

Being a professor and researcher during the COVID-19 pandemic

 Deyla Paula de Oliveira¹,  Gustavo Cunha de Araújo²

¹ Universidade Federal de Alfenas - UNIFAL. Instituto de Ciências Humanas e Letras (ICHL). Rua Gabriel Monteiro da Silva, 700, Centro. Alfenas - MG. Brasil. ² Universidade Federal do Tocantins - UFT/Universidade Federal do Norte do Tocantins - UFNT.

Author for correspondence: deylaoliver@gmail.com

ABSTRACT. Following the outbreak of COVID-19 and the need to follow health protocols based on the World Health Organization (WHO) guidelines, most teachers and researchers started conducting teaching and research activities at their “home office”. Meanwhile, these professionals began to develop their activities in an often-improvised workspace - many of them have also been caring for their children and doing household chores. We have even observed a decline in student performance with remote teaching, as class duration reduced and students lacked access to laboratories for practical classes. In our view, if the Brazilian government does not invest in improving the quality of remote education and internet access for the population amid the ongoing pandemic, an increasing number of teachers and researchers will develop irreversible health problems due to the precariousness of remote teaching and work.

Keywords: covid-19, remote learning, health problems.

Ser professor(a) e pesquisador(a) durante a pandemia da COVID-19

RESUMO. Com a pandemia da COVID-19 e a necessidade de seguir protocolos de saúde baseados nas diretrizes da Organização Mundial de Saúde (OMS), a maioria dos professores e pesquisadores começaram a conduzir suas atividades no formato “home office”. Entretanto, esses profissionais começaram a desenvolver as suas atividades em um espaço de trabalho muitas vezes improvisado - muitos deles tendo também que conciliar a vida pessoal, como cuidar de filhos, bem como outras tarefas, como as domésticas. Além disso, observou-se um declínio no desempenho dos estudantes com o ensino remoto, uma vez que a duração das aulas foi reduzida e eles não tiveram acesso a laboratórios para aulas práticas, por exemplo. Em nossa opinião, essas novas experiências mudaram significativamente nossas rotinas, nossa relação com o trabalho, nossa vida profissional, pessoal e interpessoal, e acreditamos que essas mudanças serão irreversíveis.

Palavras-chave: covid-19, ensino remoto, problemas de saúde.

Ser profesor e investigador durante la pandemia de COVID-19

RESUMEN. A raíz del brote de COVID-19 y de la necesidad de seguir los protocolos sanitarios basados en las directrices de la Organización Mundial de la Salud (OMS), la mayoría de los profesores e investigadores han empezado a realizar sus actividades docentes y de investigación en su "despacho". Mientras tanto, los investigadores y profesores universitarios han empezado a desarrollar sus actividades en un espacio de trabajo a menudo improvisado; muchos de ellos también han estado cuidando de sus hijos y realizando tareas domésticas. Además, se observó un descenso en el rendimiento de los estudiantes con la enseñanza a distancia, ya que se redujo la duración de las clases y no tuvieron acceso a la mayoría de los laboratorios, por ejemplo. En nuestra opinión, si el gobierno brasileño no invierte en mejorar la calidad de la enseñanza a distancia y el acceso a Internet de la población en medio de la pandemia en curso, un número creciente de profesores e investigadores desarrollará problemas de salud irreversibles debido a la precariedad de la enseñanza y el trabajo a distancia.

Palabras clave: covid-19, educación a distancia, problemas de salud.

Introduction

Due to the COVID-19 pandemic and the need for social isolation, following the guidelines of the World Health Organization (OPAS/OMS, 2020), and the Brazilian Ministry of Health, teaching activities in elementary schools, and, since March 2020, teaching, research, and extension activities in universities have been conducted remotely online.

Meanwhile, students and professors often had to develop their activities at home in an improvised working space. The increase in work demands resulting from the many online meetings, student guidance, synchronous and asynchronous classes, participation in committees, reading, writing, and proofreading of scientific articles, and participation in undergraduate, master's, and doctoral boards, among other activities inherent to the area, raised dilemmas and paradigms never experienced by professors. Professional and domestic activities in certain ways mixed, and the work doubled. Moreover, time for resting and taking care of private matters was reduced, even affecting professors' mental health.

Teaching online classes and developing research at home

Langin (2021) investigated the challenges of being a professor, researcher, and parent during this pandemic, not only working remotely and conducting classes but also caring for children and performing domestic chores, and the emotional aspects of managing work, research, and home at the same time (Langin, 2021), showing that the COVID-19 pandemic significantly affected professors' and researchers' professional, personal, and emotional lives.

The pandemic's challenges, including working and teaching remotely using a cell phone and/or computer and other abovementioned problems, not only affected the lives of professors and researchers during the pandemic period but will accompany and even affect students' lives in the long term (Gruber, Van Bavel, Lewis, Jr., & Cunningham, 2021).

More quality in remote education, fewer health problems for teaching and research

We [the authors] have also experienced a significant increase in work, which we describe as a difficult period. The increase in work associated with the fact that we cannot leave our houses due to the fear of contracting COVID-19 has led to tension, stress, anxiety, and physical and emotional exhaustion. We have also reported on problems and difficulties with Internet access, with slow or unstable connections during remote work. We have even

observed that student performance decreased after remote learning was implemented. Even more than us (professors), students have suffered from Internet fluctuations or absence. As a result, we had to adapt classes, shortening them, replacing content to facilitate teaching, and adapting practical laboratory classes as it was impossible to give them face-to-face.

A benefit to working remotely was the possibility of gathering more people for online meetings, undergraduate, master's, and/or doctoral boards, and academic events. People were even able to participate in scientific events led by lecturers from distant places without needing to travel to events, which allowed us to obtain more knowledge and improve our skills. This format brought people together and kept them connected even if they were physically "distant" (Gruber, Van Bavel, Lewis, Jr., & Cunningham, 2021).

However, we do not know what awaits us or the effects of this pandemic period on professors, researchers, and even student learning. However, these new experiences have significantly changed our routines, our relationship with work, our professional, personal, and interpersonal lives; we believe these changes will be irreversible.

References

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