

SWOT ANALYSIS OF TEACHING PROCESS AT UNIVERSITIES DURING COVID-19 PANDEMIC

Iryna Soroka¹, Alla Zasluzhena²

¹Ph.D. in Psychology, Associate professor, O.P. Jindal Global University, Jindal Institute of Behavioural Sciences, Sonapat (India)

ORCID ID: <http://orcid.org/0000-0003-1132-488X>

²Candidate of Pedagogical Sciences, Associate professor, National Aviation University, Kyiv (Ukraine)

ORCID ID: <https://orcid.org/0000-0001-5628-790X>

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ABSTRACT

Coronavirus (Covid-19) pandemic has affected our lives at macro, meso, and micro levels, disrupted educational practices, caused challenges for university teachers but created opportunities as well. The study aimed to identify the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats which university teachers envision in their work during the Covid-19 pandemic. The study was performed by using the survey with the help of the questionnaire created by the authors and a Standardized STAI form (State-Trait Anxiety Inventory), constructed by Spielberger. The data were analysed with the help of SPSS v 21. The participants were 140 teachers (80 females, 60 males), aged between 30-50, from 6 universities of Ukraine. Strengths suggested by the teaching staff of Ukrainian universities: good relationships with students and administration, the grading system in universities, satisfying working conditions, good socializing, good experience, and moral satisfaction. Weaknesses: low salary, huge workload, bad technical support. The disadvantage of online teaching mentioned in the study is the absence of live communication. Other drawbacks of online teaching are as follows: online classes and preparation require more time and good time-management skills. Online teaching may create a sense of isolation. Lack of appropriate resources, power cuts were some of the challenges that teachers faced during their virtual classes. Some more issues mentioned by the teachers: passive students and difficulties in encouraging collaboration. The following Opportunities were identified in this research: the opportunity to develop skills, creativity, the opportunity of further education/teacher training, the opportunity to realize plans, the opportunity of promotion. The teachers pointed out the following threats at work which they anticipate: conflicts with colleagues, unhealthy competition, loss of job, high demands, great responsibility. The findings suggest that the pandemic affects the mental health of both male and female university teachers; the levels of state and trait anxiety are higher among women. This research can serve as a basis for in-depth study of such issues as job satisfaction, well-being, and mental health.

Keywords: *strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, threats, trait, state anxiety.*

Introduction

The spread of the novel coronavirus has affected society immensely at macro, meso, and micro levels. Micro, meso, and macro refer to the levels of analysis typically used in research. The micro-level analysis focuses on the interactions of individuals. Meso-level research examines teams, units, organizations, institutions. Macro-level re-

search is used to look at societies at large: the political administrative environment, economies, and cultures (Coleman, 1990; Collins, 1981; Knorr-Cetina, 1981; Amzat & Maigari, 2021, p.82).

Teaching is considered to be one of the most stressful professions. Responses to the Covid-19 pandemic have created new stressors for teachers to deal with, includ-

Address for correspondence, e-mail: editpsychas@gmail.com
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ing challenges caused by online teaching (MacIntyre et al., 2020).

Considering the pandemic, the researchers have been studying the possible impact of the COVID-19 outbreak on the university teachers at macro, meso, and micro levels with the help of SWOT analysis. Therefore, the study aims to identify the strengths (if any), weaknesses (or challenges), opportunities, and threats which university teachers envision in their work during the Covid-19 pandemic.

The following **research question** is proposed to help achieve the aim of this article: What are the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats of the teaching process at universities in the time of Covid-19? Such a research question is important to guide the researchers to be on the track to investigate the research problem.

Literature review

SWOT (strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats) analysis tool was originally developed as a business tool to aid decision making (Hazzan et al., 2018; Leiber et al., 2018), though in our study it helps to investigate the current situation in higher education.

Georga J. Longhurst et al. (2020) in their research conducted in 14 universities in the United Kingdom and the Republic of Ireland mention the following Strengths (developing new online resources, upskilling in new technologies), Weaknesses (time constraints, lack of practical sessions, issues with assessment), Opportunities (academic collaboration, working remotely, incorporation of blended learning in future curriculum development), Threats (reduced student engagement, diminished teacher-student relationship) in the time of the pandemic.

To continue the list of threats, the current Covid-19 crisis may cause an increased risk of isolation, anxiety, and boredom among the population (Rubin and Wessely, 2020). Kumar and Nayar (2020) studied anxiety, stress, fear, trauma, helplessness, and other psychological issues experienced during a pandemic.

The research conducted in India by Rehman et al. (2020, p. 46) indicated that “the levels of stress and depression were found to be mild, whereas the levels of anxiety were moderate among males and females. This could be because the current lockdown and fear of getting infected with Covid-19 are so pervasive, that similar experiences of

distress are evident irrespective of gender”. Researchers, teachers, and health professionals reported mild levels of stress, whereas mental health professionals and employees in different corporate jobs were found to be in the normal range of stress. The findings in India could be attributed to the closure of universities and colleges that offer limited technological support and knowledge resulting in uncertainty about the future of students, teachers, and researchers. The current pandemic places demand on students and teachers alike to adapt to online teaching albeit with limited resources, thus resulting in above normal stress levels.

Coronavirus not only brings death in the short-term, but it also destabilizes behaviour patterns in the long-term. The risk and fear of contagion have modified production models, employment policies, social and interpersonal relationships, leisure habits, education, and training systems and every consolidated behavioural repertoire as stated by Pietro Smirni et al. (2020).

According to Ozamiz et al. (2020), research done within the Spanish population, it is difficult to know the psychological and emotional consequences of confinement, fear of the unknown, and all changes caused by COVID-19, but it is evident that they can lead to anxiety disorders, depression, stress, and increased conception of harmful substances (Asmundson & Taylor, 2020; Ozamiz et al., 2020; Torales et al., 2020).

A survey conducted in Europe shows an increase in the rates of stress and mental health concerns in the academic scientific workforce (Gewin, 2021). In addition to online teaching demands, survey respondents identified other problems: disrupted professional networks and working from home, often while caring for children. Academic researchers feel that their careers are on hold, and long-term collaborations are suffering because of network disruptions. “Redundancies have taken place since last year in many institutions, including a reported 17,000 job cuts in Australia, alongside lay-offs in the United States, Canada, and the United Kingdom” (Gewin, 2021, p. 491).

The conclusion which may be drawn from the study of the up-to-date scientific literature is that the coronavirus (Covid-19) pandemic has affected the people around the globe at macro, meso, and micro levels, has disrupted educational practices, caused challenges for university teachers despite their age, gender, nationality and ex-

pertise.

Methodology

Sample

The sample of respondents consisted of 140 teachers (80 females, 60 males), aged between 30-50, from 6 universities of Ukraine ("KROK" University, National Technical University of Ukraine "Igor Sikorsky Kyiv Polytechnic Institute", Kyiv National Economic University named after Vadym Hetman, The National University of Life and Environmental Sciences of Ukraine, National Aviation University, and The National Academy of Educational Sciences of Ukraine). The research was conducted during the period September 2020 – April 2021.

Research Instrument and Procedure

A mixed-method approach, i.e., both quantitative and qualitative techniques were used in this research. The following survey questionnaire designed by the authors of the study was used to interview the participants:

1. Do you find the relationships with your colleagues

good b) satisfying c) bad d) not sure

2. Do you find the relationships with the management

a) good b) satisfying c) bad d) not sure

3. Do you find the relationships with your students

good b) satisfying c) bad d) not sure

4. Do you think that technical support in your university is

a) advanced/modern b) old-fashioned/
poor c) not sure

5. Do you like the grading system in your university?

a) yes b) no c) not sure

6. Do you find the workload

a) huge b) usual c) not sure

7. Do you find the working conditions

a) good b) satisfying c) bad

The next question was rated on a 0–5 Likert-type scale.

8. Put the grades for the points below from 0 to

5 (where 0 – not at all, 5 – absolutely true).

Your work gives you:

prestige

the opportunity to realize your plans

the opportunity of promotion

the opportunity to develop your skills

the opportunity of further education/teacher training good experience

the opportunity to implement your creativity

good socializing

high salary

moral satisfaction

9. What are the disadvantages of online teaching for you:

a) lack of "live" communication b) technical problems c) your variant

10. Which threats at work do you anticipate (put your answers in the order from the least probable to the most probable/ inevitable).

conflicts with students, conflicts with colleagues, conflicts with the management, unhealthy competition, high demands, huge responsibility, loss of a job or your own variant.

11. Which emotions have you experienced during the Covid-19 pandemic? Score from

0 – never to 4 – all the time.

12. What is the reason for these feelings? More than one variant may be possible.

a) You are afraid of being infected.

b) You must adapt to a new routine.

c) Your variant.

To measure the levels of anxiety among university

Feelings / emotions	Frequency				
	0 – never	1 – seldom	2 – from time to time	3 – often	4 – all the time
anxiety					
stress					
depression					
frustration					
anger					
hopelessness					
pessimism					
happiness					
optimism					
drive					
enthusiasm					

teachers a Standardized STAI form (State-Trait Anxiety Inventory), constructed by Charles D. Spielberger (1983)

was used. According to Spielberg anxiety is a unidimensional construct including both state and trait anxiety. State anxiety reflects the psychological and physiological reactions directly related to adverse situations in a specific moment. In contrast, the term trait anxiety refers to a trait of personality, describing individual differences related to a tendency to present state anxiety.

The procedure

The study was performed by using the online survey with the help of the instruments described previously. After the interview, fixing and analysing the results was conducted. The data were analysed with the help of SPSS v 21.

Results

After analysing the results of our survey with the help of the SWOT tool, we can present the following **Strengths** suggested by the teaching staff of Ukrainian universities: 50% of respondents find their job prestigious; relationships with students are identified as good by 50% and the same was mentioned about the relationships with administration; 40% of teachers like the grading system in their universities; the working conditions are good for 20% and satisfying for 70% of respondents; 80% get good socializing at work, 80% – good experience and 80% – moral satisfaction.

As for the **Weaknesses**: the low salary was mentioned by 80% of surveyed; huge workload by 50%; for half of the interviewed teachers technical support is old-fashioned in their institutions and for 50% it was difficult to respond. The drawbacks of online teaching: absence of live communication was suggested by 60%, technical problems

by 30% of respondents and only 1 person doesn't face any problems in online teaching.

Other mentioned disadvantages of online teaching are as follows: online classes and preparation require more time and good time-management skills. Online teaching may create a sense of isolation. Lack of appropriate resources, power cuts were some of the challenges that teachers faced during their virtual classes. Some more issues mentioned by the teachers: passive students and difficulties in encouraging collaboration. Students and university teachers may not have a quiet space to work, which is needed to concentrate, a lot of respondents were distracted by their family members while delivering online classes.

The following **Opportunities** were identified in this research: the opportunity to develop skills (90%); creativity (70%), the opportunity of further education/teacher training (90%); the opportunity to realize plans (50%); the opportunity of promotion (70%).

Threats are future dangers. The teachers who participated in this research pointed out the following threats at work which they anticipate: conflicts with colleagues, unhealthy competition, loss of job, high demands, a huge responsibility.

The results of the question №11. "Which emotions have you experienced during the Covid-19 pandemic?" are presented in Table 1 below.

The results show that during the Covid-19 pandemic teachers of Ukrainian universities most frequently experienced stress, anxiety, and depression, followed by sense of hopelessness, pessimism and frustration.

**Feelings & Emotions of the university teaching staff during Covid-19 pandemic
(in % of respondents)**

Table 1.

Feelings/ emotions	Frequency				
	0-never	1-seldom	2-from time to time	3-often	4- all the time
anxiety	-	-	10	20	70
stress	-	-	35	35	30
depression	-	5	25	40	30
frustration	35	45	15	5	-
anger	10	50	25	10	5
hopelessness	5	5	75	15	-
pessimism	-	10	60	25	5
happiness	-	50	50	-	-
optimism	60	20	20	-	-
drive	-	80	10	5	5
enthusiasm	5	50	20	20	5

Table 2.
The levels of state and trait anxiety among university teaching staff during Covid-19 pandemic (in % of respondents)

State anxiety			
Gender	Low level	Medium level	High level
Female	3.8	25.0	71.2
Male	33.3	0.0	66.7
Trait anxiety			
Gender	Low level	Medium level	High level
Female	1.3	0.0	98.7
Male	0.0	16.7	83.3

To measure the levels of anxiety we used the standardized STAI form (State-Trait Anxiety Inventory), constructed by Charles D. Spielberger. The results are introduced in Table 2.

3.8% of female university teachers in Ukraine, who took part in our research have a low level, 25.0% – medium and 71.2% – high level of state anxiety while male respondents demonstrated the low level (33.3%) and the high level (66.7%). Both female and male university teachers have a high level of trait anxiety: 98,7% and 83,3% of respondents respectively.

Answering question № 12 of the survey about the reasons for their feelings caused by Covid-19 pandemic, Ukrainian university teachers mentioned the fear of being infected; their routine, habitual way of life have been disrupted; they lost their confidence in the future; they felt isolated; experienced lack of sleep, overeating or loss of appetite; some teachers lost members of the family.

Discussion

The review of the scientific literature and our research itself has distinguished that the Covid-19 pandemic has influenced people's lives, teaching, and educational processes immensely at different levels. It disrupted travel opportunities hence leading to the suspension of regular collaboration, visiting international conferences (macro-level). It challenged the educational institutions by the transition to online teaching, which required modernizing technical support, installing software, organizing trainings (meso level). Moreover, the pandemic has affected the mental health of the teaching staff (micro-level). People are faced with such problems as stress, burnout, frustration, depression, etc., and in the majority of cases, they have to deal with these feelings by themselves.

It might be interesting to compare the results of our previous research (Soroka, 2014) of SWOT analyses of the teaching process with the current one. The main difference which can be notified is that the attitude to the teaching profession changed. The prestige of the profession took the last place in the list among teachers of Ukrainian universities in 2014 but in our current study, 50% of respondents find their job prestigious. It can be explained by the attempts of the previous and present government to improve the situation in education, to increase salaries and change requirements. At the same time, the teachers nowadays are less sure in their security, they are more afraid of redundancy than seven years ago. In 2014 30 % of the

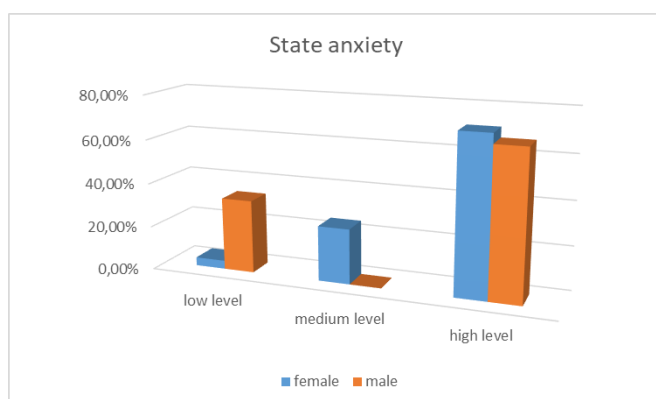


Figure 1. Comparison of the levels of state anxiety between female and male university teachers

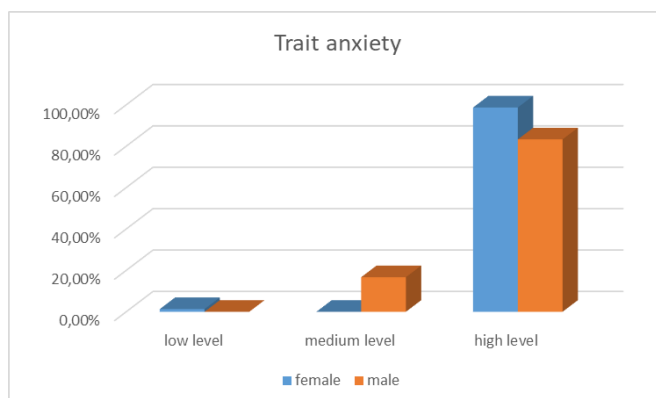


Figure 2. Comparison of the levels of trait anxiety between female and male university teachers

teachers found the technical support in their institutions advanced (while 25% thought it was old-fashioned, and 45% were not sure). 37% of teachers liked the grading system in their universities. 30% of respondents found the working conditions good and 59% found them satisfying. But what should be emphasized is that the teachers in our present study and the one 7 years ago mention similar opportunities in their work: the opportunity to develop skills, creativity, the opportunity of further education/teacher training.

Our findings suggest that the pandemic affects the mental health of both male and female university teachers, but the levels of state and trait anxiety are higher among women. These results are in line with the findings of the Turkish researchers who state in their study that depression and anxiety levels are higher in women (Selçuk Özdin & Şükriye Bayrak Özdin, 2020).

Anxiety is a mental state characterized by an intense sense of tension and worry, relative to something adverse that might happen in the future. Anxiety can be an adaptive response driving coping behaviours to face possible dangers, but if excessive and unmotivated, it can be dysfunctional, leading to developing disorders (Hopwood et al., 2012). State anxiety is defined as a more intense emotional state, a temporary reaction to adverse events, whereas trait anxiety is a more stable personality feature, defined as a constant individual difference related to a tendency to respond with concerns, troubles and worries to various situations (Spielberger et al., 1983).

Corona Virus Disease-19 (COVID-19) resulted in health risk, with psychological, emotional, social implications. Employers in educational institutions must provide employees with the resources they need to meet the demands of the job. Moreover, various trainings and coaching sessions should be organized to prevent stress, conflicts, and burnout.

Conclusion

In conclusion, the strengths, weaknesses (or challenges), opportunities, and threats which university teachers envision in their work during the Covid-19 pandemic were researched. Strengths which were suggested by the teaching staff of Ukrainian universities include good relationships with students and administration, the grading sys-

tem in universities, satisfying working conditions, good socializing, good experience, and moral satisfaction. The weaknesses include low salary, huge workload, bad technical support. The disadvantage of online teaching is the absence of live communication, a sense of isolation. Online classes and preparation require more time and good time-management skills. Professors lack appropriate resources. Power cuts were also the challenge that teachers faced during their virtual classes. Some more issues were mentioned by the teachers: passive students and difficulties in encouraging collaboration; students and university teachers may not have a quiet space to work. The majority of respondents were distracted by their family members while delivering online classes.

The following Opportunities were identified in this research: the opportunity to develop skills, creativity, the opportunity of further education/teacher training, the opportunity to realize plans, the opportunity of promotion. The teachers who participated in the research pointed out the following threats at work which they anticipate: conflicts with colleagues, unhealthy competition, loss of job, high demands, great responsibility.

During the Covid-19 pandemic teachers of Ukrainian universities most frequently experience stress, anxiety, and depression. The findings suggest that the pandemic affects the mental health of both male and female university teachers, but the levels of state and trait anxiety are higher among women.

Recommendations

These findings can be useful for the administration of educational institutions, practical psychologists as well as teachers themselves. The present research can serve as a basis for in-depth study of such issues as job satisfaction, well-being, and mental health.

Limitations

It is important to acknowledge that the present study irrespective of its rich data, comprehensive results, and findings has certain limitations: geographical locale and sample. In future research, it is important to increase the number of participants, the comparison between state and private institutions can be done as well as cross-cultural research.

Conflicts of Interest

The authors report that they have no conflicts of interest of affiliation, legal, financial, or commercial origin that could be related to the research.

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Ірина Сорока

Кандидат психологічних наук, доцент, Джіндал Інститут Поведінкових Дисциплін, м. Соніпат, (Індія)

Алла Заслужена

Кандидат педагогічних наук, доцент, Національний авіаційний університет, м. Київ, (Україна)

SWOT АНАЛІЗ ПРОЦЕСУ ВИКЛАДАННЯ В УНІВЕРСИТЕТІ ПІД ЧАС ПАНДЕМІЇ COVID-19

АНОТАЦІЯ

Пандемія коронавірусу (Covid-19) вплинула на наше життя на макро-, мезо- та мікрорівнях, спричинила виклики для викладачів університетів, унеможливила подорожі, що призвело до припинення регулярної

співпраці, відвідування міжнародних конференцій (макрорівень). Викликом навчальним закладам з переходом до онлайн-навчання, стали вимоги модернізації технічної підтримки, встановлення програмного забезпечення, організації тренінгів (мезорівень). Пандемія безпосередньо вплинула на психічне здоров'я педагогічного колективу (мікрорівень). Люди стикаються з такими проблемами, як стрес, вигорання, розчарування, депресія тощо, і в більшості випадків їм доводиться боротися з цими почуттями самотійно.

Метою дослідження було виявити сильні, слабкі сторони, можливості та загрози, які передбачають викладачі університетів у своїй роботі під час пандемії Covid-19. Дослідження було проведено за допомогою опитувальника, створеного авторами, та стандартизованої методики визначення особистісної та реактивної тривожності за Спілбергером. Дані були проаналізовані за допомогою SPSS 21.0. Учасниками дослідження стали 140 викладачів (80 жінок, 60 чоловіків) у віці від 30 до 50 років з 6 університетів України. Сильні сторони, запропоновані професорсько-викладацьким складом українських університетів: хороші стосунки зі студентами та адміністрацією, система оцінювання в університетах, задовільні умови праці, гарний досвід та моральне задоволення. Слабкі сторони: низька зарплата, велике навантаження, погана технічна підтримка. Недоліком онлайн викладання, зазначеного у дослідженні, є відсутність живого спілкування, технічні несправності, відсутність інтернету. Інші згадані недоліки викладання онлайн полягають у наступному: підготовка вимагає більше часу та певних навичок управління часом. Онлайн-навчання може створити відчуття ізоляції. Відсутність відповідних ресурсів, відключення електроенергії були тими проблемами, з якими стикалися вчителі під час віртуальних занять. Студенти та викладачі університетів інколи не мають обладнаного робочого місця, багато респондентів відволікалися членами родини під час проведення онлайн-уроків.

За допомогою SWOT аналізу у цьому дослідженні були визначені такі можливості: розвивати навички та творчі здібності, можливість подальшої освіти / перепідготовки викладачів, можливість реалізувати плани та кар'єрний зріст. Викладачі універси-

тетів вказали на наступні загрози на роботі: конфлікти з колегами, нездорова конкуренція, втрата роботи, високі вимоги, велика відповідальність.

Результати свідчать про те, що пандемія впливає на психічне здоров'я викладачів університетів, як жіночої так і чоловічої статі, але рівень реактивної та особистісної тривожності вищий серед жінок. Також учасниками дослідження були зазначені підвищені рівні стресу та депресивного стану, як наслідки пандемії, страх захворіти, а також порушення їхнього звичного способу життя, та втрату впевненості у завтрашньому дні. Це дослідження може послужити основою для поглибленого вивчення чинників, що впливають на задоволеність роботою та психічне здоров'я.

Ключові слова: сильні та слабкі сторони, можливість, загрози, особистісна та реактивна тривожність.

Ирина Сорока

Кандидат психологических наук, доцент, Джиндал Институт Поведенческих Дисциплин, г. Сонипат (Индия)

Алла Заслуженная

Кандидат педагогических наук, доцент, Национальный авиационный университет, г. Киев (Украина)

SWOT АНАЛІЗ ПРОЦЕСА ПРЕПОДАВАННЯ В УНІВЕРСИТЕТЕ ВО ВРЕМЯ ПАНДЕМИИ COVID-19

АННОТАЦИЯ

Пандемия коронавируса (Covid-19) повлияла на нашу жизнь на макро-, мезо- и микроуровнях, создала сложности преподавателям университетов. Невозможность путешествовать привела к прекращению регулярного сотрудничества и физического посещения международных конференций (макроуровень). Вызовом учебным заведениям с переходом к онлайн-обучению, стали требования модернизации технического оборудования, установки программного обеспечения, организации тренингов (мезоуровень). Пандемия непосредственно повлияла на психическое здоровье педагогического коллектива (микроуровень). Люди сталкиваются с такими проблемами, как стресс, выгорание, разочарование, депрессия и т. д., и в большинстве случаев им приходится бороться с этими чувствами

самостійно.

Целью исследования было выявить сильные и слабые стороны, возможности и угрозы, которые испытывают преподаватели университетов в своей работе во время пандемии Covid-19. Исследование было проведено с помощью опросника, созданного авторами, и стандартизированной методики определения личностной и реактивной тревожности по Спилбергеру. Данные были проанализированы с помощью SPSS 21.0. Участниками исследования стали 140 преподавателей (80 женщин, 60 мужчин) в возрасте от 30 до 50 лет из 6 университетов Украины. Сильные стороны, предложенные профессорско-преподавательским составом украинских университетов: хорошие отношения со студентами и администрацией, система оценивания в университете, удовлетворительные условия труда, хороший опыт и моральное удовлетворение. Слабые стороны: низкая зарплата, большая нагрузка, плохая техническая поддержка. Недостатком онлайн преподавания, указанного в исследовании, является отсутствие живого общения, технические неисправности и отсутствие интернета. Другие упомянутые недостатки преподавания онлайн заключаются в следующем: подготовка занимает больше времени и требует определенных навыков управления временем. Онлайн-обучение вызывает ощущение изоляции. Отсутствие соответствующих ресурсов, отключения электроэнергии также были проблемами, с которыми сталкивались преподаватели во время виртуальных занятий. Студенты и преподаватели университетов иногда не имеют оборудованного рабочего места, многие респонденты отвлекались членами семьи во время проведения онлайн-уроков.

При помощи SWOT анализа в данном исследовании были определены следующие возможности: развивать навыки и творческие способности, возможность дальнейшего образования/переподготовки преподавателей, возможность реализовать планы и карьерный рост. Преподаватели университетов указали на следующие угрозы на работе: конфликты с коллегами, нездоровая конкуренция, потеря работы, высокие требования, большая ответственность. Результаты свидетельствуют о том, что пандемия влияет на психическое здоровье преподавателей университетов, как женского, так и

мужского пола, но уровень реактивной и личностной тревожности выше среди женщин. Также участниками исследования были отмечены повышенный уровень стресса и депрессивного состояния, как следствия пандемии, страх заболеть, а также нарушение их привычного образа жизни и утрата уверенности в завтрашнем дне. Это исследование может послужить основой для углубленного изучения факторов, влияющих на удовлетворенность работой и на психическое здоровье.

Ключевые слова: сильные и слабые стороны, возможности, угрозы, личностная и реактивная тревожность.

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