



Journal of Social Sciences of Mus Alparslan University

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Araştırma Makalesi • Research Article

The Effect of the Pandemic on the Performance of Tourist Guides and the Practice of Their Professions: A Qualitative Study in the Cappadocia Region

Pandeminin Turist Rehberlerinin Performansına ve Mesleği Uygulama Şekillerine Etkisi: Kapadokya Bölgesinde Nitel Bir Araştırma

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Abstract: Crises are the turning points where all industries are heavily affected, national economies experience significant problems, and only businesses which develop appropriate strategies and methods can survive. Sometimes natural disasters and sometimes terrorist attacks may cause these crisis periods to occur. In such cases, people first give up on their luxury consumption, such as their touristic travels. This situation makes the tourism sector to be one of the most vulnerable sectors. Tourism is a labor-intensive industry and one of the first sectors affected by such negativities. Therefore, tourism workers particularly feel many difficulties in such periods. One of these affected occupational groups is the tour guiding profession. This study aims to reveal the tour guides' experiences during the pandemic, which caused a significant sectoral crisis, and the effect of these experiences on their performance. The research carried out a qualitative research method and phenomenological research design. Professional tour guides were selected with snowball sampling, which is one of the purposive sampling methods. The ethical compliance of the prepared interview form was endorsed by the Iğdır University Ethics Committee Approval, dated 01.04.2021-No. 2021/12. Interviews were conducted with 20 professional tour guides registered at Nevşehir Chamber of Guides. The audio recordings obtained from the interviews were transcribed and identified as the MAXQDA project. In the study, content analysis was used as the analysis method. Three main themes and ten sub-themes were created using the data from the literature and the field. As a result of the coding process, the most repeated principal theme was determined as "Psychological and Behavioral Results." The most repeated sub-theme was "Professional Dissatisfaction." The research results have revealed that professional tour guides were not satisfied with their profession during the pandemic period, and the pandemic process had unfavorable effects on their performance.

Keywords: Pandemic, Tour guide, Performance

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Cite as/ Atıf: İli, N. D., Çokal, Z. & Keskin, B. (2022). The effect of the pandemic on the performance of tourist guides and the practice of their professions: A qualitative study in the Cappadocia region. *Anemon Muş Alparslan Üniversitesi Sosyal Bilimler Dergisi*, 10(1), 57-70. <http://dx.doi.org/10.18506/anemon.1003040>

Received/Geliş: 30 September/Eylül 2021

Accepted/Kabul: 28 November/Kasım 2021

Published/Yayın: 30 April/Nisan 2022

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Öz: Krizler tüm sektörlerin yoğun etkilendiği, ülke ekonomilerinin büyük sorunlar yaşadığı ve uygun stratejiler ve yöntemler bulan işletmelerin ancak ayakta kalabildiği dönüm noktalarıdır. Kimi zaman yaşanan doğal afetler kimi zamansa terör saldırıları bu dönemlerin yaşanmasına neden olmaktadır. Bu durumlarda insanlar ilk olarak seyahat gibi lüks gördükleri tüketimlerinden vazgeçmektedir. Bu da en hassas sektörlerin başında turizm sektörünün gelmesine neden olmaktadır. Emek yoğun bir sektör olan turizm bu tür olumsuzluklardan ilk etkilenen sektör olması nedeniyle turizm çalışanları bu dönemlerde oldukça zorluk yaşamaktadır. Bu meslek gruplarından biri de turist rehberliği mesleğidir. Bu çalışmanın amacı da sektörde önemli bir krize neden olan pandemi sürecinde turist rehberlerinin yaşadıkları deneyimleri ve bu deneyimlerin performansları üzerindeki etkisini ortaya koymaktır. Araştırma nitel araştırma yöntemi ile yürütülmüş ve araştırmada fenomenolojik araştırma deseni kullanılmıştır. Amaçlı örnekleme yöntemlerinden biri olan kartopu örnekleme ile profesyonel turist rehberlerine ulaşılmıştır. Hazırlanan görüşme formu için Iğdır Üniversitesi Etik Kurulundan 01.04.2021 tarih ve 2021/12 nolu kararı ile etik uygunluk raporu alınmıştır. Nevşehir Rehberler Odası'na bağlı 20 profesyonel turist rehberi ile mülakat gerçekleştirilmiştir. Mülakatlar sonucu elde edilen ses kayıtları deşifre edilerek MAXQDA projesi olarak tanımlanmıştır. Analiz tekniği olarak içerik analizi kullanılmıştır. Literatürden ve sahadan eğelen verilerle üç ana tema on alt tema oluşturulmuştur. Kodlamalar sonucunda en çok tekrarlanan ana temanın "Psikolojik ve Davranışsal Sonuçlar" olduğu tespit edilmiştir. Bu ana tema içerisinde en çok tekrarlanan alt tema ise "Mesleki Memnuniyetsizlik"tir. Araştırma sonucuna göre profesyonel turist rehberlerinin pandemi döneminde mesleklerinden memnun olmadıkları ve pandemi sürecinin performansları üzerinde olumsuz etkiler yarattığı ortaya çıkmıştır.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Pandemi, Turist rehberliği, Performans

Introduction

The tourism sector is crucial to the growth and development of countries. Today, all countries are trying to take a more active part in the tourism sector and have a larger share of tourism revenues, both by their investments and natural and cultural resources. Tourism is an all-important and income-generating industry that countries place great importance on considering this situation. However, it is the first sector to be affected by even minor negativities.

Challenging issues such as terrorism, natural disasters, epidemics, internal turmoil, wars, economic problems, and ecological changes directly or indirectly affect the tourism sector (Köşker, 2017). Terrorist incidents in countries may affect many destinations, ranging from neighboring countries to very distant regions. In addition, political instability, terrorist activities, natural disasters, and epidemics may create significant problems and losses in tourism. Considering the historical process, many events that negatively affect tourism have been encountered. For example, terrorist incidents in the USA, UK, European countries, and Turkey, political turmoil in the Middle East countries, epidemics in Africa and Far East countries have caused severe adverse effects on the tourism sector (Sel et al., 2017: 229). The influences of the crises arising from these unfavorable events may be extremely devastating, and destinations cannot survive in the short term (Beirman, 2002; Fletcher & Morakabati, 2008). These events not only affect the local region but may also affect the entire world. A butterfly effect resulting from an airplane attack at one end of the world may cause employees working in the tourism sector in a very distant country to lose their jobs. Client losses in tourism, which is a sector that is highly affected by all kinds of crises, directly affect the income flow of countries. One of the main reasons for this is that tourism has a notable place in providing foreign currency input to countries and increasing the gross national product. The fact is that the higher the number of tourists, the higher the income of the countries. For this reason, the satisfaction of tourists visiting the country, their general positive impression of the destination, and their revisiting frequency have a significant role in raising income. In this context, each individual serving in the sector contributes to tourist satisfaction and a good impression. However, there are such professions in the tourism sector that they have more influence on the touristic activities since their members are in one-to-one communication with tourists. Tour guiding takes the first place in these professions. Like all service providers in the sector, tour guides are also highly affected by the crisis processes. Tour guides affected by crises, both financially and morally, have difficulty coping with these processes.

The COVID-19 disease, which first emerged in 2019 in China, has affected the entire world over time and turned into a pandemic. While the pandemic influenced all industries globally, one of them was the businesses in the tourism sector and their employees. The current study aimed to reveal the effects of the pandemic on the tour guides serving in Cappadocia, an outstanding center of attraction for Turkey and the world. The study sought to answer the questions of what difficulties the tour guides encountered in exercising their profession during the pandemic period and whether a change in their performance occurred.

Tour Guiding

As a service sector, one of the most primary objectives of tourism businesses is to ensure customer satisfaction. This customer satisfaction with the touristic destination is directly related to the service providers. Sometimes for a year, some people dream of vacation and organize their financial resources according to this event. They have great expectations about their holidays, and because of this reason, they want to be back from their trips with high satisfaction. The employees, serving in touristic facilities and being in direct communication with tourists, are the key elements that will provide this satisfaction. One of these employees is the tour guide acting as an intermediary between the touristic destination and the visitor and are the cultural ambassadors of their countries.

The World Federation of Tour Guides (WFTG) defines a tour guide as an authorized person who guides tourists in the languages they prefer and conveys the information of the destination to the tourist in the best way by explaining the natural and cultural values (WFTG, 2021). Tour guides not only accompany the travelers and act as interpreters throughout the trips but also enable the visitors to get to know different cultures, gain travel experiences, and be informed about natural, historical, and cultural assets in a destination (Ap & Wong, 2001; Dahles, 2002). A tour guide gives information about amazing things such as visited destinations, historical places, the landscapes worth photographing, and the culture of native people, and decorates this information with stories (Leclerc & Martin, 2004: 182). Tourists participate in guided tours for many reasons and benefit from the guidance service. A desire to get to know new cultures and not experience the difficulties of being in a foreign country is the center of foreign tourists' reasons for using guidance services (Aslan & Çokal, 2016: 56).

The tour guide helps the tourists to get the service needed in the destination by communicating with tour operators, travel agencies, domestic and foreign tourists, hotels and other guest accommodations, restaurants, shopkeepers, hospitals, police stations, transportation, and other service providers (Çokal & Yılmaz, 2020: 495).

The service offered by the tour guide affects the tourist's experience and impression. Tour guiding is an individual profession where the performance of the tour guide is all-important. Although sometimes external factors affect the performance, the final determinant is the person himself (Lugosi & Bray, 2008: 469). Pond (1993: 64) emphasizes that the tour guide is the one who makes or breaks a tour, pointing out that the performance is in the hands of the tour guide. The performance of the tour guides is also related to their competencies, education, and training (Prakash & Chowdhary, 2010: 53). Besides, the information given to tourists about the places to see, the sights worth photographing, and souvenir shops is a significant indicator of the tour guide's performance. The performance of the tour guide depends on his extroverted personality and regularly fulfilling his professional roles and duties (Edensor, 2000: 334-335). However, tour guides may encounter many difficulties while performing their work. The environment and comfort required for work performance may sometimes be insufficient. Especially the crises experienced in recent years have negatively affected the practice of the profession and the tour guides' performance. The crises, such as terrorist incidents, COVID-19 pandemic, political reasons, have particularly affected the tourism sector and, similarly, the tour guiding profession.

Tour Guiding and The COVID-19

Like all business lines in the tourism sector, tour guiding is also affected by crises and negativities. Tour guides faced many depressions until 2019 and tried to withstand them. Tour guiding is a profession

performed without being connected to any corporation. For this reason, unlike other tourism workers, tour guides have to apply their individual crisis management in crises. Similar to the businesses struggling for survival, tour guides also carry out their fighting to survive. The experienced crises, settling down in the center of his life, directly affect the tour guide's capability to work (Çakmak, 2018: 115). Table 1 shows the crisis processes that tour guides may encounter while performing their profession.

Table 1. The Crisis Process in Tour Guiding Profession

Before the Tour	During the Tour	Global
- Hiring a tour guide for a fee lower than the base for the tours forward contracted with the tourism agency. - Price cutting policies of agencies,	- Natural disasters in the accommodation or destination - Technical problems with the tour bus or the accommodation facility - Accidents, injuries, or deaths during the tour, - Criminal events during the tour (theft, snatching) - Terrorist activities on the tour route	- Domestic or international political crises - Terror activities - Anti-Turkish or Islamophobia-based propaganda conducted abroad

Source: Çakmak, 2018: 117-118

Tour guides are affected by some possible occupational and (or) in-land crises before leading -at the preparation stage- and during tour periods. Besides, global crises are another factor affecting tour guides' working life as well as on other businesses in the world's economy. Nowadays, epidemic diseases show their effects globally. There were periods when epidemics caused various concerns in the world from time to time. However, these epidemics were not very frequent, and they did not have a large-scale economic effect like today. The COVID-19 pandemic, which has become a big problem today and increases the rate of spread with its mutated variants, causes a troublesome period in the world.

The first coronavirus case was detected in a cluster of seafood market workers who applied to hospitals with viral pneumonia symptoms in the city of Wuhan, Hubei province of the People's Republic of China. The Novel Coronavirus is a severe infectious disease with a high spread rate, which is in the same family as the Middle East Respiratory Syndrome (MERS) and Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome (SARS) epidemic virus. This disease, of which no similar cases were detected before, was defined as COVID-19 on January 7, 2020, and named SARS-CoV-2 (COVID-19 Guide, 2020). With the declaration of Covid-19 as a pandemic by the World Health Organization, countries took extraordinary measures and created strategic action plans. In order to minimize the unfavorable effects of the pandemic, the precautions, such as border crossing restrictions, quarantine measures, and travel bans, were taken (Duran & Acar, 2020: 55). However, travel restrictions applied for preventative purposes have caused a recession in the tourism sector. Domestic and international activities of all touristic businesses came to a standstill, and the layoff rate in the tourism sector increased rapidly (Alaeddinoğlu & Rol, 2020). The pandemic has negatively affected tourism businesses in every respect. Like all sector laborers, tour guides also took their place among the people who were negatively affected by the process.

Studies on the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic on tour guidance seem to be quite limited in the international literature. In general, these investigations have focused on the impact of the pandemic on the tourism sector and businesses. The Turkish literature also covers a scant number of studies. In their study, Düzgün and Kurt (2020) aimed to determine the effect of COVID-19 on tour guides registered to the Ankara Chamber of Tourist Guides. The study, carried out with the interview method, has revealed that the tour guides experienced severe economic difficulties in this period, and their financial income did not sustain a living. Additionally, the study observed that tour guides felt insecure and turned to alternative income-generating options -other than their own profession- such as academic careers (Düzgün & Kurt, 2020).

Türker and Karaca (2020), on the other hand, discussed the possible post-COVID-19 transformations in tourism and tour guiding from the perspective of professional tour guides. The research has determined tour guides have a general idea that the issues such as hygiene, individual travel, small groups, social distance, and active management will remain on the sector agenda after the pandemic (Türker & Karaca, 2020).

Şahin and Güzel (2020) have also discussed the problems experienced by the tourism sector in this period and suggested solutions considering the tour guides' perspectives. The research has aimed to determine tour guides' assessments and their alternative opinions about the characteristics of tourism in the face of unfavorable current developments. The study has reported that tourism shows four structural features during these times of crisis: Vulnerable structure, competitive structure, substitutability, and damage to the country's image. The study also has revealed that tour guides believe measures are needed for the issues such as security promises, promotional activities, destination branding, and target market studies in the tourism sector (Şahin & Güzel, 2020).

These studies have included the opinions of tour guides during the pandemic period. The common suggestion is to repeat these studies by using different samples and various time segments of the pandemic period (Düzgün & Kurt, 2020; Türker & Karaca, 2020). Based on these suggestions, researching tour guides serving during the pandemic in the Cappadocia region would appear beneficial. In this context, the current study aimed to investigate the professional performance of tour guides during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Research Methodology

The current study interviewed the tour guiding professionals to find out their thoughts, feelings, and problems experienced during the pandemic period while performing their jobs. In this context, the phenomenological research pattern, a qualitative research method, was used in the study. The qualitative research allowing an in-depth study of the subject is a set of techniques based on personal interviews covering open-ended questions, casual conversations, non-directed questions, and approaches such as group or focus group interviews, participant observation, ethnography, case study, photography, or storytelling (Levy, 2006). While phenomenology is a branch of a positivist approach, experience is assumed as the source of all knowledge. Perceiving a subject starts with learning how that subject or phenomenon is experienced (Husserl, 2012). Researchers interested in phenomenology usually try to analyze the similarities between people experiencing incidents rather than investigating a single person-specific phenomenon (Sart, 2017). The studied phenomenon of this research is the COVID-19 period, which has been evaluated in line with the guides' experiences. The research design has started with the interview questions, constituting the model's center, empowering the study rather than controlling it. Therefore, asking the right questions is crucial for a detailed examination (Maxwell, 2018). Investigating the tour guides' social world is necessary to learn about the effects of the pandemic on tour guides, create a descriptive framework, and deal with their experiences while performing their profession. The current study sought to answer the following questions:

- What have the tour guides been going through during the pandemic period?
- Have there been any changes in the performance of tour guides?
- How have the effects of the epidemic impacted occupational performance?

Population and Sample

The research universe consisted of professional tour guides registered at Nevşehir Chamber of Guides in the Cappadocia Region. According to the chamber records, there were 578 registered tour guides, of whom 499 were active, and 79 were inactive in 2021 (www.tureb.org). Of the 499 actively working guides, 20 were interviewed. The interviews were terminated when similar results occurred, and the data was saturated. Purposive and snowball sampling methods were preferred in determining the participants. While developing a purposive sample, researchers use their specific knowledge and experience to select participants representing the social world. In creating the snowball/chain sample, a

few people of concern are determined and interviewed, then these participants offer new people's names, and the chain of participants is formed (Berg & Lune, 2015).

Data Collection Method

Interview and document review techniques were preferred in the data collection method. Research and semi-structured interview questions have been created on guide performance and COVID-19 period according to the literature. The research usually obtained and evaluated the main and sub-themes in the light of field data. The ethical compliance of the prepared interview form was endorsed by the Iğdır University Ethics Committee Approval, dated 01.04.2021-No. 2021/12. The data collection process was by face-to-face and telephone interviews. An interview is a process in which researchers conduct a mutual face-to-face or telephone conversation with the participants and receive information about the research topic. In this process, the research aims to reveal the feelings and thoughts of the participants in a particular subject, penetrate their inner world, and expose their points of view, mental perceptions, experiences, reactions, and interpretations about the concept or event (Karagöz, 2017).

The interview process was voluntary. The 6-question interview form, created by the conceptual framework, is as follows;

- How has the COVID-19 period affected your profession?
- How did this process affect your performance?
- What has changed in the way tours are organized (route, duration of presentation, mode of introduction)?
- What involuntary, instinctive changes have occurred in your behavior towards the tourist? What are the differences between your pre-COVID-19 perspective and the current one?
- What measures do you take on tours?
- You have to both maintain your health and earn money. Can you evaluate yourself in terms of negative emotions such as professional deformation and burnout because of going on tour during this period?
- What will this process change for the profession of tour guidance in the future? What will be different?

In addition to these questions, demographic questions related to the tour guides given under the heading of findings were asked.

Data Analysis

The content analysis is the most appropriate analysis method for analyzing the data according to the research pattern. It is used to systematically identify and measure data on phenomena obtained using objective tools. It is also a research method used to make valid inferences about the data and their context to provide a concept guide representing information, new ideas, and facts. For this reason, the content analysis provides a large-scale description, summary, and categories of phenomena (Krippendorff, 1980).

For the data analysis, the audio recordings were transcribed, and transferred to a computer environment as a word document, and analyzed systematically by reading line by line. The qualitative data analysis program MAXQDA 18 was used to facilitate the systematic analysis of interviews. This program offers researchers excellent opportunities in coding and visualizing data.

Validity and Reliability

The credibility of the results in qualitative research is a significant research criterion. In quantitative research, validity, reliability, and power analyses are proved by numerical indicators. However, since there are no numerical data to prove these analyses in qualitative research, it is problematic to analyze validity, reliability, and power. Validity is the accuracy matter of the research results. Reliability, on the other hand, is related to the reproducibility of the research results. The research area validity, collecting direct data through face-to-face interviews on the scene, the ability to

go back to the field to confirm the information obtained, and the ability to collect additional information are critical features establishing validity in qualitative research. Credibility, transferability, consistency, confirmability concepts are used among the methods that ensure reliability (Yıldırım & Şimşek, 2013). Besides, inter-coder consistency was achieved for the research reliability, and the field experts were consulted as one of the classical methods.

Patton (2001) has stated that validity and reliability affect the work quality in designing qualitative research, analyzing the results, evaluating the study quality, analyzing the analysis results, and questioning the results. Similarly, Seale (1999) has supported the consistency and reliability concepts in qualitative research. Data consistency can be ensured when the research steps are confirmed by examining the items such as data reduction methods and process notes to evaluate the raw data (Campbell, 1996). That is why many researchers use the triangulation method. Triangulation is a validity procedure in which researchers converge between multiple and different sources of information to create study themes or categories (Creswell & Miller, 2000). In the study, the researcher preferred triangulation. In collecting, analyzing, and interpreting the data, more than one researcher took part in the opinions of the authors and experts.

Findings

The data obtained through the interviews (audio recordings) were transcribed and identified as documents to the MAXQDA program. First, the main and sub-themes were created on the coding system, and the data were classified one by one into the relevant themes. The main and sub-themes for tour guidance and the COVID-19 period were defined. Table 2 shows the main and sub-themes created by the data in detail.

Table 2. Main Themes - Sub-Themes and Descriptions

Main Themes - Sub-Themes	Descriptions
Psychological and Behavioral Consequences	
Concern for the Future	It expresses opinions on the state of tourism and tour guidance and, depending on these, the state of well-being in the future.
Occupational Dissatisfaction	Depending on the pandemic period, these are attitudes towards the negativity brought by the tour guidance profession.
Self-improvement	It refers to the professional experience gained by tour guides improving themselves during unemployment while failing to carry out tours during the pandemic period.
Burnout	It refers to the state of burnout experienced by tour guides due to the negative consequences of the pandemic period.
Disposition and Energy	It expresses the attitude and behavior towards practicing the profession and going on tours during the pandemic period.
Performance	
Negative Impact on Performance	It expresses the unfavorable effects of the pandemic on doing the profession of tour guiding.
Positive Impact on Performance	It expresses the favorable effects of the pandemic on doing the profession of tour guiding.
Implementation of the Profession	
Presentation	It refers to tour guides' information transfers about the destination and the changed knowledge transfer due to the pandemic during the tour.
Communication	During the tour, it refers to communicative factors such as distance and intimacy, with tourists.

The qualitative data were compiled into a document, and 1455 word groups were obtained from 4554 words. Figure 1 shows the word cloud consisting of the 75 most frequently repeated words. The most repeated word in this word cloud was "mask" with 89 repetitions. The second most repeated word was "tour" with 86 repetitions. The word "time" was the third most repeated word, with 48 repetitions. Frequently repeated other words were tourist (48), exchange (35), disinfectant (33), distance (30), work and road (29), car (28). According to the saying rate, the most said words seem as tourists, masks, health measures, and the tour.

Table 4. Main Theme and Sub-Theme Frequencies

Code System	Frequencies
Psychological and Behavioral Consequences	81
Concern for the Future	22
Occupational Dissatisfaction	29
Self-improvement	11
Burnout	10
Disposition and Energy	9
Performance	31
Negative Impact on Performance	20
Positive Impact on Performance	11
Implementation of Profession	77
Presentation	22
Communication	25
Tour Planning	30
Total	189

The examination of the main and sub-themes by the data encoded 189 times shows that the most mentioned main theme was Psychological and Behavioral Consequences (81). Implementation of Profession (77) was the second, and Performance (31) was the third most mentioned main theme. The pandemic process chiefly affected the behavior and psychology of tour guides. The way they practice the profession varies depending on the pandemic, and they especially take extra precautions in tour planning. In the same way, the pandemic process causes unfavorable effects on the tour guides' performances. Positive impacts emerge as resting and regeneration.

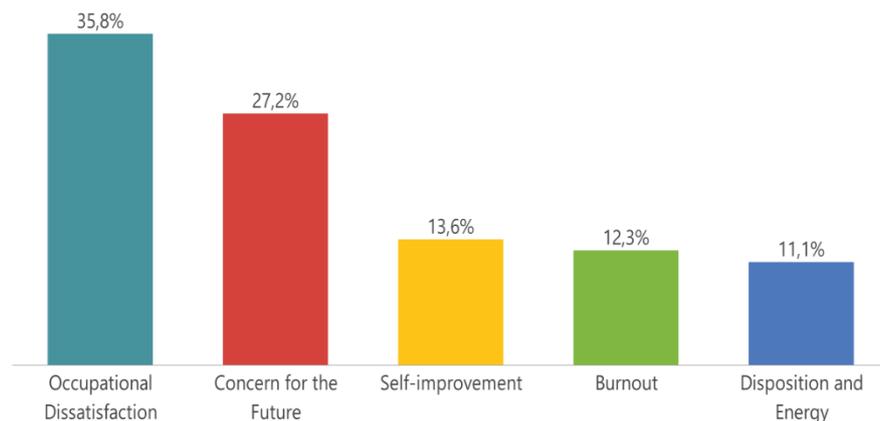


Figure 2. The Sub-Themes of Psychological and Behavioral Consequences

The most mentioned sub-theme of the main theme of Psychological and Behavioral Consequences was Occupational Dissatisfaction (35.8%). Secondly, Concern for the Future had a rate of 27.2%. Self-improvement (13.6%), Burnout (12.3%), Disposition, and Energy (11.1%) were close to each other in rate. According to these results, the tour guides' professional dissatisfaction came to the fore. Due to the cessation of tourist mobility during the pandemic process, tour guides have experienced severe financial

difficulties due to the inability to go on tours, the inability to earn income, and the loans and debts. In this case, general professional dissatisfaction has arisen among tour guides. Comments on the sub-themes are as follows;

I think I am short of knowledge. Forgetting knowledge was distressing at first, but then I got used to it a little bit. I feel this way psychologically. (Occupational Dissatisfaction) P7

“I think even after the covid-19 vaccine is found, nothing will change, and everything will continue in the same way” (Concern for the Future)P13

I was able to spend more time reading more about history and archeology. It actually calmed me down on the one hand and improved me in terms of training myself. (Self-improvement) P3

I am tired. I am exhausted. The more I think about it, the more I run out. (Burnout) P2

Frankly, it did not negatively affect me. I felt good after resting for a long time because I can socialize with people once I am home. (Disposition and Energy) P11

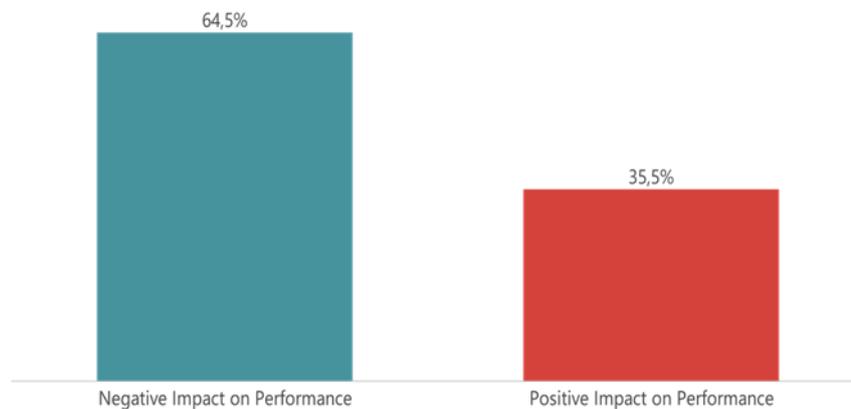


Figure 3. The Sub-Themes of Performance

The pandemic has negatively impacted the performances of tour guides (64.5%). The adverse effects primarily emerge in insufficient income, scant experience in the profession, difficulty recalling information about tourist destinations, low energy, and motivation, diffidence, anxiety, missing opportunities. Therefore, the pandemic period can not be denied to have very negative impacts on the professional development of the guides, especially. The positive effects are less than the unfavorable effects (35.5%). Positive effects often manifest themselves as resting, acquiring new knowledge, self-improvement professionally. Especially in the professional sense, it can be said that experienced guides perceive more positive effects compared to new beginners. Comments on the sub-themes are as follows;

“I lost my energy and forgot knowledge I had before, I was a bit rusty at the job. Then when I went to the first tour, of course, I was a little stunned.” (Negative impact) P13

“It did not affect my professional performance. On the contrary, I was able to take more time to read about my profession and what I needed to learn to improve myself in a professional sense during the COVID-19 pandemic. After my tours started, I continued to work with enthusiasm again.” (Positive impact) P5

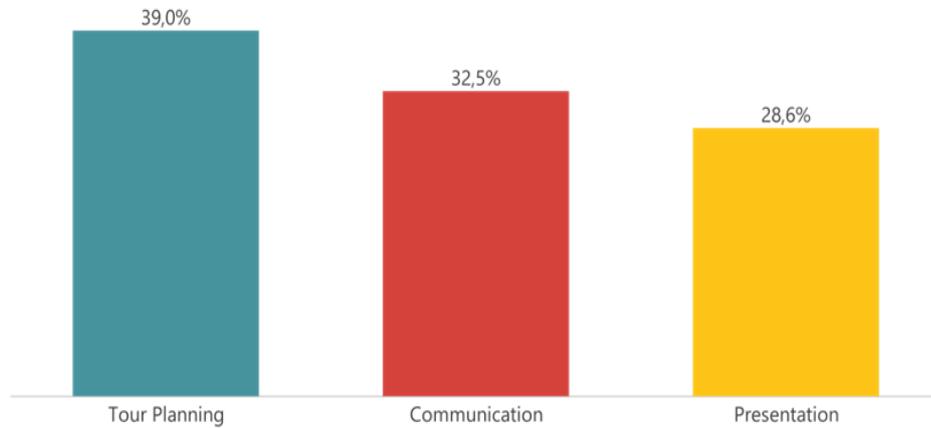


Figure 4. The Sub-Themes of Implementation of Profession

Some things have changed during the pandemic period in the practice of the profession. In particular, new methods have been developed in the planning of tours (39%). In this way, the health of both tour guides and tourists was tried to be protected. The passenger numbers of the tour buses were organized according to the capacity restrictions suitable for social distance. Health protection rules were given importance, and the vehicles were provided with health-protective devices, such as masks and disinfectants. Restaurant capacities were arranged to provide a social distance between clients. Touristic routes changed. Some indoor museum visits were canceled. Despite these critical measures, tour guides reported that some tourist groups were reluctant to comply with health rules. In the communication sub-theme (32.5%), the tour guide's warnings about customer communication, mask, and disinfectant issues have come to the fore. All tour guides have warned tourists to wear masks and apply the social distance rule. The narration sub-theme (28.6%) demonstrates that the tour guides have changed their routine touristic information narration due to the restrictions imposed and the changes in the routes. Sometimes, they have encountered narrative disruptions because of the difficulty of wearing a mask and the inability to concentrate enough. While some tour guides stated that they shortened the narration along with the route, a few tour guides expressed that there has been no change in the narration length, and the tour has continued without affecting their performance. Comments on sub-themes are as follows;

“Routes have been changed; no museums tour exist in the plan. For example, we did not enter Museums, only visited open spaces.” (Tour planning) P9

“Personally, I do not amend the tour program. I continue in the same way as before, I simply try to do my job.” (Tour planning) P10

“There was no change in my narration time and style for the underground cities, I showed the same performance.” (Presentation) P19

“I raise my voice because of wearing a mask and keeping distance with each other for a healthy communication. However, this situation is a nuisance because our throat hurts shortly.” (Presentation) P11

“In terms of physical distance, of course, both the tourist and the guide mutually established a proper physical distance. Apart from that, our intimacy with the tourists continued at the level we should have.” (Communication) P5

“We distribute gloves. When we go to dinner or something, I warn everyone to wash their hands first. We provide social distance between us” P3

One tourism season has already passed since the beginning of the outbreak. The current study discussed tour guides' problems, who actively provide guidance services during the season, and the

effects of experienced difficulties on their performance. The study foresaw that there would be more future crises to affect the sector and guiding profession, and preventive measures should be taken to address the deficiencies of tour guides and the tourism sector by setting crisis management.

Conclusion

Crises and crisis management are critical issues in businesses whose structures are vulnerable to economic turmoils. Crisis management, especially in the service sector, is one of the principal factors for the well-being of employees. The tourism industry is a labor-intensive sector, and economic crises can cause severe results and damages here. Therefore, it is essential to overcome these sectoral crises without harming occupational groups. Specifically, these crises can have more severe consequences for tour guides who are individual employees in the sector. The primary unavoidable needs of people are health, food, drink, and shelter. Besides, individuals have secondary needs like entertainment, traveling, joining tours, touristic activities, etc. However, in difficult financial conditions, such are given up first. Therefore, the first harm is felt by tour guides who are in one-to-one communication with the tourist.

The Covid-19 pandemic period has also affected the tourism area and the professional groups serving in the sector. With this study, the problems experienced by tour guides, one of these professional groups in difficulties, have been tried to be identified by qualitative methods, and solutions have been proposed. The research showed that the pandemic period had both positive and negative effects on tour guides. Tour guides who had experienced positive effects were especially guides who had more professional experience than new beginners. When the pandemic temporarily ended the intensive pace of work, these people devoted their time to develop themselves in their professions. Thus, when the tourist season revived, they had enough energy and were ready to run on tour. While in this new process, some unfavorable effects occurred, especially on performance. Some technical preventions such as wearing a mask, keeping a certain distance between individuals, short-time conversations were motivation lowering factors of tour guides. In addition, considering the role of the tourists' in possible virus spreading has created a situation where the tour guides could not concentrate enough on their works. When, for example, compared to the pre-pandemic period, now, more distant communication with the client has been a must. Since the number of people on the tours is planned according to the social distance requirements, a sufficiently interactive tour process is not possible with a small number of tourists. This situation affects both the financial gain of the tour guides and their professional motivations.

Tour guides predict that in the future, individual tours will be prominent rather than group tours. They believe that the interest in VIP tours will increase and be implemented soon. The idea that tourism will never catch up with its former vitality has been put forward as an adverse prediction about the pandemic period. The study findings, which emphasized tour guides' future concerns stemming from uncertainties on the agenda, have revealed that tour guides usually want to shift their jobs and seek opportunities in other professions rather than their own work.

The fact that most tour guides in the study were inexperienced constituted the limitation of the research. Similar work can be done by comparing it with long-serving professional tour guides.

Recommendations for Future Directions

To tour guides;

Tour guides should consider the delicate structure of the tourism industry and get professional experience as from their student life to succeed in the industry. During the epidemic period, tourists turned to more individual trips instead of large group trips. Tour guides can be expertise in these niche markets and turn such arduous processes into opportunities. Specializing in this area and organizing open space-oriented tours with few people can be advantageous for tourist groups.

To travel agencies and chambers;

The small-amount loans provided by the state banks at the beginning of the pandemic period have not been sufficient for tour guides. For a solution, travel agencies can financially support tour guides by

hiring agency-affiliated guides with modest fees and paying their salaries. Besides, a forceful organization of the guide chamber and the guides' solidarity will ensure unity in solving problems.

To researchers;

It is believed that this study, conducted using qualitative research methods, will be an original study comparing young-old, experienced- less experienced tour guides and considering all parameters through an established model. Measures regarding the tour guiding after the pandemic period and remedies for crises can be discussed in another study.

Disclosure Statements

1. Contribution rate statement of researchers: First author % 35, Second author % 35, Third author % 30
2. No potential conflict of interest was reported by the authors.

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