

The Impact of COVID-19 on the Translation Industry: Insights from Türkiye

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Abstract: The COVID-19 pandemic, which devastated social and economic life all over the world, led to significant changes in the organizational processes within educational, social, medical, and working settings. The primary aim of this study is to explore the perceptions and first-hand experiences posed by the actors of the translation industry regarding the permanent impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on socio-economic and psychosocial conditions in the wider and personal context through inductive content analysis. With this purpose, drawing upon a course-based applied research project, a questionnaire and semi-structured interviews administered to 86 participants were instrumentalized to scrutinize socio-economic vulnerability, the dynamics of work-life balance, work-family balance, changes in the translator and interpreter profiles, and permanent changes in the field on the basis of the evolving translation market during the COVID-19 pandemic. The findings revealed that participants informed about negative experiences about teleworking or telecommuting during the pandemic, (i.e., lower performance, demotivation, work-life imbalance, work-family conflict, and the risk of burnout) in addition to some favorable outcomes such as enhancement of quality of life, increasing job performance and satisfaction, lesser work-family imbalance, reduced rates of stress. In spite of a rise in the required qualifications of the workers in the sector concerning technology literacy, skills in using CAT tools and familiarity with remote interpreting, promotion opportunities and wages were reported to decrease. Moreover, this study underlines the emergence of an interpreting mode and the required technology literacy impel a revolutionary change in the translation training and inevitably jeopardize the job of those who cannot keep up with the digitalization and technological development.

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INTRODUCTION

Causing an unprecedented global health and socio-economic crisis, the COVID-19 pandemic affected the health, jobs, and incomes of millions of people around the world. The emerging data from the vulnerable countries put forward that the overwhelming economic effects of COVID-19 pandemic have not fallen with equal severity on all sectors. Industries requiring high-quality communication with customers were at risk, as no longer was it safe to be in close proximity to others to provide remote translation /interpretation services. Various firms, hence, had to set up a remote workforce model. Consequently, dramatic shifts regarding nature and setting have taken place since the beginning of the pandemic. Translation services, especially interpretation, which was once conducted in the form of in-person activity, had to switch to a virtual setting. As an artifact of this change, the acquisition of digital competencies became a must, which forces translators to work in a digital translation/interpretation environment.

According to Arnaldi et al. (2022, 1) “the outbreak of the coronavirus pandemic has posed a series of translation problems, from the necessity to interpret information for multilingual populations to the need to expeditiously translate laboratory research into a vaccine and medicines for patients (a process itself known as translational medicine”. Technology-forward solutions in translation /interpretation services gained traction in the face of the need for the solution to these problems. For instance, machine translation and CAT (computer-assisted translation) tools provide real solutions that can diminish borders, conflate the spaces between people, and eradicate the problems on the COVID-19-related information and services they need.

Moreover, prolonged isolation at home and proxemics deriving from distancing measures taken by the governments gave rise to a dramatic change in the demand of translation types. Exponential increase in game localization and subtitling aimed at keeping people engaged, challenged, and entertained during the lockdown resulted in opening up avenues in the field of translation along with required technological literacy. This immediate need created a substantial impact on university curricula since they were rushed to set up

modern, technologically well-equipped learning environments in a very short period of time.

It is against this backdrop that one aspect of this landscape can perhaps be said to be experiencing ever-proliferating potential of translation and interpretation. Luo (2022, 2) rightfully asserted that “COVID-19 was a test of the function of translation as well as a challenge to it, exposing its deficiencies and showing us the way forward. Translation in diverse forms of cooperation, between pandemic scholars and translators, professional translators and amateur translators, translators/interpreters and medical staff, and translators and modern technology, has proved its effectiveness, promptness, wide access, and capacity for mind relaxing”. Through the various forms of cooperation emerged in anti-COVID-19 translation, translation, which is “all about making connections, linking one culture and language to another, setting up the conditions for an open-ended exchange of goods, technologies and ideas” (Cronin 2003: 41), became an indispensable means to publicize news and knowledge about the disease. In the environment of chaos and confusion resulting from lockdown and isolation, translation becomes a critical bridge of communication standing out to lessen uncertainty and to access the outside world.

By casting the apparent drawback of COVID-19 pandemic in a socio-economic framework, this study investigates the Turkish translators’ views of the effect of the COVID-19 pandemic, both on the translation industry, and on their personal life. Therefore, this study aims to analyze the problems and opportunities experienced and perceived by translators, the main actors of the translation industry during the COVID-19 pandemic, in terms of work-life balance, work-family balance, changes in the translator and interpreter profiles and permanent changes in the field on the basis of the changing translation market. Our subject group consists of 86 translators working in public and private institutions, home office freelancers translating for an office, traditional office employees in the translation industry, and owners of translation offices/companies.

LITERATURE REVIEW

The battle against COVID-19 was waged on multiple fronts, may it be health services, economics, education, tourism, aviation, or other sectors. When faced with a language barrier in one of those, translators were the ones to succor. The changes in demand, the evolving nature

of the job, the new terminology brought by the pandemic, and the quest for government support affected the market and the translators and, herewith, paved the way for academic research in many countries.

In China, Zhang and Wu (2020, 517) interviewed 5 volunteer translators from online volunteer translation communities established during the COVID-19 outbreak in Wuhan and observed their translation practices to ease the international donation and procurement of medical supplies. Claiming the English-centric education policies in Wuhan resulted in not meeting the multilingual crisis communication needs of the city during the COVID-19 outbreak, they suggested that development of education policies is necessary to correspond the language needs of linguistically diverse populations at multiple levels (Zhang and Wu 2020, 527). A wider study with participants from 113 language service providers, hereafter referred as LSPs, from the Chinese mainland was conducted by Language on the Move, in 2020. At the time of the survey, it was reported that more than 90% of the LSPs had resumed work through telecommuting, and nearly a half, in-office. It was also stated that the LSPs largely operated through the CAT platforms, and online business management systems. When it comes to the contribution to the battle against COVID-19, it was indicated that the majority of the LSPs had contributed to it in various ways. Another point made in the study was that surveyed participants were mostly concerned about a decline in business due to a severe decline of on-site language services. It was also highlighted that the services related to English were affected by the restrictions imposed on the country by English-speaking countries. Looking at the post-pandemic expectations and the changes in business, the study suggested that LSPs hoped to receive help from the government and considered to change their business models or improve the layout of online businesses by improving efficiency and efficacy of telecommuting, raising digital marketing capabilities, increasing investment in intelligent technology and products, and providing more remote services.

Focusing on the translators in the Netherlands, Masselink (2020, 3-28) worked with two different groups of translators (i.e., literary translators and non-literary translators) with a total number of 132 and investigated the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic on translators' work. The results of the questionnaire showed that there are no significant differences between the groups in most areas such as work pressure, connecting with colleagues etc. In terms of text domains, the

study reports a significant difference between the groups, illustrating that the non-literary translators experienced a change in the text domains they operate in. With regards to the pay rates of the groups, it was concluded that only non-literary translators faced a change, with most of them reporting a decrease. As for the work method, a significant difference between the groups was not observed but the participants reported they both had positive and negative changes at work (e.g., lower levels of productivity, working more hours, feeling more relaxed, taking more time for revision). Finally, the participants were asked about the change in translation field in general and between 27% and 35% indicated noticing a change. The qualitative data regarding this question revealed the shift in attention of the field to the pandemic and jobs being less available. The study concludes that translators in such crises should be supported in acquiring jobs, given mental support and advice as to how to maintain a regular working schedule.

Spotlighting the Lithuanian translation market, Kasperė and Motiejūnienė (2021, 154-180) investigated the effects of COVID-19 outbreak on freelance translators, LSPs and translation students. Questionnaires for the first two groups focused on demand, pricing, text domains, state support in the translation market and the future of it. The questionnaire targeting the students inquired about their studies and, likewise, the future of translation. The results revealed that most of both freelancers and LSPs reported a decrease in translation demand during the outbreak, but not in payment. In terms of text domain, it was reported that there was an increase in orders related to COVID-19 and medicine in general. Being asked the Lithuanian state support, many of the participants stated that they were aware of the support, but fewer reported obtaining such aid. For the near future of the translation market, LSPs were reported to be concerned while the freelancers were generally optimistic. The perceptions of translation students about their future profession after the COVID-19 outbreak was also gathered as a part of the study, and it is stated that many of the students were positive about the future, and did not expect any changes in their working conditions induced by crises. The study also concluded that it is necessary to develop a wider skill set in translation study programs to enable the future translators to be well equipped for crisis settings.

Another study regarding the status of translators was conducted by Farahani and Shomoossi (2021, 118-125) in Iran. They used semi-structured interviews with 6 translators forced into teleworking with

clients during the pandemic, and investigated the social and personal pros and cons of teleworking together with the compensatory strategies utilized by the translators. In their qualitative study, it was found out that translators faced both a positive and a negative impacts in terms of the personal aspect of the pandemic. While it was illustrated that reduced transportation costs and having more time for self-development are the pros of teleworking, it was also reported that life became unattractive to them, and depression was knocking on their door. Besides, the participants were concerned about their mental balance. For the social aspect, the participants said that they felt the absence of their office work and social habits at the office. The compensatory strategies utilized by the translators were calling the clients/colleagues, and using voice messages, making video calls instead of sending short texts.

Olimat and Mahadin (2022, 142-143) also utilized a questionnaire directed to 106 Jordanian translators in the year of 2020. The participants highlighted the significant role of translators during the outbreak, especially with regards to producing reliable and correct translations of information. They also reported the challenges they faced such as a decrease in workload and working hours, and an increase in short-notice translations. Other points raised in the study were working at home with families being present, and translators' interaction with LSPs and clients.

In Nepal, with the aim of investigating the breadth of management policies regarding translation during the pandemic and the role of translation in communicating risk information, Adhikari and Shrestha (2021, 4) conducted a case study combining document analysis with semi-structured interviews with 4 officials and 10 end users. They concluded that – despite its being unacknowledged - translation played a significant role in the pandemic.

In Türkiye, Arzik-Erzurumlu and Demir (2022, 25-26) explored the effects of COVID-19 on interpreters' performance with respect to the rendition of numbers in the English and Turkish language pair. They not only compared the source and target texts in the 2020 American Presidential Debates, but also conducted semi-structured interviews with the interpreters involved. The findings revealed that the numbers were omitted or misinterpreted more frequently when compared to face-to-face interpreting conditions where the interpreters have the opportunity to assist one another. Zeytinkaya (2021, 27) discussed the effects of COVID-19 from a different perspective which is the

psychological states of translation students in Türkiye and their professional expectations. Conducting a survey with 56 students and utilizing quantitative methods, Zeytinkaya concluded that there is a statistically significant negative correlation between students' fear of COVID-19 and their professional expectations.

METHODOLOGY

This study, which employs a descriptive qualitative research method, is an outcome of a course-based applied research project designed to enhance learning through the applied research and to gain greater knowledge and awareness on critical problems based on an articulated need and specifications in the form of a fieldwork. Such a course design became a driving force to “stimulate a changeover from task-based instruction to real world situations, including real world actors and factors” (Şahin & Kansu-Yetkiner 2020, 445). Our research design consists of two phases. The initial phase covered an online questionnaire, providing a landscape of the situation in Türkiye regarding the impact of COVID-19 pandemic on the translation industry. Translators in public and private institutions, home office freelancers translating for an office and traditional office employees in the translation industry, who were active in the translation market during the pandemic (n=86) were contacted by the 47 students enrolled in the course. Initially, the questionnaire was filled out by 98 participants. As 12 participants did not complete the second part of study, 86 participants – mostly from the Aegean region of Türkiye – who had completed both the questionnaire and the interview were included in the research.

Participants were asked to fill out the online questionnaire consisting of five sections. The first section aimed to gather and identify demographic information of the participants and whether their livelihood depends on translation. The second section explored the education level (fields, degree levels, certificates) of the participants and following that there was another section regarding their work experience. This section focused on years of experience, language pairs, weekly hours, average income, position at work, and field of work. The fourth and the fifth sections concentrated solely on the effects of the COVID-19 outbreak on their work. In the fourth section, the questions were designed to gather an insight on individual job experiences of the translators during the outbreak by using checkboxes and an optional “Other” line was added for each question in order to

enable the participants to provide more information regarding their experience. The first question of this section aimed to find out in which text domains the demand in translation increased during the outbreak. The second and third questions were related to more general issues: health and challenges faced during the outbreak. The last two questions of this section, on the other hand, investigated the working conditions in the translation market: job security and the income of the translators during the outbreak. The first two questions of the fifth section were given to the participants in multiple choice format, and the aim was to cross check the answers given in the previous sections regarding translators' income and workload. As the questionnaire circulated in a period when COVID-19 measures were becoming less strict in Türkiye, the last question of the section was included to find out whether the effects of the COVID-19 outbreak continues its effect on the translation market in the second half of 2022. Prior to students' establishing the first contact, each potential participant was checked and approved by the researchers. The questionnaire started gathering responses on May 20, 2022, and it was closed on June 26, 2022. The questionnaire and research design received ethical approval from the Ethics Committee at İzmir University of Economics. The first section included a consent form, informing about the aim of the research. Participants were enlightened that the participation was voluntary, anonymous, and confidential.

In the second phase, as the second data source of the study, students conducted semi-structured interviews with those completing the above-mentioned online questionnaire. Prior to this, students were given a briefing about the interviewing process and a document summarizing project focus and frame in order to enable them to steer the dialogue smoothly. Participants were asked four semi-structured questions which illuminated four issues, namely, work-life balance, division of domestic labor during the COVID-19 pandemic, possible new job qualifications required in the field, and finally permanent effect of the pandemic on the nature of translation and translating. The semi-structured interviews were instrumentalized by the researchers to analyze the participants' perception and actual experience about the field during COVID-19 pandemic by employing "inductive content analysis method" (Mayring 2000, 3).

Content analysis is one of the most prevalent forms of analysis within qualitative research which foregrounds defining, analyzing, and interpreting patterns of meaning within qualitative data. It fits material

into a model of communication enabling “the use of replicable and valid methods for making specific inferences from text to other states or properties of its source” (Krippendorff 1969, 103). Engaging with a “theory driven or data driven perspective” (Boyatzis 1998, 29); our inductive content analysis worked with the following steps: familiarizing ourselves with the data, which covers up reading and re-reading the transcribed data and listing initial ideas, assignment of the categories and subcategories along with the levels of abstraction using in vivo coding method, formulation of the new categories by searching for overarching themes. In this way, the assigned themes under the tentative categories were step-by-step deduced. Within a mutual feedback loop created by the two researchers, the assigned categories were revised, eventually turned into final main categories.

FINDINGS

Results from the Questionnaire

Data analysis shows there is no major discrepancy among the participants in terms of their sex as 52.33% (n=45) of the participants are female, the rest male (47.67%, n=41). Looking at the age range of the participants, it is observed that 31.40% (n=27) of the participants are between the ages of 23-29; and, 27.91% (n=24) of them are between 30-39. The percentage of the participants aged between 40-49 decreased to 13.95% (n=12) while the range above 50 is closer to the other age groups by rating 26.74% (n=23). The majority of participants (70.93%, n=61) are based in İzmir, followed by two other metropolises of Türkiye (i.e., İstanbul and Ankara) with 11.63% (n=10) and 4.65% (n=4), respectively. The remaining participants are either based in various cities of Türkiye (9.30%, n=8) or live abroad (4.36%, n=3). 73.3% (n=63) of the participants indicated that they earn their living by working as translators while the remaining 26.7% (n=23) stated that they work as translators alongside with their out-of-the-field jobs, which include but are not limited to English language teaching, overseas education consultancy, law, sales, tourism, and geology.

In the second section of the questionnaire, the participants were asked about their educational background. It was observed that 45.3% (n= 39) of the participants did not receive a formal education in translation while 54.7% (n= 47) of the participants did. Among the first group consisting of participants with a background in other fields than translation, the distribution of education levels are as follows: 31 participants with a bachelor’s degree, 14 with a master’s degree, 5

participants with an associate degree, and 5 participants with a Ph.D. degree. Among the second group, 43 of the participants hold a bachelor's degree in translation; 3 of them hold an associate degree while 1 participant holds a master's degree in the field.

The next section focused on the participants' experience in the translation market. The answers of the participants were investigated in ten-year intervals. The results indicate that more than half of the participants (51.16%, n=44) have been working as a translator or as an interpreter for less than 10 years (1-10). This was followed by the group of participants with experience of 10 to 20 years experience, with the percentage of 24.41% (n=21). The percentage of the participants having 20-30 years and 30-40 years of experience are both 10.46% (n=9 for each group) while 3.48% (n=3) had 40 or more years of experience. The next question in this section inquired about the language pairs that the participants work in. 58.13% of the participants work in a single language pair (e.g., English-Turkish, German-Turkish, Arabic-Turkish); 27.90% of them added a second foreign language to their working languages. The remaining 13.95% of the participants have between 3 and 6 working languages. Among these languages, the English-Turkish language pair has by far the highest percentage and is used by 82.55% of the participants. Other languages that the participants translate/interpret in include but are not limited to Arabic, Azerbaijani, Bulgarian, French, German, Italian, Serbian, Spanish and Russian. Next, the participants were asked whether they work in the translation market continuously or periodically and the maximum time they allocate to their work in a week. The results show that a greater number of participants (82.6%) work continuously. As for the time they spent, 6 participants reported that they cannot give an estimated number of hours. When we look at the responses gathered from the remaining participants, it is observed that - in a busy week - they work an average of 35 hours. Then, the participants were asked to state their average income. It was observed that 23.3% (n=20) of the translators earn less than 5000 TRY/ month; 38.4% (n=33) earn between 5000 and 10000 TRY/month; 17.4% earn between 10000 TRY and 15000 TRY/month; 20.9% (n=18) earn more than 15000 TRY/month. Then, the participants were asked to define their positions as translators (i.e., freelance translator, owner of a translation office/company, full time office worker in a translation office/company, full time office worker in an institution, remote translator in a translation office/company). For this question, 19 participants chose more than one option, meaning that

they work both as freelancers and full-time office workers or both as an owner and a translator. Among the others, 35 participants defined themselves as freelance translators; 20 said that they own a translation office/company. 5 participants indicated that they work full time in a translation office/company while only 2 of the participants defined themselves as remote translators in a translation office/company. Lastly, 5 participants stated that they work full time as translators in an institution. In the next question, the participants defined their translation-related field of work: 24 participants said their job description involves only translation, while all others selected multiple options including in addition to translation, including editing, localization, terminology management, desktop publishing along with translation.

The last section of the questionnaire was designed to scrutinize the personal and professional experiences of the participants during the COVID-19 outbreak. The questions were provided in checkbox formats; hence, the participants had the opportunity to select more than one option in each question, meaning that the total number of answers gathered in this section may exceed the total participant number. The answers given in this section will be further elaborated through the analysis of answers given by the participants in the semi-structured interviews. First of all, the participants were asked to indicate the text domains that faced an increased demand in the translation market. The results of this question show that demand in medical translation (n=42) boosted. This was followed by the following text domains, respectively: legal translation, technical translation, and translation of economics texts. Moreover, the participants stated that there was an increase not only in translation of news reports, but also in subtitle translation and game translation. Then, the participants were asked whether they had any physical or psychological health problems, and concerns for their future during the pandemic. The participants were allowed to report multiple effects. The results illustrated that 42 participants did not face any physical problems while 23 did. 37 participants indicated psychological problems and 34 participants reported feeling concerned about their future. 5 participants said that COVID-19 outbreak led to new illnesses in their lives. At this point, it is useful to note that participants could pick more than one answer to this question as the COVID-19 outbreak could affect them in multiple ways, i.e., they may have both physical and psychological problems, or be anxious about the future while facing no physical problems.

Thereafter, the participants were asked about the most significant challenges they faced during the outbreak. Establishing a work and life balance (n=39) and managing time (n=34) was checked by most of the participants. They also stated that maintaining relations with their existing clients (n=26) and finding new clients (n=23) was tough during the period. Another point they expressed was that they had difficulties in terms of getting used to remote translation/interpreting (n=13) and technological literacy (n=4). The following question probed the job guarantee and income security during the outbreak. The question revealed that both interpreters and translators had faced cancellation of their projects/conferences (n=27). In parallel with this answer, the participants also highlighted a decrease in their income (n=26). 9 participants mentioned they continued their full-time jobs as part-timers. 5 participants indicated that the payments were disrupted. Salary deduction, cancellation of contract, and forced annual leave were also among the adverse impacts stated by individual participants. All the above-mentioned questions posed to the participants dwelled upon eliciting detailed COVID-19 related content and enabled the participants to report multiple facades of their experiences. The last 3 questions, however, were given to the participants in multiple choice format and were directly aimed to find out the effect of COVID-19 on their income and workload at the time and whether these effects survived until today. With respect to the effect on their income, 39.5% (n=34) of the participants pointed out that their income fell, while only 17.4% (n=15) reported a rise, and the remaining 43% indicated no change. As for their workload, 45.3% (n=39) of the participants reported that their workload had decreased; 25.6% (n=22) claimed vice versa and 29.1% (n=25) had had the same workload. Finally, when they were asked whether these effects were continuing, 69.7% (n=60) replied negatively while the others reported either higher or lower demand.

Results from the semi-structured interviews

The four questions raised to participants opened up the following four avenues:

How to achieve a work-life balance

Economic crises brought by COVID-19 pandemic had a substantial effect on the way people live and work, and on the operation of industries and societies. Beginning to deliver a new way of working to adapt to new conditions people switched to teleworking,

telecommuting or work from home policy as the most prevalent result of pandemic across occupations (Kramer and Kramer 2020, 1). Different researchers (Irawanto et al. 2021, 2; Contreras et al. 2020, 3) contend that teleworking gives rise to a surge in job performance and reduces turnover intentions, lessens work–family imbalance, decreases stress rates, and improves job satisfaction. On the contrary, several studies conducted during COVID-19 pandemic lockdowns to investigate the psychological consequences on people reported that restrictions affected people’s psychological well-being and caused symptoms of psychological distress and disorders along with work–family conflict (Gullo et al. 2020, 212; Wang et al. 2020, 15; among others). Teleworking and telecommuting were readily available modes of working for translators prior to the COVID-19 pandemic. A highly prevalent flexible working mode merged into private life, however, required translators to (re)build a work–life balance. Work-life balance is a process of achieving equilibrium in a way that work life and personal life complement each other. According to Evans, Carney, & Wilkinson (2013, 436), “work–life balance is successfully attained when individuals are equally engaged and satisfied across their work and life roles”. Changes in work–life balance could create an impact upon employee performance both positively and negatively.

Concurring with the previous studies, our findings gathered from interviews revealed that 31.39 % of the participants mentioned no problems with achieving a work-life balance as they immediately build their working rhythm and remove themselves from distractions by creating themselves a private working place at home. 38.37% of the participants emphasized the negative impact of teleworking or telecommuting on their lifestyle by underlining the fact that they could not be able to have clear boundaries between work and personal life and their new detached life reduced motivation and performance, which would increase stress and anxiety. 6.9% of the participants informed that, initially, they experienced an imbalance between work and personal life because they put personal needs second due to work and struggled to separate work and non-work. However, they gradually managed to attain a balance through time planning skills, and providing the suitability of having an isolated workplace at home. According to 16.27% of the participants, working from home had a positive effect on their life since it provided the autonomy of time management for translators to deal with family/personal matters, to

strengthen family environment and increased the job productivity and the quality of the work.

How to achieve a work-family balance

Living with family members or parents during COVID-19 pandemic poses a challenge of finding the right family–life balance. As women are more involved in child rearing and household chores than men are, family–life balance is generally associated with women. Women are challenged to “have it all” (Seierstad and Kirton 2015, 390) – that is, they have been struggling to be committed to their careers, children, and spouses. According to Adisa et al. (2020) “The increasing participation of women in paid employment in recent decades has been construed as one of the main reasons for work–family conflict”.

In their answers to interview questions, our participants reflected discourses woven around family–life balance at multiple levels, gendered social expectations, and discursive mental maps in Türkiye. On the basis of the analysis result, we can confirm that conditions brought by COVID-19 pandemic had a significant effect on work–family balance for 52.32% of participants. 46.51% of them reported adverse effects of the pandemic emphasizing the difficulty in living and working in a shared location with the family members. For instance, the noise generated by family members (e.g., talking, watching TV, phoning) was mentioned as the main source of disturbance and discomfort. 12 females out of 45 participants, who were adversely affected by the pandemic, underscored the fact that they engaged in domestic duties. That is to say, the majority of female participants (mostly married with children) had a gendered discourse displaying a greater loyalty and commitment to the household chores and childcare. Only 2 males seemed to perceive their homecare roles, demonstrating a high level of attachment to house chore management. In contrast, only 5.81% of the participants stated that they were positively affected by the pandemic and could achieve a work-family balance during the COVID-19 lockdown. These people remarked on the opportunity to take care of family members and to build a family-friendly climate. 39.5 % of the participants informed that they had no difficulty in achieving work-family balance. 8.13% of them did not give relevant answers on this issue.

Changes in the translator and interpreter profiles during the COVID-19 pandemic

The responses were investigated under seven main categories: technological knowledge and the use of technological equipment,

language skills, remote workers, work discipline, competence in new modes of interpreting, work performance, and low paid freelancers. At this point, it is useful to bear in mind that the participants were not given these categories beforehand but they rather created them with their responses to the question in the interview; therefore, they were not asked to rate any of these categories and there are participants who claim that the translator profile did not change at all or mention changes in more than one category. Looking at the responses gathered from the participants, it was observed 37.64% (n=32) of them stated that one of the foremost qualifications for the translators during the pandemic was technological knowledge and use of technological equipment. This was followed by the following categories: remote workers (20%, n=17) and work discipline (20%, n=17). 10.58% (n=14) of the participants underlined that expected work performance went through a change during the pandemic while 7.05% (n=6) mentioned an increased demand in language skills. Besides, 3.52% (n=3) of the participants pointed out that the pandemic called forth low paid freelancers.

Permanent changes in translation industry brought by Covid-19 pandemic

The findings obtained from the interviews indicate that COVID-19 impacted many aspects of the translation industry regarding economic conditions, working methods, skills, and performance. In his study on the perceptions, skills, and technologies for the revitalization of translation industry within Saudi Arabia in the Post COVID-19 era, Alkhatnai (2021, 91) stated that “technological revolutions are continuously transforming and have tremendously facilitated the service of remote interpretation by eliminating linguistic barriers between the marginal language speakers and service providers, while at the same time significantly reducing the costs and enhancing the availability of interpreters”. The answers of our participants confirm this view.

48.83% of the study participants made emphasis upon a permanent switch to teleworking and telecommuting which was a readily available, but not a highly prevalent work mode in the field within the pre-pandemic period. The participants’ viewpoints (17.44%) suggested that COVID-19 pandemic led to a medium turn in interpreting studies, which signals a restructure both in education and practice. Remote interpreting and medical translation were both uniquely positioned as emerging fields, since they play an important role to inform pandemic

responses and bridge the gap between science, policy, and politics. 16.27% of the participants' future projections indicate technology will take a bigger part in the post COVID-19 translation industry. Their remarks on the prevalence of technology encapsulate providing translators with new advanced skills in using online technologies, and CAT tools, thereby developing technological competence. In addition to the required translator competences, intensive digitalization (9.3%) and the emergence of online platforms (2.32 %) in the Turkish context were underlined as the natural consequences of the pandemic, which eventually resulted in excessive demand for expeditious and intensive work in the market (5.81%).

While the participants articulated the fact that COVID-19 pandemic created new and better prospects for translators in the sense of having new skills and knowledge, and opening new vistas in remote interpreting and medical translation, 6.97% of them, considering adverse economic conditions, stated the downfall of many businesses and a sharp decline in turnover. Regarding the freelancers, 5.88% of the participants reported many clients started to negotiate fees or shifted to other firms by offering lower prices. Consequently, many translation offices were reported to decline their translation fees in an attempt to compensate for their losses during COVID-19 outbreak and to hire low-paid freelancers. In a similar vein, Olimat and Mahadin (2022, 153) put forward that “these issues were particularly pertinent to freelance translators who felt unprotected due to the lack of regulation and certification in the Jordanian translation market.”

CONCLUSION

Drawing upon a questionnaire and semi-structured interviews, this study focused on perception and actual experience posed by the actors of the translation industry about the permanent impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on socio-economic and psychosocial conditions in the wider and personal context. Put it specifically, along with demographics to demonstrate the sector landscape, work-life balance, work-family balance, changes in the translator/interpreter profile and permanent changes in the field on the basis of the changing translation market were scrutinized working with inductive qualitative content analysis.

Concurring with the relevant literature, some risks about teleworking or telecommuting during the pandemic, such as lower performance, demotivation, world-life imbalance, and work-family

conflict, were brought into the fore by our participants. At the same time, they emphasized favorable outcomes of remote working such as enhancement of quality of life, increasing job performance and satisfaction, lesser work-family imbalance, reduced rates of stress as well. The findings also revealed that translators and interpreters in Türkiye were well aware of the medium and technological turn experienced during COVID-19 pandemic triggering a rise in the demand for remote interpreting and advanced technological skills. This new form of interpreting mode and the required technology literacy signal a need for a revolutionary change in the translation training, and inevitably jeopardize the position of those who cannot keep pace with the digitalization and technological development. Answers suggested that mitigating any negative consequences of the teleworking during the pandemic seems to bring burden primarily to the females on the account of housework and care support in the Turkish context.

This study confined to dynamics of the translation industry during the conditions of COVID-19 pandemic has some limitations, which in turn paves the way for future research. For instance, remote interviews which became a partial practice in this research provided limited rapport and non-verbal cues as well as neglected ethical practices. On the other hand, the increasing legitimacy of online interviews in social science research came into the fore with respect to their advantages in being able to eliminate problems of time and space, and in being able to contact hard-to-reach or geographically dispersed groups. We plead for the idea that these limitations provide impetus for future research. In conclusion, we hope this study sparks new research opportunities in the patterns of translator's workload, family life, socio-economic situation and how they could manage to improve them in post-COVID-19 era.

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