TEACHERS UNDER STRESS DURING THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC: ANALYSIS OF A SUCCESSFUL CASE[1]

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Abstract. This study investigated teachers' experience of distant teaching in conditions of COVID-19 pandemic and lockdown in spring 2020 and aimed to present a successful case of teachers organizing their work and maintaining their mental health under the pressure of the pandemic. To achieve this aim, a case study design was chosen, and interviews with five teachers from one of Berlin's private bilingual Russian-German schools were conducted. The interviews included blocks of questions on a) the changing context of work and life, b) stress level self-assessment and coping strategies used, and c) teachers' ideas about the future. Furthermore, the results of the interviews were generated through content analysis. The findings of the present case identified several supportive factors that decrease psychological stress: school administrative and technical support and the maintenance of workload at almost the same level as that before the transition to distant teaching. Other coping strategies that act as preventive factors supporting mental health were also identified: positive rethinking of the situation; seeking social support; and maintaining work-life balance through self-care, physical activities and hobbies. Implications of the present findings are provided.

Keywords: pandemic COVID-19, case study, distant teaching, psychological stress, coping strategies

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ШКОЛЫ В СТРЕССЕ В ПЕРИОД ПАНДЕМИИ COVID-19: ОПИСАНИЕ БЛАГОПОЛУЧНОГО ОПЫТА

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Аннотация. В рамках исследования изучался опыт учителей во время дистанционного обучения в условиях пандемии COVID-19 и локдауна весной 2020 года, их оценка переживаемого ими психологического стресса и факторов, влияющих на него, а также стратегий, при помощи которых они пытались себе помочь. В данной статье мы представляем описание уникального кейса успешной организации работы в изменившихся условиях. В работе представлен анализ интервью с учителями из одной частной немецко-русской школы города Берлина (ФРГ). Интервью состояло из следующих тематических блоков: а) об изменениях в жизни и работе, б) о субъективной оценке учителей: находятся ли они в стрессе и какие стратегии совладания они используют, в) о представлениях учителей о будущем: как будут выглядеть их жизнь и работа после пандемии. Результаты интервью были проанализированы с помощью контент-анализа. Было выявлено, что административная и техническая поддержка школы и сохранение нагрузки почти на том же уровне, что и до перехода на дистанционное обучение, снижают уровень психологического стресса. По результатам работы также были определены продуктивные стратегии совладания со стрессом: позитивное переосмысление ситуации; поиск социальной поддержки; поддержание баланса между работой и личной жизнью посредством заботы о себе, физической активности и хобби. Обсуждается прикладное значение настоящих выводов.

Ключевые слова: пандемия COVID-19, описание кейса, дистанционное преподавание, психологический стресс, копинг-стратегии

Introduction

The COVID-19 pandemic created a necessity for school systems to quickly pivot to remote teaching, resulting in significant, global changes to typical instructional practices. Teachers, as front-line workers in the education system, were tasked with quickly implementing new teaching practices in ways that promoted student learning while maximizing student safety. As known from previous studies, any restructuring of the organism and its adaptation to changed conditions is accompanied by the experience of stress (Fink, 2017). An important question that psychologists have been investigating for more than half a century is how to cope with stress as safely as possible and what strategies can help in this coping (Lazarus, & Folkman, 1984). The pandemic required many people to restructure their lives, and the issue of coping strategies has become most urgent (Holmes et al., 2020).

In the first wave of the pandemic in the spring of 2020, the psychological health of different groups of the population was monitored to determine what kind of assistance should be offered in the possible subsequent lockdowns. This study is focused on teachers' mental health: the level of experienced psychological stress, factors that mitigate or exacerbate it, and coping strategies to develop recommendations that would help teachers increase their well-being in the pandemic situation. The study is designed as a case study of a private bilingual Russian-German school in the central area of Berlin (Germany). Such a case study could provide psychologists and policy makers with a detailed description of teachers' experience in a specific organization and results based on the analysis of this experience.

Teaching — a stressful profession

According to recent research, teachers are more exposed to stress than other professionals, such as medical workers (Ingersoll, 2003) and representatives of social services (Kokkinen et al., 2014). Among the main factors of the working environment that cause stress in teachers, researchers have identified the following conditions: high workload and lack of support from the school administration (Guglielmi, & Tatrow, 1998) and excessive emotional involvement in relationships with students, colleagues, and parents (Schonfeld et al., 2010). A number of longitudinal studies conducted in Australia, Sweden, Finland, Great Britain, Israel, the United States and other countries have demonstrated that these factors gradually lead to depression and irritability, reduce self-esteem and satisfaction with the chosen profession, cause psychosomatic symptoms, and may contribute to the emergence of addictions (Schonfeld et al., 2017). All of these are symptoms of burnout, which is one of the most undesirable consequences of prolonged stressful experiences and is interpreted today as a psychological inability to cope with difficulties associated with work (Maslach et al., 2001).

Burnout risk is especially high in the context of a pandemic and forced changes in lifestyle and work. Moreover, researchers from different countries (e.g., Russia, Turkey, Finland, Germany, the United Kingdom, and Chile) have observed that teachers are experiencing stress because of the requirement from the educational system

and schools to use new digital tools in their everyday teaching practices (Dmitrieva, & Kachanovezkaja, 2013; Al-Fudail, & Mellar, 2008; Amri et al., 2020; Blume, 2020; Çoklar et al., 2016; Estrada-Muñoz et al., 2020; Syvänen et al., 2016). Usually, it is argued that teachers have negative perceptions about the call to improve digital literacy because they work too hard, become tired and do not have the time to do so (Dmitrieva, & Kachanovezkaja, 2013; Estrada-Muñoz et al., 2020). However, some studies argue that teachers show conservatism and reject the use of various gadgets as a means of entertainment and, in this regard, position themselves as models for their students, who teachers frequently consider overusing various technologies (Blume, 2020). There is evidence that teachers who use the internet more often are more open to mastering new technologies (e.g., Syvänen et al., 2016). Thus, teachers need more support to restructure their attitudes toward modern technologies and to master them more successfully. However, it is clear that such restructuring is not a fast process, and there are many factors that influence it: teachers' psychological readiness, as well as their socioeconomic status and, accordingly, their possibility of using the internet, undergoing training, and purchasing various gadgets. In addition, in some countries, for example, Germany, great importance is attached to the confidentiality of the data of all participants in the educational process, which could be an additional stressful factor for teachers switching to distant teaching (e. g., Blume, 2020).

Teachers' coping strategies

According to the available data, the most popular coping strategy among teachers is to seek social assistance (Aldrup et al., 2017; Clipa et al., 2017; Sandilos et al., 2018). This strategy can relate to both emotionally focused coping and problem-oriented coping since helps them complete different tasks: solving problems and obtaining information (problem-oriented coping) and calming, distracting, and engaging in emotional release (emotionally focused coping). A study in the United States and the United Kingdom highlighted ineffective strategies used by teachers to regulate their emotional states: avoidance, manifestation of aggression, and the assumption of too much responsibility. Physical activity has been shown to be the most effective and beneficial (Austin et al., 2005). In addition, research has shown a link between effective coping strategies and teaching experience: more experienced teachers are more likely to experience emotional burnout (e.g., Alhija, 2015). Thus, the question of what a truly effective coping strategy for teachers is remains open.

Based on recent studies dedicated to stress and coping strategies among teachers during the COVID-19 pandemic, hobbies and self-care as well as positive rethinking (using a new situation as an opportunity to acquire new skills) were identified as the most frequent coping strategies in teachers during this time (Petrakova et al., 2021; Sokal et al., 2020); however, other strategies, such as avoidant strategies and aggressive denial, were also sometimes found to be used by teachers [MacIntyre et al., 2020].

The current study

The aim of the study is to investigate how teachers experience the new situation after switching to distant teaching because of the COVID-19 pandemic,

their perceived level of psychological stress and its associated factors and their coping strategies. A qualitative case study design is chosen for several reasons. Despite the large number of studies aimed at exploring stress and coping in teacher populations, just a few investigated changes in teachers' practices, communication, and life in general caused by the uncertainty of the pandemic. Therefore, collecting new data before forming concrete hypotheses is necessary. The case study could also provide us with a description of an organizational context of the selected school that might be useful both for results interpretation and further implementation.

A Russian-German private bilingual school in the central area of Berlin was chosen for this study. This school has unique features that are described in the method section in detail but can be summarized as follows: the school offers all levels of education, the class size is smaller than that in general schools, there is a regular school fee, and most of the staff are bilingual. These features constitute the context of the school, making it very interesting for the analysis.

Method

Instrument and procedure

The data were collected during the first wave of the pandemic from April 10 until April 16, and then the participants spent from 3 to 5 weeks on distant teaching. The interviews were conducted in accordance with a guide developed specifically for this study. The guide was structured to cover the following topics: the level of stress experienced by the respondents, a description of the factors that could aggravate or mitigate the experience of stress, and the strategies that the respondents used to cope with stress. In total, the guide included three blocks of questions:

1. Changing context of work and life (time spent in isolation; digital tools used; communication with students, colleagues and parents; technical and psychological support from the school; changes in the daily routine; and interaction with one's own family);

2. Stress level self-assessment and coping strategies used (work-life balance in isolation, self-support practices, nutrition, sleep, communication with family and friends, sports and other types of physical activity);

3. Ideas about the future (a return to the previous way of life; isolation practices that seemed to be useful for the future; and changes in relationships with students, parents and colleagues).

A list of questions is provided in the Appendix.

The interview also functioned as psychological support. Participants were teachers who volunteered to talk with a psychologist and felt the need to discuss changes in their work and life caused by the quarantine. The interview was conducted by one of the paper's authors who was educated as a clinical psychologist and has the competence to conduct psychological counseling.

To analyze the data, "conceptual analysis" within the framework of content analysis was used.

School description

The school is a private bilingual educational organization that includes pre-school, primary school (called "Grundschule" in German), gymnasia and student preparation for specific examination, which allows tertiary education (called "gymnasiale Oberstufe" in German). The organization was established in 2005, and the main mission of the school is the integration of children from different cultures into life in Germany as well as the support of the Russian language and Russian culture. The school is located in the central area of Berlin.

Although the initial plan was for the school to teach German and Russian-speaking students, in fact today, there are 143 students in the primary school and 81 in the gymnasia, for a total of 224 students with extremely diverse language and cultural backgrounds. The students come from Russia and countries of the former Soviet Union, Germany, Poland, and Turkey, and there are various representatives of African and other cultures. The main language spoken in the school is German. However, non-Russian-speaking students have the opportunity to study Russian as a foreign language, and Russian-speaking students can choose a dual system, having classes in both Russian and German. For communication in school, children are expected to use only languages that they learn, and they have a wide choice of languages — Russian, German, English, Spain, French, and Latin. Communication in other languages is prohibited. The class size is not large, ranging from 5 to 18.

The curriculum is rich. In addition to foreign languages, children study science (biology, chemistry, and physics), mathematics, history, political science, the basics of philosophy, sports, music, and the basics of art. Children are provided with opportunities for various visits for educational purposes (excursions, museums, cinema, theaters, etc.), as well as school exchanges to improve foreign language knowledge. The school has various traditions; in particular, it is customary to celebrate both European and Russian holidays and to explain to students their meaning, history and celebration traditions.

Education is paid, and the price is calculated based on parents' income. Additional payments are made for various materials that are distributed to students during learning, school meals, and trips. The contingent is very diverse — from people who live only on social benefits to people who are sufficiently financially secure.

In general, in the whole organization, the personnel include approximately 70 persons (including direction, teachers, and educators), who also come from different countries and cultures, including Russia and countries of the former Soviet Union, Germany, Poland, Turkey, Spain, Belgium and others. The teachers' education is mainly European or Russian (with additional education in Europe), and some teachers studied in the United States. At school, teachers are also required to communicate with each other, students and students' parents only in the languages taught at the school.

Almost all teachers work in both departments — in primary school and gymnasia. In primary school, each class has both a class teacher and an educator who are always in the classroom. The primary school continues for 6 years. Thus, in primary school, all teachers always have a helper — the educator — who is always

in the classroom and helps maintain discipline. After the 6th grade, the educator does not accompany the class.

Sample

The interviews were conducted in Russian with five Russian-speaking teachers (four were female) who worked in a Russian – German private bilingual school. The participants gave their informed consent to participate in the study, and the interviews were audio-recorded.

All of our respondents had a higher pedagogical education, spoke Russian but had lived in Germany for 8–30 years, had a good command of the German language, had 2–30 years of pedagogical experience, and taught a variety of subjects, including history, music, fine arts, Russian and Russian as a foreign language, and German.

Despite the small number, our five respondents represent different levels of the discussed organization (primary and secondary school, graduation classes), teach in specific academic disciplines, and work as class teachers with different work experiences in their particular schools (from one to 10 years).

Results

Teachers and stress

In the interview, the respondents reported experiencing no or a low level of psychological stress caused by the changes in their lifestyle and work format associated with the pandemic. They reported that the first few days of the transition were the most stressful, but then they successfully adapted to the new regime. The following example expresses the most typical expressions of our respondents:

R1: The most difficult was the first week while we were all resetting: parents, children, and us. For everyone. A week later, we already found the way. We have already worked calmly within this system.[2]

Only one person was anxious because of the pandemic, which was mostly because this person's relatives were in another country, and due to the pandemic, they could not meet. Thus, at the time of the interview, the respondents were not in a state of psychological stress — neither because of the pandemic itself nor because of the need to reorganize distant education.

Factors that enhance/mitigate the state of psychological stress
School support

One of the most important factors that was found to be significant for the psychological state of teachers in our case study was school administration support. First, the respondents reported that before switching to remote work, the school administration held a meeting where they notified the personnel about the new work mode and discussed the means of communication with students and parents. Teachers had the opportunity to choose the method of communication that would

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[2] Original versions of quotes in Russian language are available in the Appendix.

be the most convenient to them. Importantly, teachers were participating in the decision-making process about practices to be used for distant teaching:

R1: Before our school was closed, we had a conference. All teachers gathered together to discuss who would work and how. Frau B. [the principal] said at the very beginning, "What would be comfortable for you? How do you deal with this? Everyone should choose the way and decide for herself." And that was good!

Regarding deciding how to work during a distant regime, a respondent noted:

R2: All of us participated. We all had the opportunity to speak up.

R4: We, let's say, collectively examined this situation together, a proposal was put forward from the teachers, what can be used <...> it was a real meeting.

Second, all respondents expressed that during distant work, the school administration was always in touch with them and provided all possible assistance:

R2: If questions arise, then, of course, I contact Frau K [first deputy principal of the school], and she helps me with everything, explains everything. We all also work closely, just like before, but virtually.

R4: At the very beginning, there was just a stream of emails. And all these letters went at first through the joint school email. There they were sorted out and then sent to each teacher so that no one confused anything at the very beginning. So it was, of course, a huge job and a huge help.

R5: [School administration was] always available, always in touch. Should one have any questions — everything can be solved.

Another aspect of the school support was technical help. The great advantage at the studied school was that the school has its own online platform that helped all participants receive the necessary news. Teachers could transfer homework and materials to students and communicate with parents through this platform. Teachers, students and parents were familiar with this system before the pandemic started. This established communication system provided a good start and time to learn new, challenging platforms.

R3: We immediately joined work from home because we have a good tool — an online journal <...> we have an advantage over other schools in Germany because it [the use of such technology] is not so common here.

R4: I think our school was lucky because we have an online journal. We have been already doing a lot via the Internet for a long time: we were sending tasks for students; parents could read about homework. There was already the base, the foundation, let's say. Both parents and children were familiar with the fact that information is on the Internet, and teachers were prepared.

Support from the school team was also noted. Daily communication via phone and messenger to exchange information and highlight examples of effective and ineffective practices became an integral part of the life of the teachers of this school. The respondents even noted that this difficult period made relations on the team closer and warmer.

R1: Of course, now we are sharing our experience more. Our work questions, 'I didn't succeed in this, but how did you do that? What would you advise me?

What did I do right, and what was wrong?' <...> We talk on the phone so much that we even joke, 'So, did you miss me? Haven't heard me for a long time?

R4: Collaboration is actually a tremendous amount of support. The same with our management team, head teacher. Any questions — you can call her; you can write to her.

Workload. Despite the changes in the work format, none of the respondents complained about the increased workload or fatigue. First and foremost, everyone communicated about the same daily routine — and above all, about working until a fixed hour.

R2: At 8 in the morning, I am on the Internet, checking the messages from students for the lessons. It lasts until 12 o'clock. Then, I have a lunch break for half an hour, and after lunch, I'm back to the computer and communicating with the students. I check tasks they've send me. And so on until 3–4 pm.

R4: In fact, I have a normal working day, from eight in the morning till 3 in the afternoon. I am at home anyway, and during this time, in any case, the computer is turned on, and moreover, the phone is somewhere nearby.

Second, due to the strict confidentiality rules, the teachers at this school also had certain regulations for communication with students and their parents.

R3: I don't give my contact phone to anyone so that no one writes or calls me. I communicated mainly with the parents of the students and only by online journal or email.

Coping strategies

At the time of the interviews, the teachers in our sample were in a fairly stable psychological state with a low level of stress, which may have been due to some external factors that were described above (such as school support and the amount of workload) but also to coping strategies that were used by teachers. Following the theoretical framework of Lazarus and Folkman, the most actively chosen coping strategies were emotionally focused coping such as a positive rethinking of the situation and seeking social support. The following are some examples of positive rethinking, a search for a positive meaning in the pandemic situation in general:

R5: It should be kept in mind that this is not the last quarantine. In Germany, unlike Russia, there is no such quarantine system. I can't remember... my children seem to have never had quarantine; they studied at school. <...> So, we should not be afraid of the situation; everything will be fine. You just have to act.

R4: I have gained some experience in this new situation, and I will try to do something creative in my future work.

Some teachers mentioned that they also found something new and positive in their interactions and practices with students and their parents:

R4: In such situations, probably, many people really open up. They show some other sides. I am surprised because I saw many other, really different, positive sides. I did not count on it; I did not think about it at all. And to be honest, I thought that everything would be a little bit messy, incomprehensible, especially at the beginning. Instead, I received, on the contrary, some kind of full willingness to cooperate and support.

R1: I learn more about my students' ability to work independently. <...> It's good that they do something on their own, sit and work. Some of them work even more than at school. So, this is amazing.

Seeking social support as a coping strategy served two functions. On the one hand, the search for support revealed other ways to solve problems (for example, above it was shown that teachers began to communicate more with each other, exchanging news and asking each other for help) and provided psychological tranquility, working as an emotional compensator. The respondents actively noted that communication with families, friends and informal communication with colleagues helped considerably.

R1: Thank God there are free programs such as 'WhatsApp' where I can communicate with my relatives. I even communicate more often than before during work. We communicate every day. It saves us.

R3: Now, I spend more time with children. I really missed it during 'normal times. In everyday life, when it is necessary to stay physically at school until 4 o'clock, naturally, communication with children is possible only in the evening during a short period of time.

R4: Suddenly, I've realized that I have a fairly large circle of friends here. We are exchanging information, who has what, who is how. Sometimes we talk on the phone, sometimes we text. I like that now everyone is sending each other some funny pictures, postcards, funny videos, even about this situation. Well, how without humor, right? Of course, humor helps.

Additionally, we highlight such strategies as hobbies, self-care and physical activity that helped the respondents maintain work-life balance.

R3: I consciously made pauses for myself. During these pauses I could talk to the children or go for a walk, or something, or cook dinner. And then sit down near the computer and work.

R2: Unfortunately, the fitness clubs are now closed. I do exercises at home, here. I do push-ups; I have kettlebell here. And the core muscles need to be pumped, and running in the fresh air is necessary, and walking. And I do all this.

R4: Even during the lesson, I can quickly go out to make a face mask and just sit for 15 minutes. That is, already during the lesson, I paid attention to myself, frankly. Now, I take care of myself more: I have meals regularly. I try to do exercises for at least 15 minutes; I go out in the evening to get some air. Really, now I devote more time to myself.

R5: I'm watching movies from the 50–60s <...> they have a positive effect on me.

Thus, the respondents managed to avoid acute negative experiences of stress due to factors such as support from the school and a stable workload. These supportive factors allowed them to maintain a balance of work and personal time. In their interviews, the teachers mentioned coping strategies such as positive rethinking about the situation in general and about students' personalities and communication with them; seeking social support, which manifested itself in communication

with friends, family and colleagues; and maintaining work-life balance through self-care, physical activities and hobbies.

Discussion

In their report to UNESCO, Holmes and her colleagues (2020) stressed the importance of studying the psychological effects of the pandemic, especially the effects on front-line workers, so that the knowledge gained may be applied in future pandemic periods. Teachers are front-line workers and the most important figures in the educational system in each country. In this case study, the focus was on the psychological stress and coping strategies of teachers during the first wave of the COVID-19 pandemic. The interview results with teachers from a private bilingual Russian-German school in Berlin indicated some practices that can be useful for overcoming the psychological effects of the pandemic.

The respondents reported experiencing no or low levels of psychological stress caused by the changes in their lifestyles and work formats associated with the pandemic. However, for some persons, the closure of borders and thus the inability to see their relatives was stressful. The low level of psychological stress during distance teaching in the described case might have been associated with the following factors: school support, amount of workload, efficient communication within the professional community, and stress coping strategies.

School support contributed to such a harmonious transition to distance teaching; this school support included emotional and informational support from the school administration, the technical readiness of the school (the school already had its own online journal to support the interactions of all participants in the educational process, and there were no requirements to acquire new online tools in an extremely short time), and active communication and mutual assistance among the team members.

The teachers succeeded in maintaining their normal daily routine by working fixed hours; thus, their workload did not increase significantly. Furthermore, the volume of their communication with children and parents remained almost the same. The maintenance of communication routines was enabled by the presence of a familiar channel for communication i.e., the online journal, and confidentiality requirements of the German educational system that emphasize communication via an official school platform or email rather than by mobile phone or messenger.

Because of the lack of an increasing workload, the teachers maintained a balance of work and personal time, which is an important factor for mental health. The teachers applied several strategies that helped them cope with stress. First, they spent time on hobbies, physical activities, and self-care (e. g., balance of nutrition). The teachers spend time communicating with colleagues, friends, and family members; seeking support; and just having pleasant time, which are examples of problem-oriented and emotionally focused coping.

Another coping strategy was positive rethinking aimed at finding new opportunities that the current situation offered, for example, the acquisition of new skills by both teachers and students. Because the pandemic has affected our lives longer than expected and we have to adapt to the "new normal," positive rethinking could be an effective strategy. In contrast, an expectation for a sooner end to the pandemic could be a risk factor for psychological stress.

These findings are consistent with those of other studies that focused on stress among teachers; however, they provide positive examples of the coping strategies implemented by teachers with school support. Previous studies have already concluded that one of the most important factors causing stressful experiences in teachers is a lack of school support (Guglielmi, & Tatrow, 1998). In our study, it was shown that school support is indeed very important for teachers during a pandemic situation. Another factor highlighted in the literature as stressful for teachers is a large workload, which includes a large amount of emotional communication with students and their parents (Kokkinen et al, 2014; Schonfeld et al., 2010]. In contrast, the teachers in our study maintained a daily routine with a fixed number of working hours and maintained the same volume of communication with students and their parents. Finally, there are rich data showing that teaching using digital technologies is a severe stressor for teachers, including teachers in Germany (Blume, 2020). The respondents in our study were not required to use new online tools for distant teaching but could use the existing tools they were familiar with. Altogether, this approach prevented the teachers in our study from experiencing negative psychological effects of distant teaching during the pandemic.

The experience of teachers from a private bilingual Russian-German school in Berlin of coping with stress in the sudden transition to distant teaching in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic could be useful for other teachers and schools. The main supportive strategies that should be implemented based on the present case are as follows: open supportive communication between teachers and school administration, friendly and cohesive teamwork, the use of familiar digital tools at least during the first weeks of distant work, and reasonable workload and maintenance of a work-life balance.

However, the school in this case study has some unique characteristics. Because the school is private, it had the opportunity to follow just some of the mandatory requirements for government schools. The small size of the school allows close communication between the administration and school staff, which helped maintain a supportive climate during distant teaching. Another important feature of the school is the small classes. The small class size allowed the teachers to continue individual communication with each student and prevented the teachers' workload from increasing dramatically, as it could have if the classes included 30 or more students each. Furthermore, the school staff had a strong pre-pandemic experience in maintaining online communication: the online journal, which was familiar to teachers, students, and parents, was helpful for the transition to distance education; nobody

had to begin using new online tools in a short time. Additionally, please note that all five respondents were Russian-speaking emigrants from the countries of the former Soviet Union. However, in the present case study, we did not focus on the multicultural context of the school and the individual experiences of teachers in adapting to new environments and cultures, which could be an important factor for adaptation to new situations.

Conclusion

This case study of teachers at a private bilingual Russian-German school in Berlin during the first wave of the COVID-19 pandemic revealed several supportive factors that decreased psychological stress: school administrative and technical support and the maintenance of workload at almost the same volume as that before the transition to distant teaching. The teachers applied different coping strategies to support their mental health, including positive rethinking of the situation; seeking social support; and maintaining work-life balance through self-care, physical activities and hobbies.

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