and emotional burnout. The validity and reliability study of the Turkish language was conducted by Ergün and Sezgin Nartgün (2017). The reliability coefficient of the scale for the Turkish adaptation was found as .82. According to the findings, this scale is a valid and reliable scale for Turkish culture.

**The PERMA-Profil.** (Butler & Kern, 2016). This 23-item questionnaire was designed to assess the well-being of adults according to Seligman's well-being model. Demirci, Ekşi, Dinçer, and Kardaş (2017) adopted the scale into Turkish. The internal consistency reliability coefficients of the scale were found as .61 and .81, and the test-retest correlation coefficient was found as .83 for the whole scale.

## **Data Analysis**

Qualitative data analysis was done by researchers by using content analysis. Recordings of the semi-structured interviews were transcribed verbatim by the researchers. After the codes were finalized, the codebook was constituted which includes definitions of each code and code group. The analyst triangulation method was used to ensure validity (Patton, 1990) by sharing the codebook with one academic from Marmara University, Faculty of Education. After taking the feedback, the codes were finalized. Quotations were given from the interviews to ensure transferability (Lincoln & Guba, 1985).

Since the study includes a limited number of participants, descriptive analysis was conducted to see the differences on well-being between different groups of teachers depending on their demographic profile. The independent sample t- tests were used to investigate the different impacts of demographic data on the well-being of teachers. The data were analyzed by using SPSS. Since the data was collected online, there wasn't any missing value. After checking all the related assumptions, a test of the hypothesis with a p-value < 0.05 was considered significant. Regarding the demographics, the frequencies of the participants' answers were calculated. Furthermore, the subscales of the PERMA, TSWQ and Brief Resilience Scale were calculated and the mean values with SD were reported to profile the most competent factors.

## **Limitations**

There are certain limitations to this research. First of all, the number of participants is limited because of the nature of qualitative studies. However, the number of male participants is highly limited. In addition, there are only two participants who have children. Most of the participants were not married and did not have any children. As it is stated in the previous studies, people who have children might have more influence to arrange the time for their work and their children at home. Furthermore, all participants just started their careers with a tenure of 5 years at most. Thus, more experienced and older teachers might have different experiences during distance education. For further studies, it is suggested

that more male teachers, senior teachers, and teachers who have children might give a holistic frame about the effects of distance education on teachers' well-being.

## Findings

### Findings from Qualitative Analysis

This section contains the content analysis of the 10 semi-structured interviews conducted with teachers from different levels of schools and different cities in Turkey. There are four main themes that emerged coping mechanisms, positive emotion, interaction with school components, and areas that need to be improved.

### Coping Mechanisms

The first theme that emerged from the semi-structured interviews is called coping mechanisms. Teachers mentioned their coping mechanisms during the lockdowns under this theme. All teachers stated that ambiguity of process affected all of them unpleasantly at the beginning of the pandemic as participant one stated below.

*Frankly, I had a hard time planning my own time, as the planning was left to the administration at first. It destroyed me until it became clear at 8 in the morning or at 11 at night... This irregularity affected me more than the pandemic. P1*

*We said to the children that they will come, then we said that they will not come. Also, when the school opened, our schedule changed every week. I find it difficult to reach and inform the students, then I encounter the same process again. P3*

Teachers who have spare time for activities such as painting, sports, and books started to use these activities as coping mechanisms after adopting the ambiguity. However, the personal characteristics of the teachers were influential during this adaptation process as well. Two teachers stated that social interaction was the key coping mechanism for them.

*I am a person who cannot sit idly. At first, it was overwhelming for me. I didn't know what to do. And frankly, I didn't have a hobby that I clung to too much. I've been going to the gym regularly for 2 years. I had to leave it. For example, I was going to the gym, taking a walk; and meeting my friends was the best hobby for me. I couldn't do any of these. This upset me a lot. At first, I didn't know what to do in quarantine for 4-5 months, we got worn out then I said I have to do something. P4*

One participant who has kids has a different experience in terms of her coping mechanisms. Since he has toddlers, it was very difficult for him to adapt to the situation and find coping mechanisms to handle quarantines. On the other hand, he developed coping mechanisms such as social interaction with his friends and family and spending more time with his kids.

*I also spend more time with my own children during this time. Uncertainty was tiring, of course, my children are young, they do not go to school, but the possibility of the school opening or not, the questions of the parents of the students about how the lessons will be taught were more tiring... It took time to get used to the children's order while teaching from home at first, but we got used to the situation. P2*

### Positive Emotion

The positive emotion theme contains the teachers' statements about focusing on the positive side of the situation. This theme has two codes; current applications and prospectivity. Six teachers out of nine stated that online education has many opportunities, especially in terms of introverted students.



*That (introvert) boy showed a tremendous rise in this education period. How he speaks, and attends classes, you can't believe his level of self-confidence. His family also bought him a nice laptop, he bought a home internet connection, and the boy made incredible progress. Students who are afraid of their friends and have less self-confidence feel more comfortable in online education and have the chance to show themselves better. P5*

Furthermore, these teachers asserted that they tried to ascertain ways to adopt online education according to students' learning needs.

*If we look at everything as a disadvantage, then we need to reset the process. That's why I tried to look at its advantages. I aimed to reflect something on the screen for their visual intelligence according to their learning styles. When they participated in the lesson with the microphone, I tried to increase their verbal skills not just by telling them myself. For example, they asked each other questions. I tried to transfer to the same (face-to-face) classroom environment. P1*

The second code called prospectivity refers to the intention of teachers' to use the internet tools when the pandemic is over. Seven teachers stated that they want to use the internet tools for compensation classes, homework, and in-class activities in the future. Thus, the internet tools they are using for online education are helpful and these tools might be effective during face-to-face education to support and encourage the students.

*I can use (online tools) for practical purposes, for example, a mutual platform that students can access more easily, and (online) group sharing answer keys for certain types of exams, assignments, and examples, and making controls. P6*

On the other hand, two teachers who are working in rural areas stated that it might be difficult for them to use these internet tools since the students do not have access to them. Furthermore, school facilities are not appropriate for using these tools inside the classrooms as well. Therefore, these two teachers indicated that using internet tools wouldn't be helpful for their teaching process.

*It is not an application that I can use very often, if I lived in the city and went to a school in the city, I could do it in such a school with facilities so (now) I don't think that I can use them. P4*

### **Interaction with School Components**

Theme called interaction with school components has three codes: interaction with students, interaction with parents, and interaction with administrators. First code-named interaction with students varies by school region. Teachers who are working in developed regions like the countryside in Turkey stated that they have more interaction than before with students. However, teachers in rural areas indicated that the students could not reach the internet tools such as internet connections, smartphones, or computers. Therefore, participation highly decreased in those areas.

*For example, there was a hardworking female student who couldn't attend because of her internet problem, she joined when she got her internet done. There are children who say "We have only one smartphone in our house.", "It is my father's, I cannot join the class when my father goes to work.", we still have such problems. X region has an internet infrastructure, but students from the Y and Z regions cannot attend classes. Transported students cannot enter lessons because there is no internet infrastructure. P3*

*At first, both the students' participation in the course was less, and the number of siblings is also high. The region I live in is a disadvantaged place. Children are always 3 and 4 siblings. Most of them take turns attending classes. Even now, for example, a student sends me a message and says "teacher, my brother will attend, so I cannot attend this course." Most of the parents are people who go to the*

*farmlands or to the factory to work. Sometimes, the problem is that the parents are working, and there is no computer, tablet, etc. at home. The students will attend from the phone. They say that "teacher, my parents are working, I cannot attend because they take the phone with them...." For example, there were a few good students, and some of them did not even attend any classes for a whole year. P5*

The second code is termed as interaction with parents mentioned by all participants as well. All teachers stated that parents have an enormous responsibility for the attendance of their kids in the online classes. Therefore, parents' manner towards education becomes a determinant factor.

*This obviously hasn't changed much, attentive parents were also attentive before covid, the those who are careless were also careless pre-covid. I don't think there has been a change after Covid, but more attentive parents cared more about their children. P4*

*The responsibilities of parents have changed a lot because most of the responsibilities are now theirs. Frankly, I am satisfied with this, but of course, the parents are not. Because normally they would throw it on the teacher. Now (the things) are under their control at home, but they don't know anything. P5*

The socioeconomic status of the parents became a significant factor in terms of interaction as well.;

*Parents always work with us, both mom and dad. Because they are in a bad place economically. Parents work either in the farmlands or in the factory. That's why, since children are usually alone at home if the student knows her/his responsibility, s/he does what s/he has to do, but otherwise, s/he does not attend classes in any way, nor does s/he do what is given. P5*

All teachers stated that they have much more interaction with administrators regarding the interaction with administrators' codes. Since the situation is inconsistent and there may be new decisions in a day, they were able to communicate with the administration at any hour on any day.

### **Areas need to be improved**

All teachers addressed the different areas that need to be improved during online education. First of all, six teachers stated that they need more resources in addition to textbooks given by MoNE. Since different students have different learning styles, one source may not answer all students' needs. In addition to these resources, all teachers stated that even though the curriculum is the same for online education, they only have 30 minutes for the classes. Thus, they lost 10 minutes from their usual class hours. Therefore, teachers stated that the curriculum should be revised according to the online education standards.

*Lesson hours have been shortened, reduced to 30 minutes, we have lost 10 minutes from each lesson, and the ministry still explains that students are responsible for the entire curriculum. I think this is wrong because the content will decrease because we are asked to explain the same thing in a shorter time, I could not complete the lessons even in normal time, it is almost impossible for me to complete now. Then I have to go through the content faster. This is also a disadvantage for slower learners. P5*

In addition, three teachers indicated the need for parent education about online education. Since internet tools might be a new subject for parents, especially parents who live in rural areas, there needs to be structured information about online education for parents.

*At first, I think parents should have been educated, I think parents should be educated first in everything in national education because when parents are not educated, students cannot do anything. Since the parent is not aware of online education, the student cannot access that online education no matter how much you explain. For example, there was a parent who had 2-3 children, and when online classes*

*started last March, they all attended classes, then a phone bill of 250-300 Turkish liras came, after that he did not let any of the children attend online classes. P7*

Furthermore, all teachers stated the flexible working hours because of the covid. Since the parents and the students can easily reach the teachers any time they want, teachers stated that they had difficulty setting boundaries with parents and students at the beginning. Furthermore, the class hours could be assigned in the evening because of the density of the internet system used all over Turkey. Their working hours extended to irrelevant hours such as late in the evening. However, teachers also stated that they started to set strict boundaries at the beginning of the new term.

*No one would dare to offer a face-to-face meeting at 10 am at 9, but after being remote, there are no more work hours. Early in the morning or late at night people now offer such things to each other, which I think is a negative thing. I find this very negative in terms of protecting my own private space. I constantly warn students about this issue; I say that you should never text before 9 in the morning and after 9 in the evening. I also warn the students who do it. P9*

### **Findings from Quantitative Analysis**

The well-being of teachers is investigated considering some demographic variables such as gender, years of experience, the institution that teachers are working in (state or private), the school level they are working at, and their marital status. There aren't any statistically significant relationships between teachers' well-being and gender, and years of experience at all scales, and subscales. On the other hand, there is a significant difference between teachers' well-being and the institution they are working in (state or private), the school level they are working at, and their marital status.

The 52 teachers who are working at state schools ( $M= 3.96$ ,  $SD= .56$ ) compared to 22 participants who are working at private schools ( $M= 2.91$ ,  $SD= .69$ ) presented statistically significant results on PERMA,  $t(74)= .95$ ,  $p < .005$ . Even though there are statistically significant results on PERMA for teachers who are working at the state schools, there isn't any statistically significant difference on the Brief Resilience Scale and TSWQ. The 33 participants who are single ( $M=3.02$ ,  $SD= .46$ ) compared to 41 married teachers ( $M=3.42$ ,  $SD=.46$ ) demonstrated statistically significant results on the PERMA,  $t(72)= -1,89$ ,  $p < .005$ . On the other hand, there isn't any statistically significant difference in the Brief Resilience Scale and TSWQ between the teachers who are married or single. 33 participants who are working at primary levels (pre-school and primary school) ( $M=3.02$ ,  $SD= .46$ ) compared to 41 participants who are working at the secondary levels (secondary school and high school) ( $M=2.04$ ,  $SD= .46$ ) demonstrated significant results on Brief Resilience Scale,  $t(74)= .75$ ,  $p < .005$ , and TSWQ,  $t(74)= .71$ ,  $p < .005$ . On the other hand, there isn't any statistically significant difference in PERMA between the teachers who are working at primary and secondary levels.

## **Discussion**

### **Discussion on Quantitative Results**

Pandemic has affected students, teachers, and parents all over the world. Teachers in this study stated their coping mechanisms, emotions, interaction with school components, and the areas they see crucial for improvement. Teachers were mostly worried about uncertainties in their schedules and future possibilities and resorted to pastime activities. Uncertainties about work, social, family life, and the future cause stress (Kavuk & Demirtaş, 2021; Allen et al., 2020; Malisch et al., 2020) however after regulating and adjusting the stressors to suit your new routine, some coping techniques emerge after such factors (MacIntyre et al., 2020). When coping techniques are associated with creative activities for the development of the self, teachers get an advantage out of a difficult situation. Such activities help them overcome stressful conditions (Talidong & Toquero, 2020).

Aside from personal confusion, teachers try to focus on some positive changes that the pandemic may bring for their students' educational improvement. Especially getting more skilled at using digital tools and the appropriateness of online education to learners' selves and needs seem to make teachers hold positive views about this new education system. At this point, if teachers get support from their local environment, they feel much more effective in teaching (Bubb & Jones, 2020; Kraft & Simon, 2020; Kavuk & Demirtaş, 2021; Orhan & Beyhan, 2020). In the present study, PERMA brought out a significant result for teachers working at state schools. In previous studies conducted with state and private school teachers about attitudes toward distance education, Ağır (2007), Moçoşoğlu and Kaya (2020) stated no significant difference between these groups. Teachers in the current study may be concerned about losing their jobs or under pressure from school leaders. A lack of support from their social or professional environment can lead to an increase in these negative experiences, thus creating instability in emotional balance for well-being (Diener, 1984).

According to the statements of teachers in this study, a positive perspective is affected not just by getting the support to enhance the educational style, but by seeing students improve themselves psychologically even with distant support from the teachers or peers during the pandemic. As distant education was mostly seen as a barrier in front of communication, positive experiences during the pandemic increased hope for online learning. This barrier can be overcome by sharing feelings and giving and receiving feedback on online platforms (Huss et al., 2015; Popa et al., 2020), meanwhile, teachers in this study indicated that they manage to do so by addressing individual differences in learning by bringing a positive classroom atmosphere into online classrooms.

A positive atmosphere in the online classroom can be affected by the attendance of the students at online lessons. If the students do not have an internet connection or access to technological devices, they may not attend regularly or miss some classes during the week. This puts stress on the teacher in creating a harmonious class atmosphere or lesson procedure. Teachers in this study state that they face difficulties in students' access to the internet and devices, and parents' attention to students' education. Students' troubles with online connections are among common problems in Turkey during the pandemic (Canpolat & Yıldırım, 2021) and children from poor families are likely to have more difficulties in showing achievement and progress as they cannot attend classes (Drane et al., 2020; Poletti, 2020). Even when parents want to help their children's education, disadvantages may hinder their efforts. Apart from educational support to teachers and students, local authorities may increase support to parents by providing them with economic, educational, and technological resources. School administrations as part of school components may help authorities in organizing or delivering such help.

Another point addressed by the teachers in this study draws attention to adapting the curriculum and textbooks to suit online education as the distinction between online and face-to-face education materials is getting more noticeable considering that online education is likely to go on. Teachers indicate that changes made in decreasing class duration due to the pandemic and the inadequacy of online lesson materials on official educational platforms in addressing learners with different needs bring out a need for some regulations. Carrillo and Flores (2020) emphasize that pedagogical and social aspects of learners and teachers need to be considered to integrate technology into education. When educational activities happen according to the plans and materials are coherent with the plans, teachers feel much better (Orhan & Beyhan, 2020; Canpolat & Yıldırım, 2021). Therefore, a detailed revision regarding curriculum, course materials, learner and teacher needs should be done throughout this process.

Teachers' well-being concerning social life is also affected by their relationship with the parents. Teachers in this research emphasize that they could spare extra time for their interests during the pandemic, but with the start of distance education, boundaries between work and personal time have become unclear, and some teachers stated concerns about their personal boundaries with parents and students outside their work time. Teachers point out that parental training can be given about how to engage parents in distance education and raise awareness of parents in supporting both students and

teachers. Psychological support is necessary for all components of the educational system (UNESCO, 2021b), and obstacles faced with the pandemic can be easily dealt with when such support is provided.

### **Discussion on Quantitative Results**

Although teachers indicate they want to show academic and psychological support, vague boundaries may have created extra stress for those who have children or those who face inequalities regarding their role in the household (Guy & Arthur, 2020; Parlak et al., 2021; Allen et al., 2020; Krukowski et al., 2021). Findings from PERMA in this study also show that married teachers demonstrate a higher result, as changing daily habits and having an unusual order may affect social roles in being a spouse and taking care of children. Parlak et al. (2021) argue that teachers faced difficulties running errands as social support and childcare services diminished during the pandemic. Those with younger children especially experienced more problems in adaptation (Krukowski et al., 2021), not being able to control what has been going around and feelings of loneliness and uncertainties are also suggested to decrease productivity in female educators (Guy & Arthur, 2020). Analyzing the well-being during a pandemic, Alves et al. (2020) propose that male teachers and teachers with long experience have more negative well-being, while Abilleira et al. (2021) indicate female teachers with a longer duration of experience feel more negative effects. While recent studies mostly show the negative effect of the pandemic on females (Malisch et al., 2020; Parlak et al., 2021; Guy & Arthur, 2020; Allen et al., 2020), there is a limited number of male participants in this current study to make a distinctive claim about stressors among genders. When it comes to the years of experience, there is not a significant difference in the current study. Kraft and Simon (2020) indicate teachers faced a lack of achievement more extensively during the pandemic, and while those with less experience felt it stronger, adjusting work and personal responsibilities to distance education was a difficult process for nearly all teachers. Teachers in the present study do not have a significant relationship between years of experience, the reason might be that there is not a wide gap in the duration of experience, however, they experience similar levels of stress. Going through a novel and uncertain change in teaching and adapting the syllabus to the online system was a challenge regardless of their experience.

In the present study, the PERMA profiler reflected that primary school teachers have higher results. Hascher, Beltman & Mansfield (2021) reported higher well-being in primary school teachers during school closures. While worrying about students' learning conditions, most teachers were affected by uncertainties and personal stressors like health and workload. Primary teachers' general concern about distance learning is about whether students' home environment supports their education and the necessity of taking measures to leave the schools open during this difficult time (Moss et al., 2020). Klapproth, Federkeil, Heinschke, and Jungmann, (2020) state that the stress level between primary and secondary level teachers are similar and lower than those in higher levels. They interpret this as the teachers working at higher levels giving more work, they deal with students who become more likely to refrain from education and get less enthusiastic. As the teachers in the present study are mostly working in secondary schools, seeing irregular attendance and absent students may be affecting them more than primary level teachers.

### **Conclusion**

The Covid-19 outbreak had an enormous impact on the educational process all over the world. There were distance education tools even before the pandemic. On the other hand, pandemic served as a signal to use the technology as a part of the educational process. This study demonstrated that teachers did not get any psychological help during the covid-19 process. They could not use the coping strategies they were using before. Furthermore, since the workload was increasing for teachers, MoNE and the schools took measures from an academic perspective. On the other hand, the psychological perspective was placed aside in the teachers' case. Teachers were mostly affected by ambiguities at the beginning of the distance education process and used their own coping mechanisms. Mainly seeing the



development of introverted students and teachers' own confidence in learning digital tools can be considered positive emotions for the teachers. Struggles in finding good materials for distance education and support from parents can be considered as areas that need more focus, especially for rural regions. Such issues affect teacher well-being negatively.

### Suggestions

The well-being of the teachers has a huge impact on the teaching and learning process. In a time of change and uncertainty, the psychological needs of teachers should be taken into consideration. Teachers are inevitable and key agents of the educational process as they take part both in the learning and psychological development of the students. Thus, the psychological needs of the teachers should be a basic principle to increase the effectiveness and success of students. During the outbreak, traditional educational norms were changed. However, changing the educational process brought the changing needs of teachers which are neglected by policymakers. Thus, teachers' psychological needs should be prioritized and the technological tools should not merely be taken into account during the educational journey of students. Policymakers should provide adequate curriculum implementation and material assistance to the teachers. Orientation seminars should be carried out in case of sudden changes. Parents should also be guided when students spend most of their time taking education at home. Teacher-parent collaborations should be promoted by policymakers and other stakeholders for a better education setting.

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Dilara Özel: Conceptualization, Methodology, Data Collection, Data Analysis, Visualization, Writing – original draft, Writing – review & editing; Ayşegül Yurtsever: Conceptualization, Data Collection, Writing – original draft, Writing – review & editing.

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The authors do not declare any conflict of interest.

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