

## GENDER-WISE ANALYSIS OF PSYCHOSOCIAL EXPERIENCES OF UNIVERSITY TEACHERS WORKING ONLINE DURING COVID-19

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### ABSTRACT

*In Pakistan, a novel disease COVID-19 was transpired in 2019 that has been affected unexpectedly to everyone in different fields of life. The aim of this research was to explore gender differences in psychosocial challenges of university teachers during COVID-19. Likewise, other major aspects, educational sector had to shift its pedagogy from traditional learning to e-learning. This was a challenging and threatening to human life around the globe especially in the learning community. The main objective of the study is to explore experiences of teachers to develop an understanding of their work life challenges during pandemic, lockdown and online teaching. Considering the research goal, the data has been collected through in-depth interviews under the qualitative research paradigm. Twenty university faculty were interviewed, ten male teachers and ten female teachers from five private and five public institutes respectively. The data was analyzed through thematic analysis under the seven major themes i.e. Work Family conflict, Psychological issues, Social constraints, Technical issues, Uncertainty about Future, Gender roles, & Discipline wise challenges. The findings of the study showed that male and female teachers both faced work pressure and stress in professional lives during COVID. Female teachers in addition with their professional work were performing extra duties regarding household work, with less or in some cases zero domestic help. This study also showed that the common psychological effect of COVID-19 was stressful to meet job demands and accompanying fear of exposure to disease both in male and female teachers. However, fewer ratio of male and female teachers was affected socially, the only trouble was missing out on social gatherings which were put aside due to one's own safety.*

**Keywords:** COVID, Work family conflict, Psychological issues, Social constraints, Technical issues, Gender roles, & Discipline.

### INTRODUCTION

The world has witnessed pandemics historically but the novel virus of Covid-19 was an alarming and red signal for the mankind (Ali, 2020; Sahu, 2020). This pandemic was a hit on health, economic, political and social life. Similarly, these effects were spilled over in the educational sector ( Nicola et al., 2020). COVID-19 has not only changed educational pedagogy (Hosen et al., 2022), in fact institutions have faced structural changes due to restrictions imposed by governments to restrict the spread of virus. Face to face learning has been shifted to online learning to continue the process of education (Pokhrel & Chhetri, 2021). This shift of mode of teaching/learning has its own pros and cons. Both students and teachers experienced the shift of education from physical to online differently. Teachers face online teaching as a challenge especially in the under-developed and developing countries (Barrot, Llenares & Rosario, 2021). Working from home in addition to household responsibilities and confined social interactions, made this experience novel. It may have impacted them psychologically, socially and professionally (Mosca, & Piani, 2021). This study is an effort to explore experiences of teachers to develop an understanding about the experiences and how COVID has impacted them.

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The year 2019 was a fatal revolutionary year due to COVID-19. This pandemic evolved in every existing field. Moving forward towards the core beginning of the virus, the World Health Organization recorded some cases of pneumonia on 31 December 2019 in Wuhan City of China (Muthuparsad et al., 2021), it was further identified as novel coronavirus by Chinese authorities on 7 January 2020. By the blink of an eye, on 30 January 2020, WHO Director General Dr Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus informed the novel outburst of coronavirus as a public health emergency of international concern (PHEIC), this was the WHO's highest health alarm (UNESCO, 2020). The feature of 30 December in Timeline by WHO cited that year 2020 will be remembered as the year of commuting in every tightest aspect of human life. Economic, social, political, educational scenarios evolved immensely suggesting humans to cope with COVID-19 in various ways. One of the major and primarily the utmost chief aspects of existence that has been influenced by COVID-19 is education (Mosca, & Piani, 2021).

UNESCO conducted a global survey on the persistent situation of the higher education system due to COVID-19 on an international and global platform that showed more than 200 million tertiary-level students are affected worldwide (Hosen et al., 2020). Furthermore this survey also concluded some major dimensions of educational modes that showed the highest impact in concern of disturbance, some of the dimensions are: access to resources, international mobility, university staff, disruption of research and extension activities, widening inequality, university operations, national challenges, transition from higher education to work and national priority (Plakhotnik et al., 2021). Teachers and educational instructors are the binding force of any educational system, upon which the whole responsibility of nurturing depends. They take this heavy responsibility of making an individual capable enough by enhancing skills set within themselves, which might help them in achieving their dreams. From centuries the code of conduct for teaching remains the same around the world i.e., a classroom where teachers and students are interacting with each other, where emphasis is on mentally nourishing minds but discipline and character building is also one of the essential parts of their duties as well. That is one of the reasons why teaching is considered to be the most sacred profession around the world (Spezzano, 2021).

This study showed elusive gender wise psychological and social experiences of teachers who worked online during CORONA virus pandemic. The term psychosocial experiences are, "the influence of social factors on an individual's mind or behavior and interrelation of behavioral and social factors; also, more widely, pertaining to the interrelation of mind and society in human development" (Blackburn, 2005). So, teachers who are still working under all odds are experiencing psychological and social distress. It has resulted in one of the most common psychosocial sensations i.e., Stress. (Selye, 1936). Keeping in mind the above definitions of stress, every single individual faced stress in COVID-19 interval mainly because of the uncertainty of situations. Teachers are highly faced with stress due to various reasons that can be summoned up as, teachers are facing stress because they are unable to meet the demand of their jobs. The job of a teacher has now converted into technical handling of laptop and online zoom meetings, rather than teaching students in their actual classrooms. This has also made teachers lose the grip of authority they previously held on students. With all these new additions in their jobs, teachers are having a hard time adjusting with all these changes.

### **Research Objectives**

1. To explore the psychosocial experiences of university teachers teaching online during COVID-19.
2. To compare the differences in challenges of male and female teachers teaching during COVID-19.
3. To find differences in experience of teachers of different teaching disciplines in public and private universities.

### **REVIEW OF LITERATURE**

Work and family life balance and conflict goes alongside since way back even before COVID-19, but during the pandemic this issue has also taken a blooming rise where teachers working from home are bound to work within the home as well. This challenge has a higher ratio of female teachers than male teachers (Johnston et al, 2023). Work life and family life conflict takes place when work interferes in family time (Byron, 2005). Teachers have no specific working timing in the online medium of education. Long working hours and sudden meetings are making things stressful in many households, for teaching faculty mainly females. In previous studies it is investigated female teachers face more work-family conflict than male teachers (Duxbury, Higgins, & Lee, 1994; Tremblay et al., 2004).

In the 19th century's different researches were conducted to understand the relationship between the psychosocial behaviors among different individuals. The research conducted by Sherif (1936) was an attempt to understand the behavior of German Dictator Adolf Hitler and the influence he had on his people that confirmed the importance of conformity pressures created in social groups and how people in leading positions can influence people to perform even harmful acts. Another research conducted by Latane and Darley (1968), studied the importance of human aggression and discovered that it plays an important role in shaping the mind of individuals, in deciding whether to help an individual in problem or not.

Prominent gender wise differences were cited by Batool, Cheema and Siddique (2020) in a study based on online teaching during COVID-19, Prevalence of Occupational Stress among the University Faculty of Pakistan, before rolling out the digital tool, students, teachers, and parents must be trained about its usage. This needs to be taken in consideration but the uncertainty of the COVID-19 situation worldwide hindered all the necessary measures to be taken. Also, it required a good amount of investment of funds and time of experts to train the candidates for online teaching.

### **Significance**

During COVID-19, the educational system globally took a shift from conventional learning method to online teaching technique. This required a skilled adoption of digital platforms for teachers who had to teach online. This study highlighted the problems and issues faced by teachers while delivering their lectures online during COVID 19. The purpose of this research was to try to explore psycho-social issues faced by the teachers teaching online to derive solutions for technical problems causing stress. It will eventually result in benefiting teachers, as their level of motivation will increase, which will also have positive impacts on work performances of teachers.

### **METHOD**

#### **Research Design**

For this research, the qualitative research method was used as every individual faced different psychosocial effect during COVID-19. So, in order to gain an in-depth analysis, interviews were scheduled through zoom-in meetings with individuals who were selected for research.

#### **Sampling Technique**

For present research purposive sampling was used. The university teachers were selected, who have been teaching online during the global pandemic. They have been using different digital platforms like zooms etc. for conducting online classes. Their minimum experience of teaching online was 6 months.

#### **Tools for data collection**

The tool for data collection was interview guide which was prepared by reviewing the literature. Interview schedule was designed for conducting interviews and appointments were fixed beforehand, keeping in view the busy schedules of our participants. Following were the questions which were asked during interviews.

1. How will you describe your experience of teaching online during COVID-19?
2. What challenges did you face/still facing while teaching online during COVID-19?
3. In your opinion how COVID-19 affected you socially? In your opinion how COVID-19 affected you psychologically?

#### **Procedure**

Due to COVID-19, everyone followed the SOPs therefore it was very difficult to conduct face to face interviews. For this reason, we opted for telephonic interviews and zoom meetings. Also, research took permission of respective participants before recording their interviews giving them a brief introduction of research. Then after ensuring them with the confidentiality and taking their consent interviews were conducted. After interviews all the data was converted into literal form or verbatim were made for further thematic analysis

#### **Demographic information**

This study was designed to explore the psychosocial experiences of university teachers working online during COVID-19. For the present study, ten male and 10 female teachers were selected from five private and five Govt. educational institutions.

#### **Table 1**

*Demographics of participants*

Demographics	Male (10)		Female (10)	
	Frequency	%	Frequency	%
<b>Age</b>				
34- 42 years	3	30	5	50
43-51 years	7	70	5	50
<b>Experience</b>				
5-10 years	4	40	6	60
11-20 years	6	60	4	40
<b>Teaching Discipline</b>				
Social Sciences	2	20	2	20
Math's/Statistics	3	30	1	10
English language	2	20	3	30
Management science	2	20	2	30
Medical science	1	10	2	30

**RESULTS**

This study was designed to explore the psychosocial experiences of university teachers working online during COVID-19. For this purpose, thematic analysis of in-depth interviews was formulated from public and private university teachers, 10 male and 10 female teachers. Results obtained from analysis of data, revealed the teachers who have been teaching in different study disciplines institutional faced numerous social, institutional, family and technical issues.

**Analysis****Table 2***Psycho-social issues faced by male and female teachers during COVID.*

Major themes	Connecting theme	Male Teachers	Female Teachers
Work Conflict	Family Work schedule Institutional support	<i>Not felt much change, it was easy to manage</i>	<i>Faced problems as professional life and family life conflicts started.</i>
Psychological issues	Stress Anxiety Fear	<i>Stress of financial burden started as university was cutting off teachers.</i>	<i>Stress due to lack of time management and looking after kids, household work as no external help was available due to Corona.</i>
Social constraints	Social life Limited Social Interaction	<i>Affected because of the lockdown</i>	<i>Very much, emotional breakdown also visible because of the lack of peer-groups support Although the responsibility was of head of the house but in this time of crisis contributions from both sides were made.</i>
Technical issues	Discipline wise problems Technical Support Demotivation Internet Issues Evaluation	<i>Theoretical teaching is easy as compared to practical subjects.</i>	<i>As far as practical work and study is concerned, that was problematic.</i>
Uncertainty about Future	Fear of getting the virus Affected Interpersonal Communication	<i>After a certain period of time demotivation in work started. Students' attitudes</i>	<i>The uncertainty of the situation created the feeling of demotivation.</i>

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Financial responsibility	<p><i>were also one of the reasons.</i></p> <p><i>Have to go out for important things but coming back home with fear of the virus and spreading it in my family is very disturbing.</i></p> <p><i>Not properly being able to fulfill all the financial responsibilities, working partners helped in this regard</i></p>	<p><i>Going out has become a dilemma now.</i></p>
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During the time of pandemic many teachers regardless of their gender have been going through the same emotional roller coaster. First of all, the new medium of teaching was a difficult task which they had to go through without any proper training. In this scenario their respective educational institutions have given them the required helping hand. They have been providing them with technical support which was present at basic level in their homes, and which is a key functional element of online teaching. Also, they have been supportive to some female teachers by providing them with such schedules which did not make it easy for them to manage their work/home life together. Secondly, the universities have been trying to cooperate with teachers, but this was something new for everyone. As no one was prepared for it, teachers still faced many issues resulting in family-work conflict or managing their time with work was difficult. But still their constant efforts and dedication towards their work motivated them to continue performing their tasks, despite facing so many hardships. Thirdly, the psychological issues which everyone faced were also there due to technological usage and errors. The negative emotions have been something that they have been battling with and to some extents have tried to keep themselves calm & relaxed in such difficult situations.

**Table 3**

*Technical issues faced by male and female teachers during COVID*

Major Theme	Sub Theme	Verbatims
Professional Issues	Classroom Management	1. <i>Online teaching is not a successful medium of education. Students do not pay attention in actual class; then how do we expect them to attend online classes.</i>
		2. <i>Managing students in online class is a tough job for any teacher, for me I faced quite a few challenges in managing class; students were not responsive at all.</i>
	Lack of Training	1. <i>We teachers were not ready for something like this. Basic computer use is something else but teaching online required a training which was not given in the dire need of hour.</i>
		2. <i>It was just fine; I was aware of all the applications so I did not feel that any training was that important.</i>
Financial issues		1. <i>I would say salaries were a little late but still in such an economic downfall time I was grateful for my university in paying me my salary.</i>
		2. <i>I thought that work load increased but salaries did not, obviously this time has been hard for everyone, my salaries have been quite late.</i>

As this pandemic was something no one was prepared for therefore, it did affect the education system. Both students and teachers were affected but the changes which teachers have to adopt were quite

drastic and not easy to adopt. First of all our infrastructure does not go well with this online class system. Many students during this pandemic moved towards their native cities where internet facilities were not good. Students were constantly complaining about bad connectivity issues resulting in demotivation for both the parties. Secondly, the teachers were to train themselves for this change. As everyone is used to this traditional teaching method, this change required lots of flexibility among teachers to follow it. For young teachers it was quite easy as compared to senior teachers who were not that much technology friendly. Thirdly, many teachers complain about their institutions not paying them according to their hard work and efforts they have put into this online system which not only were important for students but also kept the reputation of their institution intact.

**Table 4**

*Gender stereotypical roles and duties during COVID*

<b>Main Theme</b>	<b>Sub Theme</b>	<b>Verbatim</b>
Gender Role	Financially Bounded Dual burden	<i>As me and my wife both work but due to my late salaries often she was the one making shares in payments and we did face some issues financially.</i>
	Household Work	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li><i>1. Due to COVID-19, I fired my maid and all the workload was on me. It has been a hard time</i></li> <li><i>2. Managing a house and working together was so tough. There were times when my classes were scheduled in the afternoon and all my domestic work was piling up</i></li> </ol>
	Professional help	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li><i>1. Thankfully I have a very nice group of colleges' but I have not been able to see them for a while now, which disturbs me.</i></li> </ol> <p><i>My husband has been very cooperative in this regard. He has helped me kids a lot.</i></p>

As there was a financial crisis globally, every single being faced financial constraints. All the professions were facing financial cuts which did affect the lifestyle of most people. Everyone has to manage according to it but it has been quite a difficult task. Despite earning half salaries, still women in our society are designated to do all the household work in addition to their professional work. The same scenario was faced by female teachers, who were seen having trouble at the start of the pandemic in managing their personal and professional lives. There were some institutions that were supportive regarding the schedules of the female teachers but still complained about the workload which resulted not only in physical fatigue but caused them mental fatigue as well. There was one exceptional case where a female teacher stated that her husband has been quite cooperative during this pandemic helping her professionally and in managing her professional stress & tasks.

**Table 5**

*Gender differences in teachers' experiences discipline wise*

<b>Main theme</b>	<b>Sub theme</b>	<b>Male teachers verbatims</b>	<b>Female teachers verbatims</b>
Discipline wise challenges	Social sciences	<i>My experience in teaching has not been bad, theories are easy to teach. My main concern was the seriousness of students.</i>	<i>Students were not present in the class most of the time, I felt like teaching myself. My subject was not giving me a hard time in delivering but it was the student's non serious attitude that made me bizarre.</i>
	Math's/Statistics	<i>I had a very tough time teaching online. I needed a proper board to solve sums but it was not possible.</i>	<i>Math's requires proper demonstration but online board was technical, hard and tiring to use.</i>
	English	<i>Teaching online was not hard for me.</i>	<i>My teaching experience was fine.</i>

Medical sciences	<i>I have to show some live demonstrations to students in class which I was unable to do in online class.</i>	<i>I had to make videos of performing a practical and then send it to my students so that they can understand.</i>
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All the teachers had unanimously agreed on this fact that practical subjects required proper demonstration in labs that couldn't be taught online. And if taught online, still the level of students' understanding was very low. The teachers who were teaching theoretical subjects were complaining about the non-serious behavior of students, so in practical subjects where one to one live interaction of teachers is required were very difficult to teach and were compromised.

## **DISCUSSION**

The sole purpose of this study was to explore the psychosocial experiences of university teachers working online during COVID-19. Thematic analysis generated following seven major themes i.e., Work family conflict, Psychological issues, Social constraints, Technical issues, Uncertainty about Future, Gender roles, & Discipline wise challenges followed by various sub-themes. Teachers faced various difficulties, i.e., psychological and social factors that were highlighted in table 2. Furthermore, this study elaborated how COVID 19 made traumatic work-family conflicts. Previous study of Pam (2013), on inter role theory explains the family life and work conflict explained the role conflicts arise when an individual has to deal with one or more roles. Teachers have experienced this same conflict where they were juggling in managing their work life with their domestic responsibilities. This problem was majorly addressed by female teachers as they are the main caretaker of the household.

Another research by Amstad, & Semmer, (2011), Spillover Theory stated “the attitude, behavior and emotional feelings which an individual feels in one aspect of life are transferred to another domain of life”. It could be positive, negative, work related and home related. Similar results have been seen in this study where teachers transferred their positive, negative, work-related stress on home and home related tension at work. Some teachers said when they were stressed from their household affairs; they were unable to perform well at their work. Moreover, some teachers claim getting salaries on time motivated them to perform well. Males were frustrated for being at home while female teachers were frustrated for being at home with the increase in domestic work as well as professional work. But this research has also shown a slight improvement in gender roles, where some of the male teachers stated that they were not first aware of the burden their working spouses had on them. This made some of the male teachers to help their partner a little. They can like looking after children where their wives are working, giving them free time for their relaxation and not complaining if some household work is not completed on time. There is a clear difference in psychosocial experiences of male and female teachers.

Research conducted by Allen, et.al, (2020), calculated the mental wellbeing of teachers in England during the Academic period of 2019-20. The duration of one week before lockdown and one week after the announcement of reopening of schools were recorded as the higher level of work-related anxiety among teachers. Also, female teachers were having higher level of anxiety as compared to males and same goes for teachers in private schools, who have lower levels of anxiety as compared to state owned school teachers. The data was collected through longitudinal survey method during the academic year 2019-20. The results indicates that parts of teachers' role such as feeling useful and being optimistic during their job performance was reduced to a lower level. This trend was found more common in head teachers, who in the face of high stress level were more likely to leave their jobs. In comparison to this study, female teachers were more nervous and anxious about the uncertain condition of academic system.

During COVID teaching faculty had to manage their profession technically for the very first time. In the present study, researcher highlighted professional challenges faced by teachers in table 3. One of the main factors that need to be addressed is the lack of infrastructure. As we all know, this pandemic was unexpected, transferring the whole education system online was very difficult on teachers. As they have prepared their course work according to the regular class system and changing that all of a sudden was a difficult task for them initially. Then, students from different cities of Pakistan come to the best institutions to study, and have to go back to their hometown where internet facility was not readily available, which made them miss their classes. As everyone cannot afford internet facilities in their homes

or some remote areas of Pakistan still lack behind makes it difficult for students as well to attend their classes.

Women in society already have been facing a dual burden. In table 4, researcher highlighted how gender roles changed, somewhere women became overburdened or for someone life became a better place to live and handle issues. A previous study conducted by Ismail (2018), showed some conflict that arises due to work pressure. The first role conflict was work role conflict; teachers teaching online have faced this conflict due to overburdening of work they have to do in delivering lectures and keeping students engaged. Another conflict that that online teaching raised was family conflict, this was majorly seen in female teachers, they were unable to manage their personal and professional lives, leaving them in a chaotic situation.

The gender wise analysis of male and female teachers presents that the gender issues exist, where males have to deal with only work pressures but females have to deal with both work and domestic pressures. As some female teachers stated during the interview that university authorities call out meetings at any time of day assuming that they are free. We live in a society where working women have to perform their home duties alone and during the pandemic all the domestic help was called off making it more difficult for them. Also, students often take female teachers quite lightly as compared to male teachers. Thus, handling students online was double times more difficult for them as compared to males. We are all are aware of this fact that females are given different facilities, like maternal leaves, likewise some special privileges must be provided to females like giving them half number of classes as compared to male teachers, time must not be odd which might make it difficult for them to manage with home or first-time classes must be given to. It has been a hard time for both the genders.

Table 5 highlighting discipline wise challenges faced by teaching faculty, everybody faced different challenges due teaching skill and practical requirement of tools or gadgets to make lectures presentable for students' understanding. At this point there should not be equality but rather equity-based refinements for teachers teaching online. Another issue that came forward was that all the teachers have unanimously highlighted the lack of student's interest during online classes. This is one of the key issues of online classes. As teachers are putting their full efforts and devising different techniques to engage students, students on the other hand, take advantage of the teacher's physical absence and do other activities during their lectures. This has increased workload on teachers apart in the form of daily assigning of quizzes & assignments and checking them daily as well. The extra work pressure has negatively affected teachers, especially female teachers because they have to give extra time in evaluating student's work. The lack of training of teachers for teaching online is also an alarming scenario that is not taken into account. As this research was conducted on university level, therefore, most of the senior teachers (old age teachers) were not into usage of these advanced new age gadgets. They use it at a very basic level like for receiving calls, text messaging and the far most to send emails. But, when they have to teach online it is a difficult task for them, as they have to first learn to use this new system and then prepare their course work according to it, which is very time consuming and exhausting as well. Although for young lecturers this was not much of an issue.

## **CONCLUSION**

In Pakistani perspective, during COVID the tasks were difficult for all to deal with the list of problems discussed above for teaching faculty. But their efforts and work commitment worked as a source of motivation for all, due to which they had continued performing their tasks. The students have been taking advantage of this situation by not paying attention but teachers have applied different strategies and have been successful to some extent. The issues and problems were the same for both genders at professional level but when it comes to personal life, the workload and pressure on females are more as compared to males. Most of the male's teachers have been facing difficulty during their teaching sessions. They have been trying to adopt this new mode of teaching despite having difficulty and no training. They have to prepare the entire course in an online format which was designed according to the regular classes. The major issues they were facing were the students' less attention and seriousness towards their studies. All the teachers believe that they have to use different methods and techniques to keep students attentive but these methods result in increased workload on them. Also, practical subjects that require live demonstrations for students are very difficult to carry on in online classes, which they have still managed to conduct online. They have been trying their best but it seems like students' lack of interest while taking online classes' results in demotivation among the teachers, despite which they still manage to carry on



their duties. Also, due to COVID-19, all the social activities have been stopped, generating some negative emotions among them like anxiety, fear and depression but, keeping in mind the safety of others and their own families they have been keeping themselves confined in their homes and still managing to carry on with their tasks.

The female teachers have been balancing between their personal and professional lives. As we all know due to COVID-19, all the domestic help was called off. All the domestic work was performed by them but, they have to manage their professional lives as well. The additional workload other than professional wasn't present for male teachers. In teaching they have been bearing the same troubles as faced by male teachers like lack of attention and seriousness of students, devising different techniques and tools to keep students attentive during online classes which again resulted in increased workload among themselves. But few female teachers found these online classes beneficial, as the pressure they have to bear from their relevant departments was minimized during regular classes, relieve from manual checking of papers, not having the hustle of managing lab classes for students and consuming their times from long lecture breaks to some other activities were positive outcomes for them. The majority of teachers were affected by social distancing from their loved ones but a dominating fear emotion has helped them in keeping away from their family & friends and maintaining their social distancing.

### **Limitation**

The researcher found less literature regarding COVID. Also, 20 teachers were interviewed for a predefined period of time by teachers, due to their busy schedules. Face to face interviews enable an individual to study the body language of the interviewees, which also gives important insight regarding the comfortable level of an individual in his/her job, but due to COVID-19 it was restricted. In the last, due to limited time, a detailed interview couldn't be conducted resulting in a limited amount of information.

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