Research Article

Unveiling the Metamorphosis: English Teachers' Shifting Identity in the Context of Post-COVID-19 Distance Education

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Abstract: The COVID-19 pandemic has significantly impacted various teaching and learning practices. Teachers worldwide had to adapt their instructional methods to teach from a distance, often without prior training. This abrupt transition resulted in significant alterations to their professional identities, which remain largely unexplored and uninvestigated due to the rapid changes during and following the pandemic. Therefore, this qualitative explanatory case study aims to investigate the development of professional identities among student, novice, and experienced English as a foreign language (EFL) teachers under the influence of the COVID-19 pandemic, focusing on their possible selves, including their ideal and feared selves. Twelve participants, consisting of students, novice, and experienced EFL teachers, participated in semi-structured interviews as part of the study. The findings revealed that EFL teachers redefined their professional identities in response to the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic. Particularly, the teachers emphasized the importance of efficient technology usage and adaptability skills as their ideal selves while expressing fear of not utilizing technology effectively.

Metamorfozu Ortaya Çıkarmak: COVID-19 Sonrası Uzaktan Eğitim Bağlamında İngilizce Öğretmenlerinin Değişen Kimliği

Özet: COVID-19 salgını, çeşitli öğretme ve öğrenme uygulamalarını önemli ölçüde etkiledi. Dünya çapındaki öğretmenlerin, genellikle önceden eğitim almadan, uzaktan etkili bir şekilde öğretmek için öğretim yöntemlerini uyarlamaları gerekiyordu. Bu ani geçiş, pandemi sırasında ve sonrasında yaşanan hızlı değişimler nedeniyle büyük ölçüde keşfedilmemiş ve araştırılmamış olan profesyonel kimliklerinde önemli değişikliklere neden oldu. Bu nedenle, bu nitel açıklayıcı vaka çalışmasının amacı, COVID-19 salgınının etkisi altında öğrenci, mesleğe yeni başlayan ve deneyimli İngilizce öğretmenleri arasındaki mesleki kimliklerin olası benliklerine odaklanarak gelişimini araştırmaktır. Öğrenci, mesleğe yeni başlayan ve deneyimli İngilizce öğretmenlerinden oluşan on iki katılımcı yarı yapılandırılmış görüşmelere katıldı. Bulgular, İngilizce öğretmenlerinin COVID-19 salgınının etkisiyle mesleki kimliklerini yeniden tanımladıklarını ortaya koydu. Özellikle öğretmenler, teknolojiyi etkin kullanamama korkularını ifade ederken, teknolojiyi verimli kullanma ve uyum sağlama becerilerinin ideal benlikleri olarak önemini vurgulamışlardır.

1. Introduction

The impact of the COVID-19 pandemic has been felt worldwide, and in times of crisis, a decline in teachers' sense of self-efficacy can be observed (Seyle et al., 2013), which can, in turn, influence their professional identity (Dvir & Schatz-Oppenheimer, 2020). Throughout the COVID-19 pandemic, teachers' technological competence has gained importance in facilitating practical online lessons. Online teaching necessitates synchronous and asynchronous instructional approaches by teachers (Plaisance, 2018). Gonzales and Louis (2018) assert that online teaching should be structured to motivate students and capture their interest. Additionally, teachers have experienced confusion and stress due to sudden school closures and uncertainty regarding the duration of the COVID-19 pandemic's effects (UNESCO, 2020; Kraft et al., 2020; MacIntyre et al., 2020). Furthermore, Huang (2021) highlights the challenges posed to teachers' professional identities by online teaching, which impacts their teaching experiences and contextual understanding. They change their daily routines, knowledge, skills, and beliefs about teaching.

Like teachers worldwide, educators in Turkey have encountered numerous challenges stemming from the COVID-19 pandemic and the subsequent sudden shift to fully online education. As a response to the outbreak of the COVID-19 virus during the first semester of 2020 in Turkey, most services were closed to reduce physical proximity and prevent the spread of the infection. Education practices were also significantly affected by this pandemic, leading to the closure of schools to students and the adoption of remote teaching by teachers. The education system and most teachers were unprepared for the rapid changes that happened. Teachers tried to find ways to connect with their students and manage effective instruction. This situation naturally affected teachers' professional identities. Thus, this study presents an opportunity for teachers to reflect on the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on their professional identities and be conscious of their possible selves. Future selves serve as a motivating force for teachers. Moreover, the study will shed light on how the COVID-19 pandemic has influenced the identities of student, novice, and experienced English teachers, emphasizing the developmental stages that teachers go through during their careers. As a result, the findings are expected to contribute to an extensive understanding of English language teacher identity under the effect of the COVID-19 pandemic. Considering the significance of future-oriented perspectives in shaping teachers' selves (Conway, 2001), the present study examines the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on the development of English as a Foreign Language (EFL) teachers' identities. The study aims to address the following research question: How has the COVID-19 pandemic affected the ideal and feared possible selves of student, novice, and experienced EFL teachers in their roles as language educators?

1.1. Theoretical Framework and Related Studies

Markus and Nurius's (1986) Possible Selves Theory provides a robust theoretical framework to understand teachers' professional identity formation. Teachers' possible selves can be defined as their future probable selves, comprising what they aspire to become and fear becoming in their profession (Itoi, 2014). This theory offers a good foundation for comprehending the teacher professional identity formation process. While understanding teachers' present thoughts can be significant, knowledge of their expectations and fears for the future can help the transformation of their future selves and contribute to a more effective professional identity development (Shoyer & Leshem, 2016).

The relevant literature indicates that teachers' identities have been affected by the consequences of school closures due to the Coronavirus disease, which resulted in the shift to remote education (Kaden, 2020; Chen, 2021; Huang, 2021). Teachers worldwide have experienced stress and uncertainty regarding their teaching professions when they had to deliver their courses remotely (Kim & Asbury, 2020; Kim et al., 2020; Donitsa-Schmidt & Ramot, 2020; MacIntyre et al., 2020). They reported feeling unprepared for remote teaching and lacking the necessary knowledge to meet the demands of the new situation (Donitsa-Schmidt & Ramot, 2020). Teachers face challenges related to technology, pedagogy, and the educational system (Dvir & Schatz-Oppenheimer, 2020). Additionally, they experienced a decrease in their sense of success (Kraft et al., 2020). Subekti (2021) mentioned three factors that disrupted online teaching. These factors included inadequate infrastructure and resources, teachers' lack of pedagogical skills to manage online learning, and the absence of teacher-student relationships during the learning process. Sepulveda-Escobar and Morrison (2020) also suggested that teachers faced various challenges during the pandemic, such as the lack of direct interaction with students, potential distractions at home, and insufficient technological equipment. Despite some opportunities mentioned by teacher candidates, most teachers preferred face-to-face teaching under normal circumstances, as their home environments were not suitable for conducting online lessons.

Teachers also emphasized the importance of technology, academic integrity, and kindness when discussing their teaching experiences during the COVID-19 pandemic (Nasr, 2020). Regarding technology, teachers stated that applications were necessary to deliver more effective online courses. The importance of employing alternative assessment methods, such as group collaborations, video recordings, and photographs, was mentioned concerning academic integrity. Moreover, being supportive and flexible was perceived as necessary for teachers during this pandemic. Several studies have also investigated teachers' coping strategies for dealing with the challenges of teaching during the COVID-19 pandemic and how they adapted their teaching accordingly (Huang, 2021; MacIntyre et al., 2020; Moser et al., 2021). It was observed that teachers' teaching beliefs either hindered or facilitated their adaptation to online teaching. Some teachers avoided stressors, while others coped with them. Furthermore, it was found that teachers tended to avoid stressors more as their stress levels increased, indicating the need for support in dealing with the new educational circumstances arising from the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic.

As novice teachers are at the beginning of their careers, they experience challenges when they start their professions and try to cope with them (Akçor & Savaşçı, 2020; Bozkurt, 2021). Concerning this, the study conducted in the Turkish context by Zorba (2022) found that school context was important for novice teachers' professional development and adaptation to the profession. In parallel, Farrell (2009) states that most novice teachers shape their identities in their work context rather than what they have learned in their teacher education program in their first years. In addition, Güngör et al. (2019) suggest that contexts that include interactive and reflective learning practices might be beneficial to ease novice teachers' adaptation to the profession. Besides these, the COVID-19 pandemic also affected novice teachers' professional identities to a great extent. To exemplify, Çukur (2023) investigated novice English teachers' technology beliefs after their online practicum with the effect of the COVID-19 pandemic and found that even if they believe in the importance of integrating technology, they still need support and opportunities to benefit more from technology. Besides these, experienced teachers also need professional support as they construct their teaching identities repeatedly through the years and conditions they face

(Analisti, 2021). Thus, it is expected that the COVID-19 pandemic also affected their identities and teaching beliefs; thus, they need professional support.

2. Method

2.1. Research Design

This study was designed as a qualitative explanatory case study. Case studies help researchers understand related events by understanding individual cases (Yin, 2014). Furthermore, qualitative case studies allow for a detailed exploration of knowledge to understand a specific case. Gerring (2007) asserts that individual examples are more beneficial in comprehending a case than collecting a large number of cases and conducting superficial analyses. Therefore, the present study was designed as a qualitative explanatory case study to focus on individual cases and understand the specific details of each unique case.

2.2. Participants

There were twelve participants, including student, novice, and experienced EFL teachers. Four of these participants were pre-service teachers studying English Language Teaching at various state schools in Turkey, and eight of these participants were working at state schools in Turkey as English teachers. Nine of them were female, and three of them were female. The selection of participants followed a maximum variation sampling strategy, a type of purposive sampling (Creswell, 2013). The aim was to understand how different groups of English teachers developed their ideal and feared selves throughout their careers. Participants' years of experience and teaching levels were used to ensure maximum variation. Student teachers had no prior teaching experience except for practicum. Novice teachers had less than five years of teaching experience, as some investigators in the field describe novice teachers who have less than five years of teaching experience (Kim & Roth, 2011), while experienced teachers had more than five years of teaching experience. Among the participants, four of them were secondary school teachers, six of them were high school teachers, and two of them worked as instructors at the university level.

2.3. Data Collection and Analysis

The data of the study were collected through semi-structured interviews. The interview questions were prepared by the researcher, and they were validated through a vetting process by three experts in the field of language teaching. These experts were asked to review the questions and state any misunderstandings, unclear statements, or unnecessary parts. Based on their feedback, the questions were revised by the researcher through minor modifications. Then, the interview questions were piloted with two teachers from each participant group (student, novice, and experienced). These pilot procedures helped the researchers observe approximate interview durations and identify possible problems during the study.

The interviews were conducted via telephone in June and July 2020, and their voices were recorded with permission from the participants. The interview durations ranged from 10 to 30 minutes, with an average time of seventeen minutes. The collected data were analyzed using the six-step data analysis process proposed by Creswell and Plano Clark (2011). Content analysis was conducted to extract codes from the transcribed documents via MAXQDA. Then, themes were formulated from the codes, and these themes were interpreted to provide a deeper understanding. Direct quotations from the interviews were included to explain the themes in depth. According to Patton (1990), direct quotations reveal

participants' thoughts, beliefs, and experiences. Additionally, the data were presented in the form of texts, tables, and figures to enhance the clarity and reader-friendliness of the interpretations. Moreover, to ensure trustworthiness, member checking, where participants examined the analysis concerning the accurate representation of the data, and peer review, where experts in the field reviewed the results, was applied. In addition, a comparative analysis with the related literature and a purpose sampling strategy were conducted for transferability.

3. Findings

Participants expressed the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic on their possible selves. It was clear from the results that teacher groups (student, novice, and experienced) in the study signified personal qualities and professional competencies as ideal language teacher characteristics, and their fears included having undesired professional dispositions and undesired personal qualities. With respect to the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic on the participants' ideal selves, all mentioned the significance of effective technology use, not giving up easily, and being adaptable. Moreover, regarding the COVID-19 pandemic's effects on participants' feared selves, they all shared fears about not using technology effectively. In the rest of the findings section, each participant group's experiences and perceptions are reported with reference to the codes and themes that arose from the data analysis.

3.1. Student English Teachers' Possible Selves with the Effect of the COVID-19 Pandemic

The recent COVID-19 pandemic has also had an impact on the possible selves, including their ideals and fears concerning the profession of student English teachers. In terms of their ideal language teacher selves, student English teachers mentioned specific personal qualities and professional competencies. Most notably, they emphasized the importance of 'using technology effectively' during this period. Additionally, they stressed the significance of 'having the ability to adapt' as an essential characteristic of an ideal English teacher (see Table 1).

Table 1.

Student English Teachers' Possible Selves with the Effect of the COVID-19 Pandemic

Themes and Codes		*f*
Ideal Self		10
	using technology effectively	4
Personal Qualities (*f*=8)	having the ability to adapt	3
	not giving up easily	1
Professional Competency (*f*=2)	caring about students' special circumstances	1
	using alternative assessment techniques	1
Feared Self		4
Undesired Personal Qualities (*f*=1)	not using technology effectively	1
	teaching ineffectively	1
Undesired Professional Dispositions (*f*=3)	having communication problems with students at a distance	1
	getting tough with students	1

Given the influence of the COVID-19 pandemic, the ability to use technology efficiently was the most frequently mentioned characteristic of an ideal language teacher self among student teachers. They believed that in order to conduct effective lessons with students remotely,

teachers should possess the skill of utilizing technology effectively. The following quotation reflects the opinions of the student teachers on this topic.

> *During this pandemic, the most prominent topic was the use of technology in distance education. This period showed that the use of technology was so important for a teacher to continue teaching effectively. Luckily, I am good at using technology.* (S.T.4)

In addition to using technology effectively, the student teachers emphasized other personal qualities and professional competencies that they believed were important during the pandemic. As one of them, the student teachers stated that being adaptable was important, believing teachers should have adaptability skills to be ready for unexpected situations. Moreover, the student teachers suggested alternative assessment techniques as their ideal selves to teach more effectively during the pandemic, as clear from the quotations below.

> *I certainly think that adaptability was so important. This period also proved that fact. For example, teachers who cannot adapt themselves to distance education were ineffective during this pandemic. In the same way, even if I am in favor of using technology, I should also adapt myself to a teaching circumstance in which no technological equipment is present. I think teachers with adaptability skills are ideal teachers.* (S.T.4)

> *Teachers should also be able to know about and use alternative assessment methods. For example, during this pandemic, a teacher can assess students through a report, an online presentation, or a portfolio rather than just giving exams at a distance.* (S.T.3)

Concerning their fears in their teaching profession during the COVID-19 pandemic, the student teachers mainly feared having undesired professional dispositions and undesired personal qualities. Among their fears, they mentioned not using technology effectively by indicating their future fears on the issue:

> *As we are still taking courses at university during this period, our professors are giving their courses at a distance. Some of our teachers were not good at using technology, and I was afraid about whether I would be such a teacher if I had to give my lessons at a distance. Now, I am good at using technology, but I do not know how I will be in the future. I hope I can still use technology effectively in the future.* (S.T.2)

> *As I have experienced this period while I am still a university student, I observed that some teachers are tough with students. For example, even if a student does not have any opportunity to connect to the Internet, the teacher tells the student to send the homework by a certain date. Normally, I also used to think we needed to be tough with students, but now I am afraid of being too tough with students. I think we should also be humanistic if necessary.* (S.T.3)

Moreover, student-teacher participants mentioned their fears of getting strict with students. They considered that even if being tough can be necessary at certain times, being humanistic was also necessary to teach more effectively during the pandemic.

3.2. Possible Selves of Novice English Teachers on the Effect of the COVID-19 Pandemic

Novice English teachers' possible selves were also affected by the COVID-19 pandemic. They mainly emphasized "using technology effectively" during this pandemic. Moreover, they signified the importance of "not giving up easily" as their ideal selves (see Table 2).

Table 2.

Possible Selves of Novice English Teachers on the Effect of the COVID-19 Pandemic

Themes and Codes		*f*
Ideal Self		14
Personal Qualities (*f*=8)	using technology effectively	4
	not giving up easily	3
	having the ability to adapt	1
Professional Competency (*f*=6)	motivating students at a distance	2
	having collegial relationships	2
	caring about students' special circumstances	2
Feared Self		6
Undesired Personal Qualities (*f*=3)	not using technology effectively	3
Undesired Professional Dispositions (*f*=3)	losing the enthusiasm to teach	2
	not being able to motivate students	1

Novice teacher participants stated personal qualities and professional competencies as their ideal selves with the effect of the COVID-19 pandemic. Under these themes, they mainly signified the effective use of technology. They perceived effective technology use as an advantage during this pandemic period, as mentioned below.

> *During this period, teachers who can use technology effectively were definitely one step ahead. Teachers who had difficulty in using technology experienced difficulties. I think the infrastructure of "Eba" was so good. We could give our lessons without any problems. However, some teachers even did not know how to log in to the system.* (N.T.3)

Besides effective technology use, novice teacher participants emphasized not giving up easily and having the ability to adapt. They generally considered that teaching remotely adds extra workload to teachers, arguing that besides being prepared for the lesson, contacting students and making them participate in the lesson was also required. Therefore, being decided and not giving up easily was considered essential, as novice teacher participants 1 and 2 shared below.

> *Unfortunately, it was so difficult for me to teach during this pandemic period. I could not reach most students. I could not even reach their families. Only a few of them were interested. However, I did not give up. I did my best to teach effectively in this period.* (N.T.1)

> *During this pandemic, I observed a few teachers who did not communicate well with students. They just did their exams. I was afraid that I might be like them in the future. I am afraid of losing my motivation to teach in the future.* (N.T.2)

With the effect of the COVID-19 pandemic, novice English teacher participants also experienced certain challenges, affecting their feared selves. They mainly shared their fears concerning the ineffective use of technology. Moreover, as the quotations above express, they were concerned about losing enthusiasm to teach and being demotivated.

3.3. Possible Selves of Experienced English Teachers on the Effect of the COVID-19 Pandemic

Like students and novice English teachers, experienced participants were also affected by the COVID-19 pandemic (see Table 3). As ideal teacher characteristics, they mainly mentioned

personal qualities rather than professional competencies. They chiefly emphasized using technology effectively. Experienced teachers also shared their fears predominantly with respect to having undesired professional dispositions compared to undesired personal qualities. For instance, they feared experiencing communication problems with students at a distance.

As one of the ideal teacher characteristics, they mentioned the ability to communicate with students at a distance during this pandemic. Additionally, they emphasized using Web 2.0 tools to manage an effective teaching environment at a distance. Moreover, the participants also stated adaptability skills as ideal selves, and the excerpts below reflect participants' thoughts concerning these issues.

> *Using the web 2.0 tools that I mentioned before was important in this period. I also investigated these tools to make more effective lessons because I felt inadequate in using these tools.* (E.T.4)

> *During this period, the ability to adapt came into prominence. We adapted to the current situation very well, and we did not have any difficulty. Our university's infrastructure was also very good.* (E.T.3)

Table 3.

Possible Selves of Experienced English Teachers on the Effect of the COVID-19 Pandemic

Themes and Codes		f
Ideal Self		8
Professional Competency (f=2)	being able to communicate with students at a distance	2
	using technology effectively	4
Personal Qualities (f=6)	ability to adapt	1
	not giving up easily	1
Feared Self		7
	having communication problems with students at a distance	2
Undesired Professional Dispositions (f=6)	not being able to motivate students	1
	losing the enthusiasm to teach	1
	not being able to make students autonomous learners	1
	being unorganized in teaching	1
Undesired Personal Qualities (f=1)	not using technology effectively	1

Besides ideals, participants stated their fears about the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic. Undesired professional dispositions such as having communication problems were mainly listed among their fears. The quotations below clearly reflect their concerns on the issue.

> *During this pandemic period, I said that, luckily, I am not the kind of teacher who does not have a good relationship with students because I not only taught but also motivated students to follow their lessons. They also needed psychological support from teachers.* (E.T.4)

> *In this period, when I saw that participation in an online lesson was very low, I realized that my motivation to teach also decreased. It was like a supply and demand relationship. Then, I was a little bit afraid that in the future, my motivation to teach could decrease if I experienced such situations.* (E.T.1)

Among their fears, they also mentioned not being able to motivate students, losing the enthusiasm to teach, not being able to make students autonomous learners, being unorganized in teaching, and not using technology effectively. The statement above reflects an experienced teacher's concerns regarding losing enthusiasm to teach.

4. Discussion

The results of the study illuminated that participant teachers' professional identities, including their ideal and feared selves were affected by the COVID-19 pandemic. They needed to convert their teachings to distance education unexpectedly, and this situation resulted in teachers redefining their teaching selves.

The analysis of results indicated that all teacher groups, including students, novices, and experienced ones, signified the use of technology effectively and their ideal selves. Besides this, they also emphasized adaptability skills and, being determined and not giving up easily as ideal teacher characteristics during the COVID-19 pandemic. Unlike experienced teachers, some student and novice teachers also believed that teachers should care about students' special circumstances as they were also passing through difficult times. Parallel to teacher participants' ideal selves, teachers primarily feared ineffective technology use during the COVID-19 pandemic. Additionally, they feared losing enthusiasm to teach and experiencing communication problems with students at a distance.

Moreover, some student teachers thought that an ideal English teacher should be able to use alternative assessment techniques, some novice teachers thought teachers should have good interaction with their colleagues and should be able to motivate students at a distance, and experienced teachers considered that an ideal English teacher should be good at in communication with students at a distance. Parallel to these findings, Kim and Asbury (2020) found that the teachers emphasized the importance of relationships, a sense of worry for the vulnerable, and finding a way to overcome the effect of COVID-19 on teachers' teaching practices. Huang (2021) also expressed that experienced EFL teachers reconstructed their professional identities due to the COVID-19 pandemic. They re-regulated their daily routines, such as preparing lesson plans suitable for online teaching. They also regulated their pedagogic and content knowledge to be more effective at distance teaching. Additionally, Nasr (2020) searched teachers' teaching practices during the COVID-19 pandemic and deduced that teachers emphasized technology, academic integrity, and kindness, as consistent with the findings of the present study. Moreover, they signified the importance of using alternative assessment techniques in parallel to results. Teachers also considered that they should be supportive and flexible, in line with the present study's findings.

Similarly, in the Chile context during the COVID-19 pandemic, Sepulveda-Escobar and Morrison (2020) studied pre-service teachers' challenges and opportunities for teaching placement and inferred that teachers emphasized using technology efficiently and getting out of their comfort zone. Dvir and Schatz-Oppenheimer (2020) also shared that teachers experienced both technological and pedagogical challenges and opportunities during the COVID-19 pandemic. Concerning the effect of the pandemic on participants' feared selves, all three teacher groups feared being unable to use technology effectively. Similarly, Savaş (2019) deduced that teachers needed support from specialists to manage a more effective computer-assisted language learning (CALL). In addition, both novice and experienced teachers feared losing their enthusiasm to teach and being unable to motivate their students. Moreover, the teachers feared teaching ineffectively, having communication problems with

their students, and being unorganized, parallel to the findings of Kim et al. (2020). In addition, they had practical concerns and worried about their students. Consistent with these findings, Donitsa-Schmidt & Ramot (2000) found that teachers in Israel were unprepared for remote teaching and not only had practical concerns but also had to deal with the problem of most students being absent during online teaching. Similarly, Kaden (2020) investigated changes in teachers' professional lives during the COVID-19 pandemic and stated that teachers faced challenges in reaching their students at a distance. Moreover, the study of Subekti (2021) on pre-service English teachers' learning practices with the effect of the Covid-19 pandemic demonstrated that poor infrastructure and resources, teachers' lack of pedagogical skills, and difficulty of relationship between students and teachers affected the quality of online teaching. Moreover, the results illuminated that caring for students' special circumstances affected teaching practices positively.

Consistent with the present results, Sclafani (2021) argued that flexibility in teaching was necessary, and to be more effective in teaching, a change in pedagogy was crucial, especially during this COVID-19 pandemic. Similarly, Marek et al. (2021) stated that teachers emphasized adaptability and good planning during the COVID-19 pandemic. Moreover, Sepulveda-Escobar and Morrison (2020) expressed the challenges teachers experienced during the pandemic, particularly concerning the lack of direct interaction with their students, possible distractions at home, and a lack of technological equipment. Moreover, even if some opportunities were mentioned by pre-service teachers, such as being able to learn using technology effectively, most of the participants preferred the face-to-face teaching placement they would have experienced under normal circumstances. Additionally, Kraft et al. (2020) investigated teachers' sense of success and the effect on their working conditions during the COVID-19 pandemic and deduced that teachers' sense of success decreased during the pandemic. Moreover, novice teachers experienced more disadvantages than advantages in their online teaching practices. Among the challenges, the participants expressed the technical problems they faced during online teaching. However, contrary to the findings, the participants in Kaden's (2020) study considered that individualized assessment was a positive aspect of online teaching as learning was funny and enjoyable during COVID-19. Additionally, unlike these findings, Chen's (2021) study demonstrated that a novice teacher stressed authenticity and communication as crucial for online teaching during the COVID-19 pandemic.

5. Conclusion

The results demonstrated that the COVID-19 pandemic affected English teachers' professional identities. They mentioned their ideal and feared selves with the effect of that pandemic. As ideal selves, students, novices, and experienced teachers mentioned the importance of using technology effectively. Moreover, they mentioned adaptability skills, not giving up easily, and being able to communicate with students at a distance. As feared selves, participants primarily focused on the fear of not using technology effectively, losing enthusiasm to teach, and having problems communicating with students at a distance.

As clear from the results, the increasing need for effective use of technology, coupled with the recent COVID-19 pandemic that required teachers to conduct remote lessons, suggests additional courses in teacher education programs to enhance teachers' proficiency in using technology for teaching and learning practices. These courses could provide practical tools and applications that student teachers can utilize in teaching the target language. Student teachers could be encouraged to incorporate technology in language teaching through these

courses by preparing presentations or engaging in micro-teachings with the aid of technology.

Furthermore, the COVID-19 pandemic has highlighted the stress and challenges faced by teachers when transitioning to remote teaching, underscoring the importance of adaptability skills. Teacher education programs can support teacher candidates in developing adaptability skills and being prepared for unexpected situations through undergraduate courses. To foster this, teacher educators can encourage student teachers to consider unforeseen circumstances, such as a lack of computers or electricity at times. As a suggestion, student teachers could engage in micro-teachings under different teaching circumstances to better prepare themselves for varying teaching environments. Lastly, teacher education programs should incorporate trauma-informed pedagogy (Downey, 2007), where teachers plan their teachings while considering the impact of trauma on students' psychology and educational practices. An additional course focusing on pedagogical practices during traumatic experiences that students might have encountered could be included in the curriculum.

The results also indicate that in-service English teachers need support and professional development opportunities to cope with unexpected situations like the COVID-19 pandemic. To manage this, online or face-to-face platforms could be established by the Ministry of National Education, enabling in-service teachers to interact with one another and share their thoughts, concerns, or problems. It is also important to encourage teachers at all stages of their careers to participate in online forums which is on EFL teaching issues to enable the exchange of experiences and knowledge. Moreover, questionnaires or interviews can be conducted regularly to get insights from EFL teachers concerning their professional development needs. Based on these needs, online or face-to-face seminars and workshops can be organized to supply their specific requirements.

As a suggestion, longitudinal studies could be conducted to investigate the long-term effects of the pandemic on teaching practices and English teachers' ideal and feared selves at all stages of their careers. These studies can illuminate the challenges that teachers experienced during the pandemic and examine how it affects their professional identities. The existing literature indicates that teachers often experience confusion and stress due to sudden school closures and uncertainty, affecting their professional identities (Kim & Asbury, 2020). Therefore, further studies are needed to observe the long-term effects of the pandemic on teachers' professional identities and their teaching and learning practices.

6. Limitation of the Study

Although the study was conducted by paying attention to scientific and ethical considerations, there were certain limitations. First, even if it were a qualitative study, it would be better to increase the number of participants to understand their ideal and feared selves in a more detailed way. Second, as suitable to the nature of a qualitative study, a thicker description could better reflect participants' professional identities. Third, the data were collected through interviews with the selected participants. However, collecting multiple data, such as observations and reflection papers, would be better to support interview results. After all, the present study is expected to contribute to the existing literature to understand the possible effects of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Note on Ethical Issues

The authors confirm that ethical approval was obtained from the university with protocol number 414 ODTU 2019.

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