

### Pandemic impact on the work environment and female teaching life

Impacto de la pandemia en el entorno laboral y la vida docente femenina
Impacto pandêmico no ambiente de trabalho e vida docente feminina

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#### Abstract

The aim was to understand the main changes in the work environment and teaching life in the context of the COVID-19 Pandemic. Study with a qualitative approach, developed in a higher education institution located in the northwest of Paraná, with women belonging to the faculty of undergraduate courses in health and biological sciences. Data collection was carried out through intensive interviews until theoretical saturation, with the aid of virtual tools, use of MaxqdaPlus software version 2020 and through Bardin's content analysis, the results were verified through the elaboration of a word cloud and subsequent emergence of categories. With a total of 20 people interviewed, it was evident that the work routine and its needs for acquisitions and adaptations in the female context sometimes affected relationships, psychology and productivity. However, it was evident that positive aspects were obtained from technologies, acquisition of skills and abilities, and lower risk and locomotive expense. The pandemic led to changes in work conformity, in the teacher-student relationship, and the need to adapt, sometimes causing discouragement and insecurity. However, the need for in-depth research on the teaching psychology in the post-pandemic period is revealed.

Descriptors: University Professors; Women, Working; Workplace; Lifestyle; COVID-19; Social Isolation.

### Resumén

El objetivo fue comprender los principales cambios en el ambiente de trabajo y la vida docente en el contexto de la Pandemia del COVID-19. Estudio con enfoque cualitativo, desarrollado en una institución de educación superior ubicada en el noroeste de Paraná, con mujeres pertenecientes a la facultad de cursos de graduación en ciencias de la salud y biológicas. La recolección de datos se realizó a través de entrevistas intensivas hasta la saturación teórica, con la ayuda de herramientas virtuales, uso del software MaxqdaPlus versión 2020 y a través del análisis de contenido de Bardin, se verificaron los resultados a través de la elaboración de una nube de palabras y posterior surgimiento de categorías. Con un total de 20 personas entrevistadas, se evidenció que la rutina de trabajo y sus necesidades de adquisiciones y adaptaciones en el contexto femenino a veces afectaban las relaciones, la psicología y la productividad. Sin embargo, se evidenció que se obtuvieron aspectos positivos de las tecnologías, adquisición de habilidades y destrezas, y menor riesgo y gasto locomotor. La pandemia generó cambios en el cumplimiento laboral, en la relación docente-alumno y la necesidad de adaptación, provocando en ocasiones desánimo e inseguridad. Sin embargo, se revela la necesidad de profundizar en la investigación sobre la enseñanza de la psicología en el período pospandemia.

**Descriptores:** Docentes; Mujeres Trabajadoras; Lugar de Trabajo; Estilo de Vida; COVID-19; Aislamiento Social.

### Resumo

Objetivou-se compreender as principais alterações no que emergem o ambiente de trabalho e vida docente com o contexto da Pandemia COVID-19. Estudo de abordagem qualitativa, desenvolvido em uma instituição de ensino superior localizada no noroeste do Paraná, com mulheres pertencentes ao corpo docente dos cursos de graduação em saúde e ciências biológicas. A coleta de dados foi realizada por meio de entrevistas intensivas até saturação teórica, com auxílio de ferramentas virtuais, utilização de software MaxqdaPlus versão 2020 e por meio da análise de conteúdo de Bardin, os resultados foram verificados por meio da elaboração de nuvem de palavras e subsequente emersão das categorias. Totalizando em 20 pessoas entrevistadas, evidenciou-se que a rotina de trabalho e suas necessidades de aquisições e adaptações no contexto feminino por vezes afetou as relações, o psicológico e a produtividade. Porém foi evidente que se obteve aspectos positivos advindo das tecnologias, aquisição de competências e habilidades, e menor risco e gasto locomotivo. A pandemia levou a mudanças na conformidade de trabalho, na relação professoraluno, e a necessidade de adaptação ocasionando por vezes em desânimo e insegurança. Contudo revelase a necessidade de pesquisas aprofundadas quanto ao psicológico docente no pós-pandemia.

Descritores: Docentes; Mulheres Trabalhadoras; Local de Trabalho; Estilo de Vida; COVID-19; Isolamento Social.



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Being a woman provides diverse experiences, it is considered that even before the pandemic, these women already witnessed constant ambivalence with feelings arising from the conciliation between work and family, aiming to be capable in all spheres of their life, however, this incessant search can make them susceptible to profound

impacts on their health.<sup>1</sup>

Introduction

Related to problems arising from a male-dominated hegemony, social and racial inequality, being a mother, performing household chores and performing, among other functions, care costs women's mental health, a fact that has not been taken with due importance..<sup>2</sup>

The pandemic along with restrictive measures have exacerbated the mental health mainly of the female public, in which the World Health Organization (WHO) has found an increase in symptoms of depression and anxiety worldwide. However, mental health disorders can aggravate several aspects of comprehensive health, including the development of chronic diseases and triggering suicide. In addition, the pandemic has led to unemployment, a risk factor for suicide or its attempt.<sup>3-5</sup>

The female gender makes up about 70% of the workforce worldwide, being at the forefront of social and health services. Attention focused on women becomes necessary due to the overloads caused by attempts to reconcile their various tasks with motherhood.<sup>6-9</sup>

Some feelings triggered by women may be the effects of the multi-causality of their tasks, given the various simultaneous activities carried out, such as children, work, household chores and family. Thus, double or triple shifts of female work trigger identity conflicts, especially when the work process is changed.<sup>6-9</sup>

In March 2020, restrictive measures came into force, requiring social distancing, service closures and, among other measures and protocols, adoption of measures and protocols. with these measures being essential to carry out remotely. 10-12

In the teaching field, women face accentuated implications with regard to reconciling the personal and professional spheres. This point overlaps with the pandemic and new ordinances from the Ministry of Education and the need to create new strategies with a change in the model of classes, exposing educators to pressures that affect their mental health.<sup>13,14</sup>

In this way, it is questioned which aspects linked to the pandemic compromise female work and teaching life and how do they occur? To answer the research question, the objective was to understand the main changes in the work environment and teaching life in the context of the COVID-19 Pandemic.

### Methodology

As a way of achieving the proposed objectives, the research was conducted in a descriptive, exploratory study of a qualitative nature, that is, focusing on the subjective nature of the analyzed object, seeking to understand behaviors based on individual particularities.

The research was carried out in a city in the northwest of the state of Paraná, in a private Higher Education Institution, with face-to-face and distance learning modalities, and which adapted to the requirements of the Ministry of Education for the elaboration of emergency remote classes in the year 2020, and subsequently to the simultaneous model in 2021.

The research subjects were women belonging to the faculty of the Biological and Health Sciences center of the institution, the interviews were all carried out by the main researchers, respecting the concept of theoretical and intentional sampling, ending up with a total of 20 participants who nineteen through video calls and only one in person according to the availability of those surveyed.

For the data collection technique, an intensive interview was used with the use of a question guide, in order to guide and explore the affections and female experience in the context of remote classes in a pandemic, containing information on sociodemographic aspects, and guided by the questions " Tell me about your productivity during the pandemic?", "Did you need to acquire any resources for your work during the pandemic? What were they?", "Was there any situation that you consider bad or good in the work environment? Tell me", "Can you tell me a little about how the experience of teaching internship classes was for you before the Pandemic and after during the pandemic period?", "Can you tell me a little about how the experience of teaching internship classes was for you before the pandemic and after during the pandemic period? All interviews were audio-recorded, using virtual platforms through technology, until the objectives of the study were

In order to select the key information, a software called MAXqda Plus version 2020 was used, which extracted them from the responses and made it possible to operationalize it, giving rise to a word cloud, as shown below in Figure 1. Since this software is a free program which performs lexical analysis of words, allows different processing and analysis of the narratives produced.<sup>15</sup>

The treatment and/or analysis of the data was carried out through Bardin's Content Analysis, which consists of three chronological poles, called pre-analysis, in which there is an organization based on floating reading, establishing contact with the document, choosing of documents and possible definition of a corpus, carrying out analytical procedures, formulating hypotheses and objectives. The second deals with the exploration of the material in which the decisions taken in the first phase are applied and the coding procedures emerging in the thematic categories. In the third pole or phase of treatment of the obtained results and interpretation, there is validation of the information, synthesis of information, interpretation and/or proposal of inferences. 16

It should be noted that for carrying out the research, all ethical precepts of the research were respected, in line with the guidelines disciplined by Resolution No. 466/12 of the National Health Council. This research is part of a larger project entitled: Human resilience in the face of changes in the health, disease and society process,



Souza CS, Manzoni GL, Charlo PB, Sabino MB, Lima AF calls or made available for signature in person. In order to guarantee secrecy and anonymity, the participants were identified by the letter "I" for interviewee, followed by a number that corresponded to the sequence of inclusion in the study, for example, (I1, I2, ... and I20).

appreciated and authorized by the Standing Committee on Ethics in Research with Human Beings (CEP) of Unicesumar, through CAAE: 35917220.6. 0000.5539 and opinion number: 4.194.905. All participants confirmed acceptance at the beginning of the recording or signed the Informed Consent Form (TCLE), which was read by the researchers in the video

Figure 1. Word Cloud provided by MAXqda Plus software version 2020. Maringá, PR, Brazil, 2022



### **Results**

The participants of this study were professors aged between 25 and 69 years old who have higher education. Among these, there are those who teach theoretical classes, some both in theory and in the field of internship, and others taught classes in internship during the pandemic along with theoretical classes, but currently remain only in the theoretical model. As for the time in teaching, teachers with an average of 140 months of career participated. Marital status comprises a total of 12 married women, as shown in Chart 1.

During the interviews, they spoke about their needs for change in the face of the remote model, their difficulties, and how to face it. According to the word cloud presented in Figure 1, the most frequent words are directly related to the experience of teaching with remote classes, the association of the results found in this and with the content analysis, emerged in three thematic categories: Characterizing the process adaptive front of the home office, Understanding the teaching experiences during the Pandemic and Understanding the teaching resilience amid the adaptation to the teaching model.

Chart 1. Characterization of teachers. Maringá, PR, Brazil, 2022 Teaching modality Working time Matrimonial

Age	Level of education	Teaching modality	Working time	Matrimonial	Employees	Children
				union		
42	Doctorate degree	Theoretical	240 months	Yes	Does not have	Yes
(101)						
25	Master's degree	Theoretical	24 months	No	Does not have	No
(102)		(Internship)				
31	Master's degree	Internship	6 months	No	Does have	No
(103)						
46	Specialist	Internship	288 months	Yes	Does not have	Yes
(104)						
30	Doctorate degree	Theoretical	108 months	No	Does not have	No
(105)		(Internship)				
69	Doctorate degree	Theoretical	516 months	No	Does not have	Yes
(106)		Internship				
34	Specialist	Internship	84 months	Yes	Does not have	Yes
(107)						
37	Doctorate degree	Theoretical	120 months	Yes	Does not have	Yes
(108)		Internship				
40	Specialist	Internship	84 months	Yes	Does have	Yes
(EI09)						
33	Doctorate degree	Theoretical	120 months	Yes	Does not have	No
(110)						
33	Doctorate degree	Theoretical	36 months	Yes	Does not have	Yes
(111)						



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38	Doctorate degree	Theoretical	72 months	Yes	Does not have	No
(112)						
39	Specialist	Internship	78 months	No	Does not have	Yes
(113)						
41	Doctorate degree	Internship	144 months	Yes	Does not have	Yes
(114)						
45	Doctorate degree	Theoretical	276 months	Yes	Does have	No
(115)						
36	Doctorate degree	Theoretical	60 months	Yes	Does have	Yes
(116)						
33	Master's degree	Theoretical	48 months	No	Does not have	No
(117)						
53	Doctorate degree	Theoretical	312 months	Yes	Does not have	Yes
(118)						
45	Master's degree	Theoretical	180 months	No	Does not have	Yes
(119)		Internship				
27	Specialist	Internship	8 months	No	Does not have	No
(120)						

## Characterizing the adaptive process in front of the home office

Faced with the change of classes to the remote model, some teachers had to make some adaptations to facilitate the process of working at home, such as purchasing a computer and making improvements to the internet to have greater security in relation to the speed of handling classes.

"[...] during the pandemic I bought a computer because I already needed it [...] and also to become more agile because the connection was slower [...]" (I11).

"[...] I had a lot of difficulty with the Internet connection, so I had to adapt [...] I took the opportunity to use a higher Internet speed [...]" (105).

In the midst of work modifications, the need for several changes was seen, however, managing a private place and unfit for distractions at home was an important factor to be used as a facilitator in addition to maintaining communication with other teachers.

"[...] we tried to adapt a specific, suitable place, as quiet as possible, one that had sound insulation [...]" (IO1).

"[...] what also helped was the interaction with other teachers, it helped a lot, not only in relation to the professional, but in relation to mental health [...]" (119).

With regard to some of the difficulties faced, the removal of colleagues proved to be harmful to those who were unable to keep in touch due to the restrictive measures imposed. It was also observed that more dedication and time was needed with the technological tools essential to this teaching model.

"[...] negative was the withdrawal of colleagues [...]. We distanced a lot both in terms of friendship and exchange [...]. There are people I didn't talk to for a year, in that sense it was very negative [...]" (105).

"[...] it was necessary to dedicate time to get to know some tools, just like meet, even though I used it in the theoretical part, I didn't know [...]" (102).

The change in the conformity of the classes required changes, as necessary, the undergraduate teachers were modifying their place and work tools and seeking knowledge to effectively adapt in the best possible way, in addition to the distance faced and the excess of time demanded, it may have been a considerable damage to female routine and psychological.

### Understanding teaching experiences during a pandemic

Teaching was exposed to numerous situations different from the face-to-face context, among the women interviewed, a strong psychological influence of distance was noticed, which is accentuated by the lack of participation of students online with cameras turned off, and lack of response to calls and questions. Thus, discouragement and insecurity may have resulted in a long-winded work.

"[...] people, it's terrible to talk to the cameras off [...]. It seemed that no one was there, you talked, asked, no one answered, it's very difficult, you get discouraged, you feel bad, you think it's you as a teacher [...]" (107).

"[...] as time went by I became disconnected [...] I just tried to look at the camera and touched the boat talking to the camera because there was never anyone with the camera open" (IO1).

The presence at home for female workers influenced productivity. To the question "Tell me about your productivity during the pandemic?" disparity was noticed in the reports, and in the home-office, while domestic tasks were a reason for constant distractions and an obstacle to high productivity, the need for production and responsibility were still met. According to ease with technologies and tools, however, there was a productive increase.

"Wow, it fell a lot, a lot, a lot [...] If you're at home every time you stop to go to the bathroom it's something you see is something that distracts you [...]" (108).

"[...] productivity, I believe it affected a little, but because I had responsibilities to fulfill, I had to end up delivering, doing [...]. I managed although I was apprehensive [...]" (102).



"[...] I slightly increased the productivity of my classes. I thought that my online class I could deliver more than a face-to-face class because, sometimes, in the face-to-face class I didn't have some tools [...]" (105).

Experiences in the internship field after authorization to return was another teaching modality hampered by the pandemic, leading to female concern for their students both in relation to the spread and contamination of the virus and with regard to technical difficulties after a period of isolation, in which were removed from the field. Even on return, the difficulties did not dissolve, in addition to the lack of skills and technical experience with which the restrictive measures arrived and the fear of the population, they led to a lower demand for the health service, making it difficult to replace these difficulties with less experience in the field.

"[...] when you put four students to make a home care inside the car, it was already worrying, it's crowding [...]" (I14).

"[...] what I felt was the difference between [...] before and after the pandemic was how the students came, even though they were in the fourth year [...] they came with more technical deficiencies [...]. It was worrying [...]" (114).

"[...] the UBS flow has completely changed, it was very difficult because the student [...] comes thirsty for the internship, they want to do, learn, and it's very sad to arrive in the field and not have anyone. There came days when a person joined the UBS [...] that was the bad point [...]" (107).

The pandemic affected the daily work of teachers and even their personal lives with the inclusion of work exclusively at home in the restrictive period, with an annoying lack of student-teacher participation and interaction, disparities in production associated with the context, and lack of internship experience. However, these experiences were, in part, reducing the quality of student learning and, consequently, harmful to the mental health of teachers

# Understanding teacher resilience amid adaptation to the teaching model

The demands for adaptations and adjustments for the home office had a great impact, however, as a result of this, coping tools and even advantages with the model emerged. The use of the most diverse technologies was essential for distance learning, especially those that stimulated student interaction, such as those that allowed the elaboration of schemes and discussions of case studies, with even learning from gamification.

"[...] I really enjoyed creating a scheme with students on Jamboard, I noticed that when I participated it was better" (111).

"Look, I used gamification a lot, case study, jamboard type tool, I gave the case study, we went on the jamboard to discuss, the padlet, [...] fliptae, canva, the virtual classroom [...]" (108).

The opening of possibilities was one of the great advantages provided. The use of technology and the learning of these made the teachers expand their vision in order to

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Souza CS, Manzoni GL, Charlo PB, Sabino MB, Lima AF visualize that the use of these can help a lot in the practice of work and that even their implementation can continue to be carried out in face-to-face practice.

"[...] what was good about the pandemic, always reminds me immediately, the space we had to create new things [...]" (108).

"[...] I think a good thing was that we learned to use this technology [...] if it weren't for the pandemic, it would take time to learn how to do all this [...] today we can use this to our advantage [...]. One thing to add" (110).

The fact of being at home for teaching also had other benefits, although the restrictions were temporary and the post-pandemic return was evident at that moment, the teachers benefited in terms of optimizing time for commuting, leading to safety and economy by saving traffic.

"[...] when you are at home there are some advantages, which is that you optimize your time, commuting time, the time you spend getting ready to go out [...]" (101).

"[...] It is an advantage not to have to travel to college. Finished class there? And then you go out, it's half past ten at night alone, it's scary, the risk of traffic, so that's an advantage, more security, more economical to stay at home [...]" (106).

However, this context required changes and regulations that directly impacted the lives of these female teachers and led to setbacks and resilience, becoming empowering, providing skills and competences and an important moment to be faced. In addition to the fact that, at a certain point, it exempted these women from the cost, time and dangers of moving.

### Discussion

Mainly female teaching and its work process was strongly affected by the pandemic context. With the restrictions and change in compliance from face-to-face to remote classes, several adaptations were necessary, from the acquisition or improvement of physical, technological and human resources to changes in home compliance, as if that were not enough, they still had difficulties and went through atypical situations for the practice of teaching. However, there was resilience, and coping resulted in advantages both in the pandemic and post-pandemic periods.

Aiming to make it possible to offer remote classes with quality, some acquisitions and improvements were made. The transfer of classes to the home environment affected the teachers, including the lack of access to devices that supported the activities, this obstacle to accessing computers and the instability of the internet may have been a major obstacle to teaching. In this way, the transition to the remote becomes susceptible to the generation of additional costs to these, with the purchase of computers and hiring of Internet.<sup>17-19</sup>

Remote work at home can end up being carried out in inappropriate places such as sofas and kitchen tables with family members present, and vulnerable to interruptions. It is important to have a private place to work at home, where there is tranquility and you can work for long periods. <sup>19,20</sup>



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In addition to the obstacles and request for acquisitions and improvements, there is an intrinsic demand of remote work that can lead to worrying results such as emotional exhaustion, and discouragement, in addition to greater stress, anger and fatigue of these professors. Overcoming this, social distancing reduces the possibility of relieving work overload with restrictions on meetings with friends/family and among other leisure activities. This information justifies those found in this study by revealing social contact as an important coping tool in the midst of this adaptive process.<sup>21,22</sup>

Regarding the use of technologies, a survey with teachers from Paraíba pointed out that most of the research participants did not receive adequate training on the use of technologies in pedagogical practices. Concomitant to this, a survey of basic education teachers revealed that more than half of them did not feel familiar with the technological resources for use in emergency remote teaching and that they had difficulties in understanding and learning, in addition to the time required to prepare a content that held students' interest increased. <sup>23,24</sup>

The establishment of communication and mutual understanding was also verified as a challenge when using voice channels or videoconferencing with cameras turned off, being sometimes more challenging than when face-to-face. Adding to this, conducting the teaching process in the remote model can give the teacher feelings of ineffectiveness, mainly due to the low access of students to remote activities, there is the presence of a feeling of discouragement and a consequent feeling of failure.<sup>24-26</sup>

The pandemic and activities in a remote model, made evident the division of studies and work with domestic chores by the female gender. Such inequality when being at home full time results in low productivity at work. However, based on an experiment carried out with home office call centers, there was an increase in productivity due to the flexibility of where and when they work. Therefore, this research is in line with those cited with disparity in the maintenance of productivity by different teachers, which can lead to difficulties with overload or ease of flexibility when being at home<sup>27-29</sup>.

The internship field also suffered the consequences of a pandemic environment, the Nursing course encompasses the development of skills that require theoretical and practical classes, among the various disciplines that promote the training of these professionals is the supervised curricular internship in order to combine theory with practice. However, in March 2020, with the beginning of restrictive measures, including social distancing as a means of avoiding crowds, closing non-essential services, adopting measures and protocols, among others. With the urgency for these professionals to get into practice, the internship in the remote format was essential. However, with the flexibility, students who performed an internship felt insecure. The restrictive measures led to greater care and concern about overcrowding, in addition to the remote internship and the aforementioned insecurity, it is the basis for a greater difficulty for students to return from the internship. 10-12,30

The internship after flexibility was carried out in a Basic Health Unit (UBS), however, with the low demand of the population for the unit's services, it may have made the teaching process difficult. Corroborating this decrease in demand, a survey found a high decrease in the number of users attending the UBS, even those who had the habit of attending it before the pandemic, revealing a fear of exposing themselves to environments outside their homes.<sup>31</sup>

The modification of remote teaching made the traditional dynamics of teaching unfeasible, which previously emphasized the transmission of content and facilitated a smooth progress, urgently requiring the use of mass technology. Corroborating this, the present research shows the use of technology in the most diverse ways in order to encourage student participation. This change requires professionals to have technical and social skills, stimulating even a critical personal construction. <sup>24,32</sup>

However, these changes can also be seen in a positive way, currently the incorporation of the smartphone and technology into the school environment is becoming closer, evidencing a need for teacher training to deal with new technologies in order to incorporate them into their pedagogical practices. It is understood that the changes resulting from remote classes provided opportunities for experiences and the use of new methodological tools that make it possible to add classes to the face-to-face post-pandemic return.<sup>26,33</sup>

However, there were still advantages of the pandemic and its restrictive period, as it did not require displacement to teach, it brought time and money savings and security to work at home. Among its positive points are reduction of transport time, fuel economy and greater road safety for workers.<sup>34</sup>

### Conclusion

It is understood that the pandemic led to sudden changes with regard to changes in work compliance, in the teacher-student relationship and with the need for adaptations, sometimes causing feelings of discouragement and insecurity. In terms of productivity, despite the female overload being exacerbated by working at home, leading to distractions and a decrease in productivity, there was also maintenance due to the need to fulfill obligations, or even an increase due to the flexibility of the model. As a change in the internship model, in addition to having stopped for a while due to restrictive measures, it was noticed that even with the authorized return, there was a lack of demand for health services by the population, affecting work and even leading to teacher concern.

However, it was observed that the due moment also had positive points with the advancement of the use of technologies, development of skills and abilities related to these, and even provided a lower risk and expense of transportation.

However, aspects related to the adaptation and interaction process directly interfered with the teaching routine and psychology, which could lead to consequent implications in the near future. multidisciplinary strategies in this approach.



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