FEMALE ACADEMIC STAFF EXPERIENCES DURING COVID-19

EXPERIÊNCIAS DO CORPO DOCENTE FEMININO DURANTE COVID-19

EXPERIENCIAS DEL PROFESORADO FEMENINO DURANTE COVID-19

Ieva Margeviča-Grinberga
Dr.paed., Associate Professor, Senior Researcher
University of Latvia
https://orcid.org/0000-0002-1809-2439
ievam@lu.lv

Egija Laganovska
Dr.paed.candidate, lecturer, researcher
University of Latvia
https://orcid.org/0000-0002-6199-5051

ABSTRACT

Many organizations, including academic institutions, asked staff members to work remotely in reaction to COVID-19 in early 2020. According to Aldossari and Chaudhry (2021), the education system then witnessed a swift shift away from school environment approaches toward online learning. However, it is understood that the pandemic affects men and women differently. Higher education is not any different from this. Yildirim and Eslen-Ziya (2020) state that due to the shutdown of lower and middle-level schools, childcare duties and home chores suddenly increased for women with children. The distinction between work and the home appears to be eroding as household roles and obligations become less clear. Family homes were converted into centers of learning, care, and employment. There are signs that the pandemic caused divisions in roles among men and women to expand. The lockdown abruptly increased the number of childcare duties and domestic work that women had to accomplish on top of the hardship of raising children and working for themselves. The research aim is to explore the experience of female academics on challenges and benefits in the work during the COVID-19 pandemic. **Research Questions:** What was the experience of female academics during COVID-19? What were the challenges and benefits of working during the COVID-19 pandemic? How has technology influenced female academic practices?

Keywords: Women's Teaching Profession, Teaching in pandemic times, Experiences of academic women.

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RESUMEN

Muchas organizaciones, incluidas instituciones académicas, solicitaron a los miembros del personal que trabajaran de forma remota en reacción al COVID-19 a principios de 2020. Según Aldossari y Chaudhry (2021), el sistema educativo fue testigo de un rápido cambio de los enfoques del entorno escolar hacia el aprendizaje en

línea. Sin embargo, se entiende que la pandemia afecta de manera diferente a hombres y mujeres. La educación superior no es diferente de esto. Yildirim y Eslen-Ziya (2020) afirman que, debido al cierre de las escuelas basicas, las tareas de cuidado de niños y del hogar aumentaron repentinamente para las mujeres con hijos. La distinción entre el trabajo y el hogar parece estar debilitándose a medida que las funciones y obligaciones del hogar se vuelven menos claras. Los hogares familiares se convirtieron en centros de aprendizaje, cuidado y empleo. Hay indicios de que la pandemia provocó que se ampliaran las divisiones de roles entre hombres y mujeres. El cierre aumentó abruptamente la cantidad de tareas de cuidado de niños y trabajo doméstico que las mujeres tenían que realizar, además de las dificultades de criar a los hijos y trabajar para ellas mismas. El objetivo de la investigación es explorar la experiencia de mujeres académicas sobre los desafíos y beneficios en el trabajo durante la pandemia de COVID-19. Preguntas de investigación: ¿Cuál fue la experiencia de las mujeres académicas durante el COVID-19? ¿Cuáles fueron los desafíos y beneficios de trabajar durante la pandemia de COVID-19? ¿Cómo ha influido la tecnología en las prácticas académicas femeninas?

Palabras clave: Profisionalidad de las professoras, Enseñar en tiempos pandémicos, Experiencias de mujeres académicas.

RESUMO

Muitas organizações, incluindo instituições acadêmicas, pediram aos funcionários que trabalhassem remotamente em reação ao COVID-19 no início de 2020. De acordo com Aldossari e Chaudhry (2021), o sistema educacional testemunhou uma rápida mudança das abordagens do ambiente escolar para o aprendizado online. No entanto, entende-se que a pandemia afeta homens e mulheres de forma diferente. O ensino superior não é diferente disso. Yildirim e Eslen-Ziya (2020) afirmam que, devido ao fechamento de escolas de nível inferior e médio, as tarefas de creche e tarefas domésticas aumentaram repentinamente para mulheres com filhos. A distinção entre trabalho e lar parece estar se desgastando à medida que os papéis e obrigações domésticas se tornam menos claros. As casas das famílias foram convertidas em centros de aprendizagem, cuidados e emprego. Há sinais de que a pandemia fez com que as divisões de papéis entre homens e mulheres se expandissem. O bloqueio aumentou abruptamente o número de tarefas domésticas e de cuidados infantis que as mulheres tinham que realizar, além das dificuldades de criar filhos e trabalhar para si mesmas. O objetivo da pesquisa é explorar a experiência de acadêmicas sobre desafios e benefícios no trabalho durante a pandemia de COVID-19. Questões de pesquisa: Qual foi a experiência de acadêmicas do sexo feminino durante o COVID-19? Quais foram os desafios e benefícios de trabalhar durante a pandemia do COVID-19? Como a tecnologia influenciou as práticas acadêmicas femininas?

Palavras-chave: Profissionalidade das professoras mulheres, Ensinar em tempos de pandemia, Experiências de mulheres acadêmicas.

Introduction: Experience of Female Academics during COVID-19

Güney-Frahm (2020) asserts that the pandemic may have resulted in earlier losing resources and becoming more susceptible to losses when comparing women to men. Anderson et al. (2020); Collins et al. (2020) add that these losses, which may involve lost wages or career opportunities, reflect females' inferior position regarding resources versus men before the pandemic. The quantity of submissions that have undergone peer review is used to gauge academic production. According to this, men were less impacted by COVID-19, but

fewer women submitted papers (LUTTER, SCHRÖDER, 2020). However, to minimize interruptions, women may have undertaken certain aspects of teaching and learning during inconvenient hours (JESSEN, WAIGHTS, 2020; BIROLI et al., 2020).

According to Collins et al. (2020), similar gender discrepancies were observed in larger communities, showing that COVID-19 significantly affected women's employment. Churchill e Nash (2020) state that higher education employers should offer their personnel the greatest amount of freedom regarding when and how to work. This might make it easier for women to reorganize their workdays to fit them in between caring for the kids. Women should be able to participate by working beyond the typical working time and settings.

Challenges for Working Women during COVID-19

Various studies indicated females are disproportionately featured in low-paying jobs (JESSEN, WAIGHTS, 2020; ANDERSON et al., 2020). According to a study of data from the 2020, women's gross hourly earnings were on average 13.0 % below those of men in the European Union. Across Member States, the gender pay gap varied by 21.6 percentage points, ranging from 0.7 % in Luxembourg to 22.3 % in Latvia (EUROSTAT, 2022).

The childcare and educational systems do not meet the requirements of working and learning women. The availability, accessibility and affordability of high-quality childcare facilities are furthermore key factors that allow women, and men, with care responsibilities to participate in the labour market (COUNCIL of the EUROPEAN UNION, 2019). Most women from 18 to 64 are employed and around 16 million, or 25%, have a kid below 14 years living with them. Most of these mothers are close with family members they can count on to watch their children while they attend part-time or full-time jobs (ROSS, 2020). However, more than 17% rely on daycare centers and schools to maintain their kids in good care during work. (NASH, 2020). They do not reside with a possible caregiver at least part-time. Comparatively, 13% of all working men depend on childcare and education (ROSS, 2020).

Benefits of Working during Covid-19 for Women

To better understand the extent to which the ongoing impacts of the pandemic have impacted women, indeed surveyed 1,001 women who switched from full-time jobs to gig working, contract employees, part-time jobs, or left their jobs after the start of COVID-19 (GAFNER, 2022). According to the poll, they increasingly choose employment that promises versatility over stability when confronted with virus outbreak challenges. However, Ross (2020) states that women in the workforce are not the only ones who want flexible work arrangements. The poll results also indicate that while job hunters of both sexes call for greater flexibility, flexibility is necessary for many females, particularly those who provide care.

The top advantages of leaving full-time employment, according to women in general, were having more time to devote to other commitments, less pressure and responsibility, being able to take on new job opportunities, having more flexibility, improving mental health, and experiencing less burnt out (ROSS, 2020). The following are the main adjustments that women said they would need to think about before going back to a full-time schedule: higher work-life balance was mentioned by 68% of respondents, improved remote work flexibility was requested by 62% of respondents, and better remuneration was mentioned by 61% of respondents (GAFNER, 2022).

Technology and Female Academic Practices

Jessen and Waights (2020) state that even though women have at least as much ability as men do and notwithstanding an increase in the representation of women working in technology, studies done in the last ten years show that computer ability is associated with "manly" successes. Nash (2020) concluded that the stereotype of an intrinsically "gendered" technology that represents male ideals and information that is more favorable to males might cause women to use the Internet less frequently. According to the National Academies of Sciences, Engineering, and Medicine. (2021), with the COVID-19 epidemic and following modifications to postsecondary learning, women in Science, Engineering, and Medical (SEM) disciplines suffer various institutional injustices that contribute to their considerable underrepresentation compared to men.

The amount of unpaid childcare and household work increased dramatically as quarantine policies force people to stay at home and shut down schools and daycare centers (National Academies of Sciences, Engineering, and Medicine, 2021). However, even before the pandemic, women performed unpaid labor on average for 4 hours each day, compared to men's 1.5 hours (YILDIRIM, ESLEN-ZIYA, 2020). This means that, globally, women performed almost three times as much unpaid work compared to men. Since the beginning of the epidemic, men and women have experienced a rise in unpaid labor, but women are still doing the majority of it. The closing of schools and daycare facilities and the lack of outside support have resulted in days of extra work for them. This has meant juggling a full-time job with daycare and school obligations for the employed or learning women.

Women who are less educated than men face significant consequences, such as a considerable drop in income and a rise in underage pregnancy and early marriage. The likelihood of gender-based violence is also increased by illiteracy and economic instability. Women who lack the financial means to leave violent relationships are more vulnerable to sexual abuse and human smuggling. The COVID-19 lockdown procedures have halted the single mother's small enterprise, which provides food for the family (YILDIRIM, ESLEN-ZIYA, 2020). Besides, the pandemic has left domestic workers without a job, income support, or other forms of support (UN Women, 2020). With losing income, the obligation of unpaid care and domestic labor has increased for uncountable women in economies of all sizes. Women suffer the most from the social and economic repercussions of the pandemic, even though everybody is dealing with enormous hardships. The danger of COVID-19 infection and mortality, loss of income, and escalating violence is much higher for marginalized and poor women (ANDERSEN et al., 2020). Women make up 70% of the world's health professionals and first rescuers; however, they still lag their male colleagues in many areas (UN Women, 2020).

The literature review examined how the COVID-19 epidemic has affected women in the academic field, focusing primarily on the disproportionate caregiving responsibilities placed on them due to the spread-out and fragmented family unit. Studies have shown how women with children have been disproportionately affected by the realities of working from home

(ALON et al., 2020; JESSEN, WAIGHTS, 2020). Thus, there is a lot of childcare, more washing in occupied homes, and more dinner preparation that women must do. These conflicting demands have caused the expansion of the gender gap. (BIROLI et al., 2020; CARLSON et al., 2020). The notion of motherhood may alter due to the demands placed on these duties and the restrictions, along with who must carry them out. According to Güney-Frahm (2020), the disturbances brought on by the COVID-19 pandemic threatened the participation, competence, and commitment of women in academic STEM even as adjustments that enabled people to interact became more widespread. The high dependency on a poor childcare service and their predominance in low-wage occupations are the two factors causing the considerable harm that learning or employed women have endured due to COVID-19's economic implications.

Analysis of the experiences of the authors of the article

The authors used an analytic autoethnography approach to collect and analyse their experiences as female academic staff members working during the COVID-19 pandemic. The researchers' lived experiences are critical to constructing knowledge and developing a better understanding of concrete phenomena. Their engagement with the context, stakeholders, and processes, along with their reflections on that engagement, is paramount to the autoethnographic methodology. Autoethnography is considered to have two clear branches: emotive and analytic. Emotive autoethnography seeks to bring readers to an empathetic understanding of the writer's experience. Analytic autoethnography allows for researcher engagement in the situation to be included in the analysis, adding to the theoretical understanding of the social processes under study by making more interpretive use of the available data (BUNDE-BIROUSTE, 2019). Autoethnography focuses on understanding oneself instead of or in addition to understanding others. The most important aspect is auto-reflection and the analysis of each part of the experience connected with the phenomena under study.

The following research questions were set: How were the researchers' scientific and teaching work experiences as female academic staff affected by the COVID-19 pandemic? Which factors

influenced the researchers the most? What helped the researchers overcome these challenges?

Anderson's (2006) five key features of analytic autoethnography were used, as they show how analytic autoethnography should be applied to give reliable results. These features are complete member researcher, analytic reflexivity (which implies the researcher's awareness of their relatedness to the research field, to the phenomenon and to the group under study), the narrative visibility of the researcher's self, dialogue with informants beyond the self and commitment to theoretical analysis.

In qualitative research, the researcher is considered the most essential research tool. In analytic autoethnography, the researcher uses their positionality to get as close to the research phenomenon as possible.

Several methods were used to collect data. The researchers wrote daily notes of their experiences, reviewed literature on topics related to women teachers/academics during COVID-19 and used dialogical data (dialogue with each other was included). The researchers' conversations and photographs about their feelings and activities while working during the COVID-19 pandemic were included, allowing the ethnographic imperative for dialogue with others to be addressed. Autoethnographers offer critical reflections and interpretations of life events as internal dialogue, and readers can follow the same pattern as they interpret the narrative and draw their own connections to the topic. The presence of multiple voices provides readers with several avenues to access the material (ROGERS-SHAW, 2021).

The reflective journal was also used. A reflective journal of thoughts and feelings pertains to reactions to the data and their analysis. The study covered the period from 20 January 2020 to July 2022. The data collection can be seen in Table 1.

Table 1 Data Collection

Researcher 1					Researcher 2				
Time	Type	Source	Place	People involved	Time	Type	Source	Place	People involved
20.01.2020 - 30.01.2020	Key events	Personal notes	Riga, Latvia	Self, Researcher 2	20.01.2020- 30.01.2020	Key events	Personal notes	Riga, Latvia	Self, Researcher 1
31.01.2020	Key events, work mobility	Photography	Airplane	Self, Researcher 2	31.01.2020	Key events, study mobility	Photography	Airplane	Self, Researcher 1

01.02.2020 - 12.02.2020	Key events, work mobility	Personal notes, photographies, dialogue	Hermosillo, Mexico	Self, Researcher 2	01.02.2020- 12.07.2020	Key events, study mobility	Personal notes, photographies, dialogue	Hermosillo, Mexico	Self, Researcher 1
13.02.2020	Key events	Personal notes	Riga, Latvia	Self		Key events	Personal notes	Hermosillo, Mexico	Self
20.03.2020.	1st remote lecture with students	Personal notes	MS Teams Riga, Latvia	Self, students	20.03.2020.	1st remote lecture with students	Personal notes, dialogue with colleagues	Hermosillo, Mexico	Self, Researcher 1
20.03.2020- 01.06.2020.	Colleague self-help groups	Personal notes, dialogue	MS Teams Riga, Latvia	Self, Researcher 2, colleagues	20.03.2020- 01.06.2020.	Colleague self-help groups	Personal notes, dialogue	MS Teams Hermosillo, Mexico	Self, Researcher 1, colleagues
01.06.2020.- 01.06.2020.	Key events	Personal notes, dialogue, Reflective Journal	Riga, Latvia	Self, Researcher 2, colleagues	11.02.2020 - 15.07.2020	Key events	Personal notes, dialogue, Reflective Journal	Hermosillo, Mexico, Riga, Latvia	Self, Researcher 1, colleagues
01.06.2022.- 01.07.2022	Literature analysis	Literature review	Riga, Latvia	Self, Researcher 2	01.06.2022.- 01.07.2022	Literature analysis	Literature review	Riga, Latvia	Self, Researcher 1, colleagues

The excerpts from the researchers' analytic autoethnographic narratives are introduced in relation to the themes in which they were categorised during the analysis. Each excerpt from the narratives was selected according to its relevance to addressing each research question. The obtained data were analysed using thematic coding (see coding examples in Tables 2 and 3).

Table 2. Coding Example 1 (Researcher I)

Example 1	**Coding procedure**
The news I follow mentions cases in Paris where there are already first cases of COVID. Uncertainty and anxiety are taking over with every new case. How safe is it to fly? We have to spend so many hours on the plane. Conversations with a colleague about COVID-19 include topics such as how we will drive and what we should buy. Is security possible? I will buy ten masks to wear on the plane. I do not know what to wait for.	• Emotions about how COVID-19 will spread throughout the world • Emotions connected with travel to Mexico • Actions undertaken to neutralise emotions by buying and using a mask in the aeroplane • Actions undertaken to neutralise emotions—conversation with colleagues • Lack of control over the situation

Table 3 Coding Example 2 (Researcher II)

Example 1	**Coding procedure**
Researcher I heard about cases of the disease on the news. This was the first source of information for me. Researcher I said she has bought masks. She advised me to go and buy a mask for myself as well. I went to	• Emotions (disbelief) • Actions undertaken under the influence of a colleague

the pharmacy, and the masks were sold out. You can't buy it at a store or a pharmacy. I don't believe in wearing a mask.	

Six themes emerged from the narrative data. Women academic staff's experiences while working during the COVID-19 pandemic can be categorised under the following themes:

- Intense emotions
- Physical distancing from others
- Support
- Overload from many hours spent at the computer
- Increase in workload
- Expansion of family responsibilities

The researchers' experiences included intense and changing emotions towards daily life and work during COVID-19, which caused the following actions to be undertaken to cope with stress and manage the unpredictable work context:

- Communication with others/sharing experiences/discussing the situation with other female colleagues
- Coping with stress
- Advancing digital skills

Insights and findings for Research Question 1: What was the experience of female academics during COVID-19?

In this matter, the researchers' experiences were very different. Because Researcher I spent a short time in Mexico and could return before flights were cancelled, they could thus happily reunite with their family at home. However, Researcher II could not return home from her mobility visit to Mexico and spent six months there instead of the planned three. By analysing the dialogue, both researchers concluded that the restrictions adopted for the place, cultural environment, COVID-19 restrictions in the specific country, cultural differences, etc. were factors that determined how easily they could adapt to the new circumstances. The locations where data collection took place influenced their emotions and ability to work.

Analysing personal notes and photographs (see Photo 1), Researcher 1 was much more anxious and cautious at the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic. This is also evidenced by the mask in Photo 1.

Photo 1 On the plane from Riga to Amsterdam (on the way to Erasmus+ mobility at the University of Sonora, Hermosillo, Mexico). 31 January 2020.

The following is an excerpt from Researcher 1's personal notes before the mobility visit to Mexico:

> *More and more new COVID-19 cases are being reported every day. This worries me a little. Must buy masks. Of course, it's a bit of a shame if my colleagues say that nothing bad will happen. How will I look alone in that mask against the background of others? How can my colleagues be so calm?* (28 January 2020)

As we can see, different emotions appear in the excerpt, including shame, suspense and anxiety. On 29 January, Researcher I bought masks and shared a photo of the masks with Researcher II in the WhatsApp chat (see Photo 2).

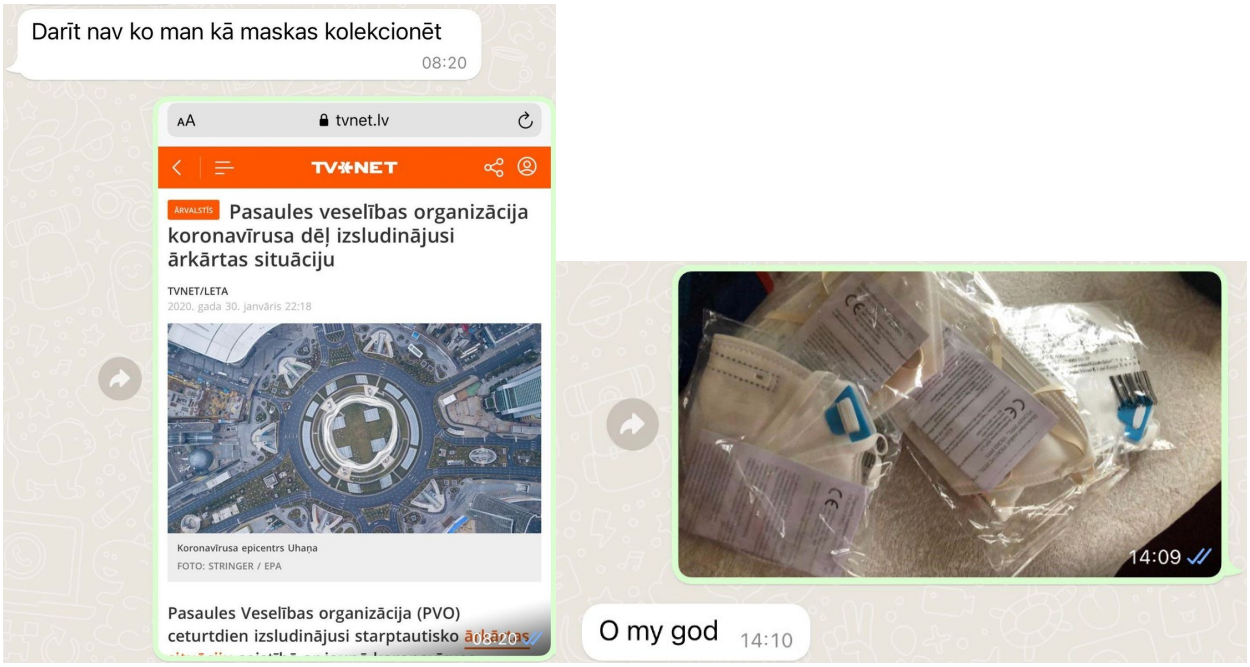


Photo 2. WhatsApp chat between Researcher I and Researcher II. Researcher II said, '*I have nothing to do but collect masks*'. Researcher I sent information about emergency situations due to COVID-19. Researcher II commented on a photo of the masks that Researcher I bought with '*Oh my god*'. (29 January 2020.)

Despite Researcher II's disbelief, she still went to the store and tried to buy masks. The following is an excerpt from Researcher II's personal notes before the mobility visit to Mexico:

> *I first heard about such a disease from a colleague. I do not believe in the disease or that the mask can protect me. Well, I'll go to the pharmacy and buy it just in case.*
> *I visited pharmacies and shops, and everywhere, they said that there were no masks.*

Researcher II's doubt that the virus would be a serious issue and the need to wear masks is also indicated by the many smiley face emojis sent with the text.

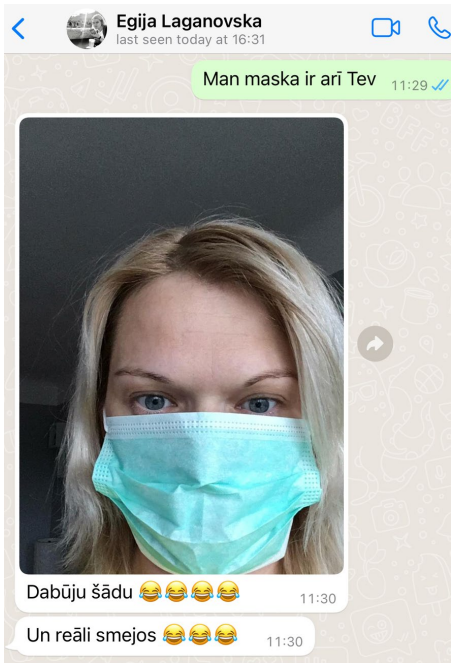


Photo 3 WhatsApp chat between Researcher I and Researcher II: '*I got this one. And really laughing*'. (30 January 2020)

It is interesting that by July 2020, Researcher II's position had completely changed from disbelief and denial to fear and extreme caution. Analysing the WhatsApp dialogue between Researchers I and II, we found the following statements:

> *I lie in bed all day; I can't get up. Back hurts. I hope it's not Covid. Well, I will not go to the doctors because it is the fastest way to get Covid.*
>
> *I was pretty much the only one at the Riga airport with a mask. I had three disinfectants and a package of disinfectant wipes. And I didn't go to the WC anywhere; I left as soon as possible. Others were still watching as I wiped down the luggage carts with a napkin before using them... well, crazy, crazy… those people.* (10 July 2020)

The data from Researcher II revealed that they did not know whether it would be possible to return home. Five flights were cancelled between April and July 2020. Five times, Researcher II had packed her suitcases and was happy and hoped that she would be able to return to her family and friends in Latvia. However, each time, there was severe disappointment when the news came that the flight was cancelled. (See Photo 4)

Photo 4 WhatsApp chat between Researchers I and II. Researcher II: '*What I expected*'. Researcher I: '*Yes. But be sure to fill out the questionnaire for the voucher. It was clear to me, but I know that you were hoping*'. Researcher II: '*Ok*' (02 April 2020)

The uncertainty of relatives who were waiting in Latvia also caused concern. Researcher II wrote, '*I just talked to my aunt; I tried to smile so as not to cry. She suddenly got mad at me and didn't understand why I wasn't there*' (24 June 2020).

Due to extreme stress, Researcher II regularly experienced health disorders, such as insomnia, nervousness, anxiety, sadness, feelings of helplessness and pain in the heart. This was evidenced by the entries in Researcher II's personal notes:

> *Mmmm. I would never have come here. Never ever. And the stupidest thing is that I don't even know how to help myself.* (25 April 2020)
>
> *My heart often hurts. I made an appointment with the doctor. I haven't felt so bad in a long time.* (07 May 2020)

> *It's not easy for me right now; it's very difficult, but I also see something positive in it. Fragile sleep. I work with myself.* (24 June 2020)

In June, the researcher had already found something positive, such as working with oneself. Real hopes of returning home appeared in Researcher II's messages when they saw a plane in the sky after many months of silence with no planes in the air (see Photo 5).

Photo 5 WhatsApp chat between Researcher II and a colleague in Latvia. Researcher II: '*Now, they fly. I immediately looked up the airline's website to see if there were any tickets. Yes, they have them. All of Latvia should keep its fingers crossed*'. Colleague: '*Yes, we are'!* (25 June 2020)

However, Researcher I mostly mentioned overload, fatigue, and weakness both in WhatsApp conversations and in her personal notes. For instance, '*Since the remote work started, I have felt very tired. When I get up in the morning, I feel tired'.* The lack of energy also kept her from connecting with her work with students remotely and when teaching the child at home: '*Often*

overcome by anger, I can't cope with all my work. The child is also assigned a very large amount of homework. It takes time to explain everything to him, but I don't have time'. (29 March 2020)

Both intense emotions and the expansion of roles are marked here because during remote learning, parents practically had to teach their youngest children themselves. For example, Researcher I's son was in the first grade from September to mid-March of 2020, when all schools switched to distance learning. In the first grade, the child has not yet mastered study, reading, writing and arithmetic skills, let alone self-directed learning skills. Therefore, teaching activities took a lot of time and patience from parents. Therefore, on 13 March, Researcher I sent Researcher II a photo with the caption '*I have to teach my child myself*'. (See Photo 6)

Photo 6 WhatsApp chat between Researchers I and II. Researcher I: '*I have to teach my child myself*'. (13 March 2020)

Children get tired from having to do a lot of homework, and Researcher I got worried because she had to spend more and more time helping her son understand how to do the homework. The task was not only to perform various activities but also to create video and photo evidence of both the process of doing the work and the presentation of the work itself. (See Photo 7)

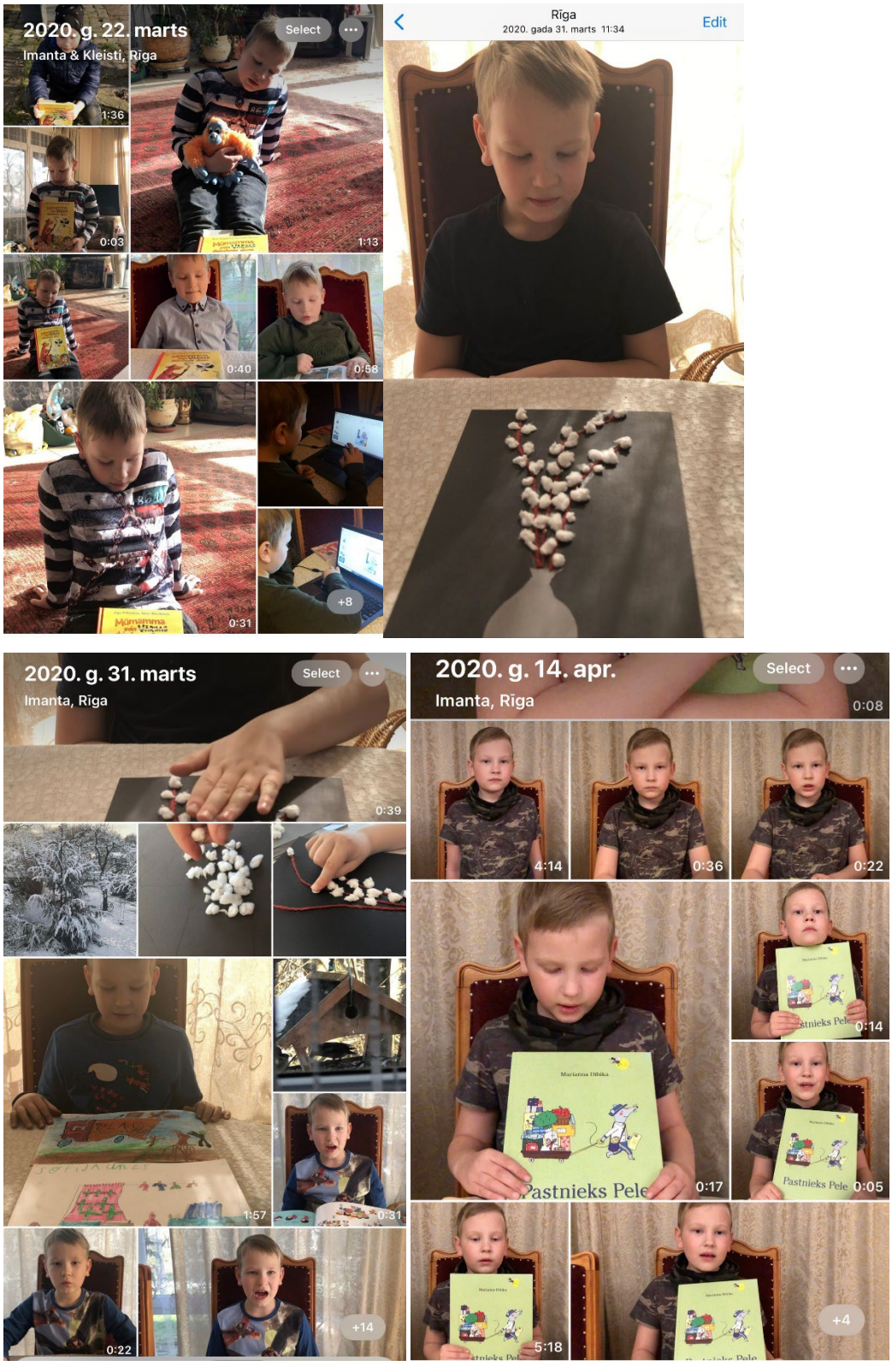


Photo 7. Researcher I's son doing various homework assignments.

Therefore, Researcher I had to work more at night when the child had gone to sleep. Researcher I wrote in her notes, '*It's 3 in the morning, but I'm still preparing a presentation for tomorrow's lecture. I'm exhausted. But, fortunately, I am able to recover and work as much as necessary*'. (27 April 2020)

The second research question, 'What were the challenges and benefits of working during the COVID-19 pandemic'? is very difficult to separate from the first, as they overlap to a large extent.

In the dialogue between Researchers I and II, it is revealed that both improved their digital competence and felt support from each other and their colleagues. For example, Researcher I wrote in her notes after the lectures, '*I am very happy that each lecture starts with asking each other how it is going and encouraging each other'.* However, Researcher II discovered different ways to reduce stress, such as writing in her diary and observing the moon (see Photo 8)

Joprojām par 9.03.2020.

Šodienu es varētu nosaukt – pilnmēness meklējumi Meksikā, konkrētāk Hermossilo. Tā vēlme vienmēr redzēt mēnesi dažādās nokrāsās un lielumos manī ir tik liela, ka mēdzu izdomāt dažādus pekstiņus, lai cilvēki dotos ar mani vai arī atceltu kaut kādas darbības. Pati mēdzu par to smaidīt, bet tajā brīdī viss ir nopietni. Tā es arī esmu pierunājusi Kristapu celties 4:00 no rīta Maltā, lai doties vērot mēness aptumsumu.... ha ha ha... ir bijušas vēl citas reizes....cilvēki mainās un vietas tāpat, tikai tā mana doma ir viena.... Šodien Edgars smējās par mani – diez ko tas nozīmē – " Tev ir pastiprināta interesi par mēnesi un putniem" ha ha ha....nē nē... ir arī taču citas ☺ Lūk, tad arī plāns redzēt pilnmēnesi šeit, protams, mani jau kādu nedēļu mocīja... es jau biju visu izpētījusi, cikos, kad un kas tas par pilnmēnesi. Šoreiz tas esot Tārpa pilnmēness (Worm Moon). Tā es jau ieminējos daudziem par ideju, ka vēlētos redzēt, bet īsti neviens tā neko man neatbildēja, vai nu īstā Meksikāņu stilā – "jā, jā, noteikti" – bet visiem taču ir skaidrs...ha ha ha! Tad pienāca pirmdienas rīts....Un es sapratu, ka ir nedaudz apmācies un man nav ne jausmas, kur es varētu redzēt mēness parādīšanos pie horizonta....jo, protams, es varu uz ielas redzēt, bet man jau ir galvenais tieši tas mirklis, kas šis tikko uzaus.... ha ha ha...Un tad es izdomāju, ka pajautāšu Renē, ko šis vakarā un izstāstīju ideju...Viņš saka, ka nav plānu un viņš zinot aptuveni 6 km no šejienes vietu, kur varētu labi redzēt. Yes. Der... bet viņš saka, ka ir jābrauc ātrāk kādas 2 h, jo kamēr uzkāpsim... Es nemūžam nedomāju, ka tas būs tik grūti.....aaaaa...tas bija reāli kāpiens pa akmeņiem... Un man visu laiku bail, ka kāda čūska neizlec... aaaa...pēdējās 10 minūtes, es domāju, ka es aiziešu ar sirdi....Renē pēc tam jokoja un teica, ka viņš redzējis jau manā sejā, ka viss....Bet man taču redzēt mēnesi vēlme ir lielāka.... ha ha ha! Vārdu sakot, pēdējie spēkiem uzrāpos augšā... Tu kādi seši akmeņi, kas nemaz neizskatās īsti droši

Kādas 10 minūtes bija nepieciešams, lai mana sirds atkal galīgi nedomātu, ka es taisos mirt.... uz tiem sešiem akmeņiem sēdēja vēl jaunieši, smēķēja zaļīti un klausījās mūziku... Un skats uz Hermosillo skats dievīgs..... pāri pilsētai rietēja saule un otrā pusē pēc maniem aprēķiniem ir noteikti pēc 40 minūtēm jābūt mēnesim.

Tā arī bija...Un nebija apmācies un tas tur tāds milzīgs arī izlīda

Atpakaļ ceļā bija jau tumšs... Kāpot lejā tumsā bija arī vesels piedzīvojums, iztiekot tikai ar telefona gaismiņu. Kad pēc 2 h tikām veiksmīgi lejā...Nenormāli gribējās dzert, jo mēs jau "gudrīši" nebijām ūdeni paņēmuši līdzi....ha ha ha...Renē aizbildinājās, ka negribējis neko rokās stiepj, es aizbildinājos, ka nezināju, ka Mirador ir kaut kas tāds....

Pēc brīnišķīgā piedzīvojuma, protams, tacos... un atkal 3 h sarunas....tā smējāmies par savu trako ideju uzkāpt Mirador, lai redzētu pilnmēnesi.... ka bija viena kūciņa jāapēd ☺

Šī bilde tapa, iedomājama, ka esam Vācijas alus festivālā.... Bet tas nav alus, tas kaut kāds Meksikāņu auksts dzēriens.

Pusnaktī mēnesim bija tās apkārt loks...

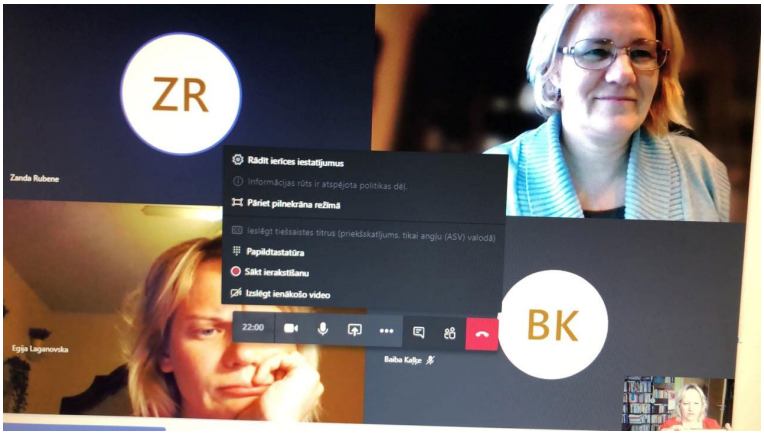
Photo 8 The excerpts from Researcher II's diary. (09 March 2020).

The main negative effects for Researcher I included prolonged time at the computer, which caused permanent health problems, including the deterioration of vision, weight gain and burnout syndrome. For Researcher II, sleep disorders and anxiety became issues.

Analysing the notes and dialogue on WhatsApp, both Researchers I and II indicated virtual communication with relatives and colleagues was the most important form of support during COVID-19, especially when they were not allowed to meet physically.

Colleagues quickly created an MS Teams group where they learned the main features of the software in one evening to help each other. Since classes at the University of Latvia were mostly held in person before the pandemic, none of the colleagues had experience with MS Teams (see Photo 9).

Photo 9 First WhatsApp chat between Researcher II and colleague: *'In the lower bar, the camera. The meeting's name and "meet now" should be given there. Yes? Yes, push it'!* The second chat between Researchers I and II. Researcher II: *'I'm looking for a microphone'.* Researcher I: *'OK, see you soon'.* Researcher II: *'In two hours if I haven't gone to bed…'.* (18 March 2020)



MS Teams screenshot: Co-learning with colleagues to learn MS Teams' features. (18 March 2020).

After 18 March, all classes were held remotely, which created many new challenges. The first was learning new tools, and the second was learning how to organise all work remotely for the first time in these researchers' lives. Researcher II wrote to Researcher I, '*Today I read special pedagogy from five in the morning... Little by little. [Students] are not particularly satisfied with this form yet. But whatever, it is what it is*'. (19 May 2020). All meetings were also organised remotely.

Answering the third research question, 'How has technology influenced female academic practices'? showed that the use of technology and the Internet made it possible to continue work and fully reduce the feeling of physical isolation. Thanks to video conferencing platforms, colleagues could celebrate holidays together, discuss work matters, lead classes and participate in conferences (see Photo 10).

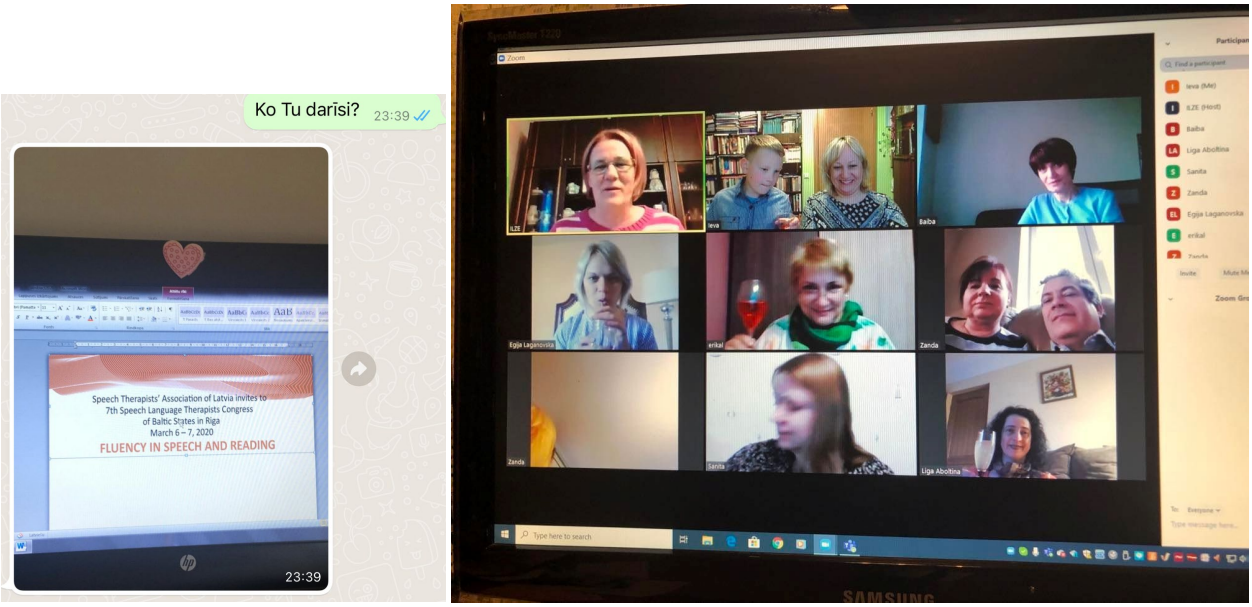


Photo 10 Conference presentation and birthday celebration.

Both researchers believed that COVID created the need to adapt very quickly to new conditions in which technology is an integral part. The pandemic also motivated the search for more and more new tools to make remote lectures more dynamic, engaging and accessible.

For example, Researcher II rearranged her workroom to adapt to the environment for remote work. (See Photo 11)

Photo 11 WhatsApp Chat between Researcher II and Researcher I 'Ieva.., I have a desk..' Researcher I: 'You are ready for work.' (13 February 2020)

Researcher II had even created a page comparing the time between Mexico and Latvia not to miss lectures. (See Photo 12)

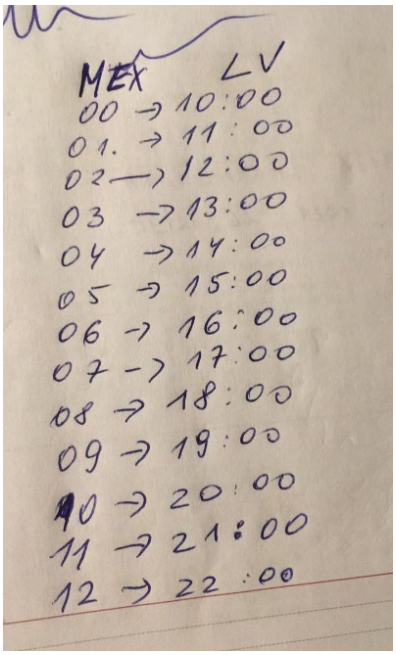


Photo 12. Researcher II's personal notes in Mexican and Latvian time. (27 April 2020.)

Covid-19 forced both researchers to explore for solutions in order to work effectively and take care of family responsibilities, according to all the data sets analyzed.

Conclusion

This paper has examined the crucial elements that disproportionately negatively affected women in the academic world during COVID-19. These three essential elements concentrate on the roles and duties of the shift from on-campus learning to remote learning, career advancement chances, and gender-based division of labor, which includes parental responsibilities. The literature review results show that there is a gender divide when it comes to household responsibilities and variables that could affect job success.

The research study's purpose was to determine female teachers' scientific and teaching work experience during COVID-19. The study examined the critical factors that influenced the performance of researchers. Similarly, the researchers evaluated some factors that helped female researchers mitigate COVID-19 challenges during teaching.

The collected data portrayed various elements, including researcher activities and feelings during the Coronavirus pandemic. Data analysis was achieved through critical

reflection and interpretation of life events, creating patterns, and drawing connections to the research question.

The study results portrayed that researchers were concerned about the rise in the cases of COVID-19 cases. Researchers were also concerned about the strategies for preventing the spread of the virus. Some of the impacts of the pandemic on researcher experience included fatigue, work overload due to reduced staff, and reduced motivation at work. The movement restrictions also influenced many academic staff to adopt remote teaching during the pandemic. Therefore, the COVID-19 pandemic adversely impacted the welfare and experiences of female researchers by exposing them to the risk of contracting the virus, fear, fatigue, and reduced motivation.

The long-term effects of the pandemic on females in higher education need to be further studied. Further research should be done to investigate the impact on other groups, particularly intersectionality, as this study is limited to comparing males and women, before and after COVID-19. This study should serve as an example for future studies to understand the effects of pandemics on single-sex. Therefore, understanding the degree to which motherhood is disadvantaged in higher education in comparison to other groups requires additional research.

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