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Teachers' Well-being in Online EFL Classes during the COVID-19 Epidemic

Elham Zarfsaz¹

Gaziosmanpaşa University, Faculty of Education, Department of Foreign Languages, Tokat/Turkey
ORCID: 0000-0002-6172-6388

Serpil Uçar

Gaziosmanpaşa University, Faculty of Education, Department of Foreign Languages, Tokat/Turkey
ORCID: 0000-0001-9722-8236

ABSTRACT

In these hectic times around the world, it seems as though teachers who were the leaders of education during the pandemic have been forgotten. While it is their responsibility to give high-quality teaching, the COVID-19 epidemic has influenced their lives and welfare. However, there is scant research to support how the pandemic has affected language instructors' well-being. This qualitative study investigates the well-being of English as a Foreign Language instructors in Turkish public universities throughout the COVID-19 pandemic in order to close this gap. It was discovered that the pandemic significantly negatively impacted the well-being of eight instructors who participated in interviews. It revealed that the current conditions of instructors were not contributing to their well-being. Instead, the economic conditions and inflation led to teacher overwork and affected life-work balance that is detrimental to their well-being. Besides, unproductive teacher-student relationships and also problems with technology frustrated the teachers. As high teacher well-being can influence learner achievement, learner progress, learner well-being, teacher job satisfaction, and collective healthy well-being in the workplace, teacher well-being should be on the agenda of all stakeholders. The teaching profession is already stressful, and the recently developed issues have increased the previously present difficulties. Based on the findings, suggestions are made for how authorities might assist teachers to thrive during and after the epidemic in order to raise the quality of teaching.

Key Words: Online education, Teacher well-being, Covid 19

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¹ Corresponding author:
PhD
elham.zarfsaz@gop.edu.tr

COVID-19 Salgını Sırasında Çevrimiçi EFL Derslerinde Öğretmenlerin İyi Oluşu

Elham Zarfsaz¹

Gaziosmanpaşa Üniversitesi, Eğitim Fakültesi, Yabancı Diller Eğitimi Bölümü

ORCID: 0000-0002-6172-6388

Serpil Uçar

Gaziosmanpaşa Üniversitesi, Eğitim Fakültesi, Yabancı Diller Eğitimi Bölümü

ORCID: 0000-0001-9722-8236

ÖZET

Dünyanın dört bir yanındaki bu yoğun günlerde, pandemi döneminde eğitimin lideri olan öğretmenler unutulmuşu benziyor. Yüksek kaliteli eğitim vermek onların sorumluluğunda olsa da, COVID-19 salgını onların yaşamlarını ve iyi oluşunu etkiledi. Ancak, pandeminin dil öğretmenlerinin refahını nasıl etkilediğini destekleyen çok az araştırma var. Bu nitel çalışma, bu açığı kapatmak için COVID-19 salgını boyunca Türk devlet üniversitelerindeki Yabancı Dil olarak İngilizce öğretmenlerinin durumunu araştırmaktadır. Görüşmelere katılan sekiz kişinin sağlık durumu üzerinde pandeminin önemli ölçüde olumsuz etkisi olduğu keşfedildi. Öğretmenlerin mevcut koşullarının refahlarına katkıda bulunmadığını ortaya koydu. Daha ziyade, ekonomik koşullar ve enflasyon, öğretmenlerin fazla çalışmasına yol açmış ve onların refahı için zararlı olan yaşam-ış dengesini etkilemiştir. Bunun yanı sıra verimsiz öğretmen-öğrenci ilişkileri ve teknoloji ile ilgili sorunlar da öğretmenleri hayal kırıklığına uğratmıştır. Yüksek öğretmen refahı öğrenci başarısını, öğrencinin ilerlemesini, öğrenci refahını, öğretmen iş tatminini ve iş yerinde toplu sağlıklı refahı etkileyebileceğinden, öğretmen refahı tüm paydaşların gündeminde olmalıdır. Öğretmenlik mesleği zaten stresli ve son zamanlarda gelişen sorunlar daha önce var olan zorlukları daha da artırdı. Bulgulara dayanarak, yetkililerin, öğretim kalitesini artırmak için salgın sırasında ve sonrasında öğretmenlerin gelişmesine nasıl yardımcı olabileceğine dair önerilerde bulunmaktadır.

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Introduction / Giriş

¹ Corresponding author:

PhD

elham.zarfsaz@gop.edu.tr

Before the COVID-19 outbreak, language teachers were already stressed and anxious due to their excessive workload and low pay. Role conflict, perceived lack of authority, and unstable employment contracts were widespread issues in language teaching. Life initially changed to chaos due to the COVID-19 pandemic's outbreak and the swift actions that had to be taken in all spheres of life, including schooling, followed by a new normal and an uncertain future. However, the stress that teachers were already under has increased due to the need to adapt to online education and then to work on a screen, different communication methods with students and parents, the erratic balance between work and personal life, the need to advance their technological knowledge for effective course delivery, as well as health issues, social exclusion, and constrained boundaries. This abrupt transformation has undoubtedly made life more difficult for everyone in the world, including language instructors. But how has this lockout affected the well-being of EFL teachers?

Positive psychology, a new discipline of psychology with the primary goal of supporting individuals in enjoying a happy life, is regarded as a basic idea of well-being. Understanding stresses that harm teachers and the factors that make them feel good, enhance their well-being, and enable them to thrive are all part of positive psychology. It is thought that having personal assets like resilience, self-esteem, self-efficacy, and social perspectives such as social support from coworkers and staff can improve well-being. In light of this, well-being is defined as "occurring when individuals have the psychological, social, and physical resources they need to meet a particular psychological, social, and/or physical challenge. The wellness of people suffers when they face more significant obstacles than they can handle, and vice versa (Dodge et al., 2012, p. 230)

Figure 1 provides a vivid illustration of this, showing well-being as a point of equilibrium between a person's resources and challenges. According to Dodge et al. (2012), there is a critical balance between challenges and resources and a set point for well-being and homeostasis.

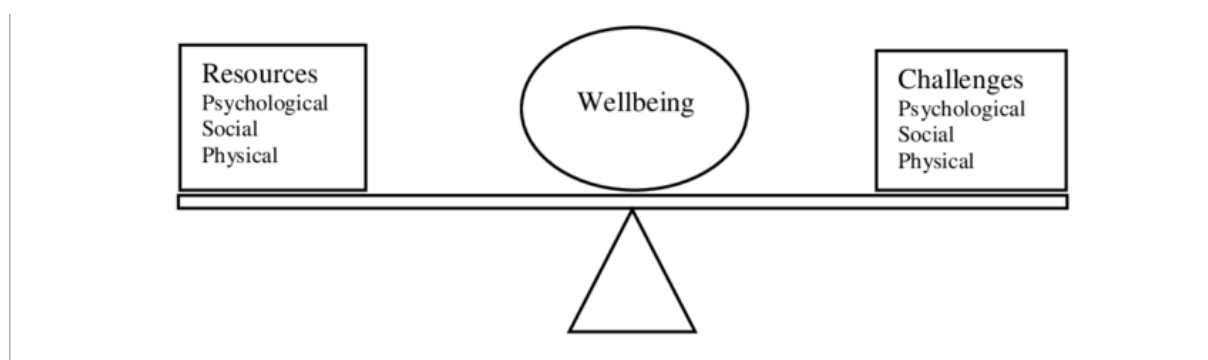


Figure 1 Definition of Well-being (Dodge et al., 2012)

According to earlier research, a teacher's personal and professional life are intertwined, and both personal (such as self-efficacy, identity, and motivation) and contextual (such as workload, relationships, and perceived status) aspects have an impact on a teacher's well-being (Mairitsch et al., 2021). In order to arrive at a comprehensive understanding of language teacher welfare, an ecological view that considers sociopolitical, institutional, cultural, personal, and interactional components is required. The current pandemic, which is a "macrosystem disaster and time-specific event within our

era" (Wang & DeLaquil, 2020, p. 2), and consequently, with many new intertwined factors affecting the world, economies, emotions, and people, has made the situation much more complicated today.

As a result, well-being is influenced by various elements because it is an elusive and complicated context-specific phenomenon. In their book on teacher well-being, Mercer and Gregersen (2020) suggested researching teacher well-being in areas with unequal educational growth between the East and the West and a shortage of such studies, particularly during the COVID-19 pandemic. This endeavor aims to investigate the well-being of EFL teachers during the COVID-19 Pandemic to respond to their need for additional research in the field and to add to the scant amount of existing literature in this area.

Studies on Well-being

The concept of well-being has been the subject of numerous studies thus far in various people and settings. Nevertheless, students and teachers have received attention when it comes to education. Along with other psychological factors associated to teaching, teachers' well-being has been chiefly investigated (e.g., burnout, self-efficacy, motivation). For instance, in three cases of a study by McKay and Barton (2018), burnout and teacher wellness were considered.

Various art-related reflection activities were used to gauge how successfully teachers' personal and environmental resources supported their well-being and resilience. With these strategies, teachers were able to identify all the elements that posed obstacles for them in their jobs, and this awareness of difficulties enabled them to self-regulate. Collegiality was bolstered by tangible, written, and verbal communication channels that encouraged teachers to think about their ideas and share them. Art-related methods improve the overall quality of teachers' meaning-making, which promotes their adaptability and well-being. This problem-solving could also assist teachers on the verge of quitting their jobs to stay in the field. That is, over time, reflection in various forms increased teachers' welfare and vitality, and they did not strive to survive on their own.

Similarly, Arslan (2018) looked at the connection between cognitive wellness and public school teachers' positive work-related performance in Turkey. The Teacher Subjective Well-being Questionnaire (TSWQ) and the Satisfaction with Life Scale were distributed to 295 instructors (SWLS). The correlational study revealed a favorable and significant correlation between teachers' overall functioning as teachers and their sense of well-being. The results do show a correlation between high levels of teacher well-being and teachers' successful and productive performance at work.

Furthermore, in England and Wales, researchers did a different sizable study on 3217 students and 1167 secondary school teachers (Harding et al., 2019). The study sought to determine whether there was any connection between psychological stress, student well-being, and instructor well-being. According to the findings, happier teachers were linked to happier students with less psychological distress. The researchers utilized the Total Difficulties Score (TDS) and the Warwick Edinburgh Mental Well-being Scale (WEMWBS) to assess the correlation between the variables. According to statistical study, instructor presenteeism and the caliber of interactions between students and teachers were significant. This cross-sectional study validated the relationship between psychological discomfort, student distress, and teacher welfare.

Similarly, Barbieri, Sulis, Porcu, and Toland (2019) employed a questionnaire in a nationwide survey in Italy to uncover a potential link between high school teachers' well-being and their sociodemographic and professional backgrounds. The survey included 7,055 instructors and looked at characteristics including job satisfaction, career drive, investment, and working conditions for teachers. The results showed that younger colleagues who participated in professional development activities had higher satisfaction levels than older colleagues. The findings also imply that teachers' well-being, linked to job

satisfaction, is positively impacted by access to human and physical resources at work and opportunities for professional growth.

The dynamic association between altruism and self-efficacy (a psychological characteristic) and work and income satisfaction was explored by Song, Gu, and Zhang (2020) in Asia (cognitive dimension). Over the course of three years, 1500 instructors in China's eastern regions participated in the study. Teachers' perceptions of well-being were not limited to happiness, as revealed by a structural equation modeling (SEM) examination of the potential correlations between the variables.

Although their fundamental living conditions had a significant impact on these values and efficacy, their rather altruistic and scholarly ideals played a significant effect on their well-being. The results showed that teachers' internal and exterior requirements were intertwined, and all three might impact their general welfare. The study found a significant relationship between income satisfaction and job satisfaction. It concluded that excellent teacher retention depends on appealing compensation and an environment that supports good teaching and learning.

Talbot and Mercer (2018) sought to comprehend how language teachers perceive emotional well-being and how they regulate it in the US, Japan, and Austria. Language instructors in the three nations participated in a series of semi-structured interviews to learn more about the difficulties and rewards of teaching, the things that improve or harm their mental well-being, and the emotional coping mechanisms accompanying it. The data revealed that each case was distinct, despite some commonalities. People, particularly the students, mainly influenced the well-being of language teachers.

High significance was also placed on the social aspects of teachers' emotional experiences and their perceptions of their competence vs. those of non-native teachers. To deal with difficulties, teachers in their study used various tactics, including cognitive reappraisal, problem-directed action, and downward social or self-comparisons.

Additionally, Mercer (2020) researched Austria's private-sector language teacher well-being. Eight volunteer instructors participated in two rounds of semi-structured interviews with the help of journals and visual aids. The wellness of language teachers in the private sector is shown to be characterized by the nature of the business model, which typically results in uncertain employment and prospects for teachers. Most of the issues facing teachers were caused by maximizing profits, resulting in low wages, shoddy job security, a shortage of personnel, and a lack of investment in instructors, or "precarity." The institute's emphasis on ranking hierarchies insulated teachers' self-esteem from the harmful effects of downward comparisons that adversely influenced their well-being. Teachers' well-being was also in danger due to time constraints brought on by their heavy workload. However, the aspects of teaching that instructors valued most were their interactions with students and coworkers and the favorable work cultures that differed across different institutions and improved their well-being.

Regarding other foreign languages, Jin et al. (2021) examined the health of 7 teachers of Mandarin Chinese in the UK. Four primary ecologies were found through the analysis of semi-structured interviews to be crucial to the wellness of language teachers. An environment of the school, an environment of work and life, an environment of the educational system, and a societal environment of teaching are described as known as ecologies (specifically teaching modern languages). Teachers used psychological, social, and contextual resources to deal with difficulties and maintain a good attitude. The connection between language teachers' well-being, resiliency, and enjoyment of teaching foreign

languages was investigated in Italy. 174 instructors of Italian completed the questionnaires as a foreign language, and analysis revealed that resilience wellness was a significant predictor of how much they enjoyed teaching foreign languages.

According to the findings of the study, enthusiastic and resourceful teachers lay the groundwork for student growth since a pleasant learning environment is necessary for learners linguistic competence (Proietti et al., 2021).

In Austria, teachers of Content and Language Integrated Learning (CLIL) were also asked about their well-being. 16 teachers were questioned by Hofstadler, Babic, Lämmerer, Mercer, and Oberdorfer (2021) regarding their thoughts on and experiences with CLIL instruction. The data analysis employed the ecological systems theory of Bronfenbrenner. According to Hofstadler et al. (2021), factors at the national, institutional, and classroom levels have an impact on language teachers' well-being. These factors can have both positive and negative effects depending on the individual.

For instance, while some teachers viewed autonomy as a form of freedom, it may also represent a lack of direction and ambiguity. Teachers also noted instances of both long- and short-term changes in well-being. Their happiness was also influenced by their perceived standing as teachers and their perceived underappreciation, and those who understood the value of CLIL may succeed in their careers. It was also shown that the teacher-student interaction had a favorable impact on the wellness of the instructor. In contrast, while some teachers viewed autonomy as a form of freedom, it may also represent a lack of direction and ambiguity. Teachers also noted instances of both long- and short-term changes in well-being. Their happiness was also influenced by their perceived standing as teachers and their perceived underappreciation, and those who understood the value of CLIL may succeed in their careers. It was also shown that the teacher-student interaction had a favorable impact on the wellness of the instructor.

The COVID-19 Pandemic and Well-Being Studies

Studies on the wellness of EFL teachers during the COVID-19 pandemic are scarce. For instance, MacIntyre et al. (2019) used a specially designed smartphone app called Moodie in an international study with 47 language teachers from various countries to evaluate various stress factors, personality types, and wellness of teachers using Goldberg's (1992) Big Five Measuring system, PERMA, and a survey on stressful situations during the COVID-19 pandemic. Although stressors negatively correlated with teachers' well-being, the statistical analysis of the Likert-scale items suggested that some personality features could support teachers' well-being.

The study identifies various factors that contribute to stress in the teaching profession, including a high workload, money issues, job instability, and relationship conflict. It also discusses the possible advantages of encouraging teacher wellness. Using a Google Docs online questionnaire, MacIntyre et al. (2020) implemented the ideas in an international study with over 600 language teachers to examine stresses and 14 coping mechanisms during the COVID-19 pandemic. The coping mechanisms were divided into avoidant and approach categories. The analysis showed a strong positive association between the approach category and positive psychological outcomes like well-being, happiness, health, and resilience and a negative relationship between the avoidance category.

Furthermore, during the pandemic, eight primary Tesol instructors in New Jersey, USA were the subject of a study by Wong, Pompeo-Fagnoli, and Harriott (2022). Their extensive semi-structured interviews revealed that teachers were more stressed during the pandemic. The cause was a lack of communication

among coworkers, a lack of administration assistance, a lack of technical resources among pupils, and the instruction of learners at various competency levels. The perceived difficulties were thought to impact the instructors' mental and emotional well-being. Finally, five language instructors were questioned by Kwee (2021) about their encounters integrating technology into the classroom during a global study conducted during the disease outbreak.

A high degree of wellness and supportive learning environments encouraged continuing the profession, whereas ambiguity about learning outcomes discouraged teachers from pursuing further online education. However, it was notable that all participants were from industrialized nations and had relatively high socioeconomic backgrounds.

According to a review of the literature, studies on teacher well-being have primarily used questionnaires and statistical analysis to determine the relationship between teacher well-being and other teacher-related variables rather than delving deeply into the components of well-being and posing "how" and "why" questions, as is the case in qualitative research. In addition, few studies specifically address English teachers.

Due to all existing research only including teachers in developed nations, where there may be sufficient technology advancements to adjust to online education quickly, this number is even more constrained during the COVID-19 epidemic when EFL teachers face various stressors and challenges. In order to close this knowledge gap and identify the factors that either enhance or detract from teacher well-being, the current study has opted to conduct in-depth interviews with EFL teachers in order to gain a thorough understanding of their well-being in this setting. The following inquiries on Turkish EFL teachers in state universities were made:

- a) What elements enhance or diminish the well-being of EFL instructors working in state universities during the pandemic?
- b) Which self-regulation techniques are most frequently employed by EFL instructors to address wellbeing-related issues?

Methodology / Yöntem

Participants

An announcement was sent to Whatsapp groups of EFL instructors to participate in an interview on the well-being of language teachers. In total, eight teachers opted-in, and a meeting time was scheduled for the one-on-one online interview between participants and a researcher. They were tenured professors who worked for foreign language institutions and educational faculties in Turkish state Universities. Participants in the study included 8 EFL instructors working in state Universities (men: 4, women: 4). Participants' ages ranged from 29 to 45, and their teaching experience ranged from 4 to 18 years. Except for two participants with bachelor's degrees in English literature, the others were either Ph.D. holders or postgraduate ELT students.

Materials and Techniques

An interview protocol was created for lengthy, semi-structured interviews with the participants. The questions were modified from (Mercer, 2020), and a faculty member who is an authority in Applied Linguistics validated them. The initial interview protocol was therefore altered and tested with three language instructors. Before the study's conclusion, the interview protocol underwent a few minor adjustments. The following are a few of the interview questions:

- What do you think about your workload? Has it changed as a result of the pandemic?
- What is your current personal and professional life stresses you out?
- How often do you become absorbed in what you are doing at work?
- How satisfied are you currently with your work?
- How would you describe the relationships in your workplace? (With colleagues, learners) What aspects of your work do you love/hate?

After obtaining the participant's consent, the interviews were recorded using a voice recorder. All of the interviews were held in December 2021, and they all lasted between 34 and 63 minutes or about an hour. It was made clear to the participants that they could communicate in English or Turkish. The entire interview was eventually translated into English for additional research. All of the interviews took place online using Zoom and Skype.

Findings / Bulgular

We use a generic inductive method of data analysis in this work. This method identifies the significant ideas in the interview transcripts that are pertinent to the study's goals. The themes and groups that result from the common fundamental notions are then discussed (Thomas, 2006). To do this, the interviews were first audio-recorded, and the interview transcripts were then painstakingly read through numerous times to determine subcategories. Each category was afterward further divided into subheadings.

Educator Welfare

EFL teachers discussed perceived factors that enhanced and diminished their well-being as part of an investigation into teacher well-being. The conclusions are arranged in the manner described below.

Contributing elements to wellness

First, the internal drive

Participants' inherent feelings and emotions for language and instruction were the source of their positive emotionality. Most of the teachers in our survey reported an inner drive to keep teaching since they had a passion for languages. They frequently had the dream of teaching languages. The following excerpt provides more details:

Excerpt 1: Teaching English has always been a goal of mine. I regrettably don't have the time to learn many more languages; When I teach English, I feel good.

Student success and the social effects of instruction

In this study, student achievement was one of the critical factors influencing teachers' well-being. All of the participants expressed their happiness at seeing their students succeed. They added that good feelings permeate a teacher when "helping others and society." When they could support students as they matured, teachers felt their lives had a purpose and were genuinely satisfied. One explained, for example:

Extract 2: When I witness their achievement, I am ecstatic. I'm overjoyed about it. I do not just teach them languages. I'm there to assist them in becoming contributing members of society and in shaping the way society will be in the future.

Factors compromising well-being

Workload and financial pressures

Teachers were perceived as those who always worked a lot but were still underpaid. They concluded that their pay was below what was fair. Each and every participant agreed that receiving money had a detrimental effect on their well-being. A majority of language teachers were found to be overworked

due to financial issues, and the present national inflation exacerbated the issue. This was the most significant barrier to life-work balance (both before and during the epidemic). The issue is explained in the extract below.

Extract 3: A balance is impossible. Because in order to survive, we must work nonstop. My family frequently accuses me of neglecting them because I put in many hours at work. I have no free time.

The constraints of technology

The pandemic's technological pressures appeared to act as a diversion, inhibiting the teaching deep flow moment, which is crucial to well-being. While instructing in actual classrooms, the participants frequently had periods of flow and intense engagement, which benefited their health. The occurrence was less common in the online version, though. Deep participation was occasionally hampered by distractions like erratic internet connections, blackouts, and dead batteries on necessary devices (owned by the teacher or the students). Here is an illustration of the level of teacher engagement before and after the pandemic:

Extract 4: Prior to the epidemic, I frequently became preoccupied with my work and lost sight of time. Because I completely forgot about our time limit, I can still clearly. But I don't think I can recall there being that many instances in the online classes. Sometimes I can't emotionally connect with my kids since many connection-related distractions exist.

Collaboration between coworkers

There appears to be a change in connection dynamics during the outbreak. Before the pandemic, instructors in public universities appeared to have a strong sense of community and a close-knit circle of other teachers. However, the relationship suffered during the epidemic due to a lack of effective contact.

Extract 5: Before the epidemic, my coworkers were friendly, and I enjoyed working with them, but it has been a while since I've spoken to them. We missed each other.

The dynamic between students and Instructors

The observations made throughout the interviews revealed a wholly unfavorable relationship between EFL instructors and students in state universities (before and during the pandemic). Because many students were unmotivated, and fell short of teachers' expectations, teachers were unable to establish strong connections with their students. This poorly built relationship severely harmed the teacher's wellness. An instructor said:

Extract 6: Students lack motivation. They make me bored since they don't recognize the need for language study. Additionally, we have issues with these students even in online classes.

Comparative social analysis

The process of social comparison among teachers appeared to be taking place. Society's social comparisons appeared to lower instructors' self-esteem. Local and national media have consistently focused on teachers' problems; as a result, aside from EFL teachers, the perception of all state universities and schools has gradually deteriorated, which has had a negative impact on teachers. In the meantime, the issue was exacerbated, and teacher well-being was negatively impacted by the hierarchical ordering of instructors in schools.

Extract 7: They frequently discuss our issues. Everyone, including students, believes that we are underprivileged and must work hard after school. This undermines the deference we demand from teachers, and it also lowers our self-esteem.

Pandemic-related anxiety

At the start of the pandemic, teachers and instructors appeared to be under a lot of stress, concerned for the health of their families, and finding it difficult to adjust to online learning without any support or

assistance from anyone. However, as time passed, the situation appeared to be more under control as people received vaccinations and teachers gained experience with online learning.

Extract 8: At first, I was upset because I kept thinking about my family and how I could never lose even one of my closest friends. They wanted us to switch to online classes suddenly, as I recall. You know, everything seemed to depend on us alone because there was no planning or aid from the other party.

Teachers' distaste

We asked teachers what they found most unpleasant about their line of work. It was shown that the primary components that language teachers in public universities disliked the most were money and service, students' lack of respect, inauthentic teaching materials, a lack of adequate school facilities, a large number of students in one class, and online evaluation. An excerpt from one of the complaints made by teachers is shown below.

Extract 9: An uninspiring situation. Input can be excessive or lacking altogether, depending on the situation. Additionally, the assessment was much better in the past. However, because of the nature of online education, we are aware that students are cheating but are unable to prevent it.

No opportunity for improvement

Nothing seemed to exist in this situation when questioned if there were any opportunities for advancement. Professional development seemed to be one of the infrequent possibilities provided by the Ministry of Higher Education, and when it did, it was never successful enough for any language instructor to be interested in taking part. Only three of ten young teachers who said they were driven to advance personally acknowledged taking part in online professional development webinars (offered by several colleges, not the Ministry of Higher Education). Indeed, it appeared that teachers' well-being was diminished by the lack of opportunities for career advancement. Teachers also did not perceive the need to take action for their personal improvement because there was no supervision or other form of motivation.

Extract 10: They don't even think it's important for us to become better educators. They merely offer a few workshops that have nothing to do with our line of work. Never does the Ministry of Higher Education provide any worthwhile workshops. I occasionally search for international internet webinars so I can participate and gain knowledge.

Techniques for coping with negativity

Taking problem-focused action

The problem-directed action technique was almost always used by teachers in this study to address issues. In order to improve the circumstance and hasten adaptation, problem-directed activity "involves thinking about and acting on the undesirable event" (Larsen & Prizmic, 2008, p. 272). For instance, a teacher who struggled with his pupils made an effort to overlook their disruptive behavior in order to prevent potential conflicts. In order to prevent any disconnections during his lesson, another teacher who was concerned about a shaky internet connection set up an additional internet connection at home. To supplement dry teaching materials and inspire students, another educator created PowerPoint files.

Negative societal or self-reflection

Some people compare themselves to others who are less fortunate in order to improve their well-being; this tactic is known as downward comparison (Wills, 1981). This was somewhat observed in our investigation as well. For instance, a teacher made comparisons between himself and his peers in the business world. He emphasized the precarious contracts and inadequate salaries of instructors working

in the private sector. He emphasized that he felt lucky in comparison to others. Another teacher mentioned a friend of his who taught at a university and had a better degree but was in a far worse financial, insurance, and contractual condition. A new instructor assessed his progress throughout the years and compared it to how he was when he first started teaching.

Discussion / Tartışma

Understanding the wellness of EFL instructors at Turkish State Universities during the COVID-19 pandemic was the goal of the current study. As a result, both positive and negative aspects that affect teachers' well-being are discovered. It's not a good sign when our context experiences harmful elements overshadowing positive well-being-enhancing factors.

In this study, language instructors have an innate desire to teach English. Their primary motivation was a love of languages and teaching, and their desire to become teachers was motivated by their ability to benefit students and, in turn, society. Before the pandemic, they appeared to be regularly engaged in their teaching duties; nevertheless, this engagement was reduced in online classes due to some distractions. Relationship patterns were impacted by the pandemic as well. Although there was an excellent working connection between teachers and school employees before the pandemic, it somewhat deteriorated during the epidemic, which was detrimental to teacher well-being.

The participants reported increasing workload during the epidemic, the primary cause of which was an effort to make online courses less monotonous for students and low compensation during national inflation. Things seemed considerably worse when the pandemic started, and the switch to online learning happened quickly. Unexpected obstacles like this require a lot of labor. Teachers appeared to be overburdened by their workload, carrying the entire load alone with no assistance or training, which had a negative impact on their well-being. This observation is consistent with the findings of Wong et al. (2022). The COVID-19 pandemic made work-life balance even worse because of new expenses and a high rate of inflation, which was already unstable before the pandemic because of financial issues.

While Wong et al. (2022) also discovered a balance between work and life, the teachers in their study appeared to suffer from perfectionism. In contrast, in our study, this imbalance was primarily brought on by the country's current economic situation, which was detrimental to language teachers' well-being. This was also the critical aspect of instruction that our participants despised the most. In the Chinese setting, Song et al. (2020) also observed that teachers' low salaries had a substantial impact on their happiness and overall life satisfaction, significantly affecting the cognitive component of teachers' well-being. Teachers looked unfamiliar with professional development courses as they struggled to maintain a tenuous work-life balance on their own.

Our study's findings don't seem to agree with those of Kwee (2021), who observed teachers' good well-being in online instruction during the COVID-19 epidemic. His study's participants felt that working from home gave them more flexibility with regard to their teaching schedules and a better sense of life-work balance. They were not as worn out as in past years as a result of classroom management concerns, and all of these things encouraged them to continue teaching online. This was not the case in our study, and teachers still had to cope with the disruptive behavior of their demotivated students while working harder to manage and engage them.

In general, low pay, long hours, an excessive workload, and a poor teacher-learner relationship (Kinman, 2001) affect teachers' job satisfaction and appear to be the primary factors affecting teacher well-being, which were also noted in our study. These issues appear to be widespread across a variety of settings. Academic stress and decreased well-being are the results of adding all the above-listed issues to the stress and health issues that teachers experience during the epidemic. Also, during the COVID-19 pandemic, Kotowski, Davis, and Barratt (2022) made comparable discoveries. According to their

research, teachers' levels of stress and burnout considerably increased during the pandemic, and they were less able to manage stress and maintain a healthy work-life balance. In a similar vein, Creely, Laletas, Fernandes, Subban, and Southcott (2021) found that the academic workload pressures during the pandemic led to mental distress and exhaustion in their analysis of the narratives of five university professors. Work-life mismatch, being cut off from professional networks, being constrained by the lockdown, and the mounting uncertainty made it urgent to improve personal coping mechanisms.

It is advised to replicate the study with a large number of participants and in diverse situations, given the limitations of the current research, particularly the small number of participants. This is because varied contextual factors can affect teacher well-being. Professionals who instruct in disciplines other than languages may also form the basis of future research because of the social standing and relevance of the subject matter in question to students' daily lives. In this study, we were only able to highlight the most important aspects of teacher well-being; longitudinal studies can delve deeper to concentrate on changes that occur over the course of a person's career.

Conclusion

The well-being of EFL instructors working in public settings during the COVID-19 pandemic was the subject of this study. It became clear instructors' working circumstances at the time were detrimental to their well-being. Instead, because of the economy and inflation, instructors were overworked, which had a negative impact on their welfare. The teachers were also frustrated by unproductive teacher-student interactions and tech-related issues. The agenda of all stakeholders should include teacher well-being since it can affect learner accomplishment, learner progress, learner well-being, teacher job satisfaction, and collective well-being in the workplace. As a result of low well-being levels, there should be action made to stop the high professional turnover and burnout rate. A local community of instructors in cities or across the country can be formed in developing countries in addition to the creation of larger unions globally to voice the worries of instructors and provide them with emotional and academic support to reduce the high turnover rate of instructors in the ensuing years.

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Ethical approval

This study has been approved by the sosyal ve beşeri bilimler araştırmaları ethic committee of Gaziosmanpaşa University with **14.09** number (214139 sayılı yazısı) and 16.11.2022.

The contribution rate of researchers

The authors contributed equally to the study.

Conflict of interest

There is no potential conflict of interest in this study.

Note:

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