

# Impact of Covid-19 Pandemic on Organizational Movement of Theater Workers: A Case of Istanbul

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## ABSTRACT

The COVID-19 outbreak that emerged in China in late 2019 was declared a pandemic by the World Health Organization, causing havoc on national and global scales. Its impact on culture and the arts has been profound, resulting in devastating consequences for the sector. Recognizing this, a cooperation protocol titled “The Effects of the Global Pandemic on Istanbul Cultural Life” was established in 2021 through a partnership between Istanbul University and the Istanbul Provincial Directorate of Culture and Tourism. The primary objectives of this protocol were to assess the pandemic’s effects on Istanbul’s cultural and artistic scene, propose relevant solutions, and disseminate findings to the public through a comprehensive report. The protocol included eight distinct fields: cinema, theater, music, publishing, librarianship, museology, exhibition, and festivals. This study focuses on the impact of the pandemic on theater professionals. Throughout the pandemic, theater workers banded together, fostering a spirit of organization and solidarity. This collaborative environment provided artists with opportunities to collaborate, offer mutual support, and establish solidarity funds. In theater, the term “ensemble” denotes a group of actors who unite to produce a play. Each member of the ensemble brings their unique talents and skills to the performance, fostering a collaborative atmosphere in which they support one another, ultimately resulting in a seamless production. The concept of ensemble is foundational in theater as it not only promotes cooperation and support among actors but also encourages group innovation. We contend that the instances of cooperation and unionization witnessed in the theater industry during the COVID-19 pandemic exemplify the essence of the ensemble in the theater. In the study designed using the qualitative research method, an in-depth interview technique was used as a data collection tool. A total of 18 individuals, nine women, and nine men, working in the theater industry were interviewed. The data obtained from these interviews were transcribed and analyzed using the MAXQDA Qualitative Data Analysis Program.

**Keywords:** COVID-19 Pandemic, Ensemble, Theatre Workers, Effects of Covid-19 on Theatre Sector

## Introduction

The COVID-19 pandemic has inflicted significant challenges on the cultural and artistic landscape in Turkey, mirroring the global impacts felt across the sector. The closure of theaters, cinemas, festivals, and various shows has led to a sudden and severe loss of income for performers. Emergency measures mandating social distancing and other safety protocols have proven impractical for performers, thereby intensifying the situation. This paper explores the magnitude of issues stemming from COVID-19 within the cultural and artistic sector, examining whether it has engendered new labor-related challenges and, if so, how these have impacted labor solidarity initiatives. Through conducting in-depth interviews with workers in the theater sector, we have sought to illuminate the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic on the industry, elucidate the challenges faced by workers and communities, assess governmental policies’ efficacy, and discern the emergence of support mechanisms independent of state intervention.

The literature consistently highlights a shared reality: the culture and arts sector, along with those engaged in creative labor, have long faced challenging and precarious conditions. As articulated by Menger (1999: 542), the pursuit of flexibility and a temporary employment structure are fundamental characteristics of labor markets in the art industry. Echoing these sentiments, the Artists’ Union England expresses similar concerns: “Across the arts professions, the same issues pop up again and again: low pay, precariat and a lack of social and employment protection” (Staunton, 2020: 2). The advent of the COVID-19 pandemic

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further intensified existing challenges, ushering in unprecedented circumstances that intensified these challenges. Such challenges represent the culmination of multiple crises and failures within the capitalist market economy (Karakioulafi, 2022: 3).

COVID-19 has followed similar patterns in its impact on the cultural and creative sectors. The 2020 Annual Work Program for the Creative Europe Program outlined actions to provide sector-specific support to the theater sector, notably through a comprehensive study. The primary objective of this study was to gather quantitative and qualitative data, provide a comprehensive understanding of the socioeconomic profile and influence of the theater sector across the EU, and highlight its diversity, financing structures, ownership models, and programing methodologies among stakeholders. Furthermore, this study examined the initial impact of COVID-19 on the theater sector and analyzed the support mechanisms available in Creative Europe countries. Drawing upon data collected through extensive desk research, interviews, surveys, and feedback gathered from stakeholders during the validation seminar, the report provided a thorough assessment. Looking ahead, a new report is slated for release in 2022, focusing on the vulnerabilities within the theater sector and suggests potential solutions. Commissioned by the Directorate-General for Education, Youth, Sport, and Culture in July 2022, this forthcoming report highlights the sector's diversity, varied business models, and programing methods used by stakeholders throughout the EU. (European Commission, 2022).

The literature reflects similar impacts worldwide. The pandemic has profoundly affected the performing arts, particularly in terms of internationalization and audience engagement, as highlighted by the EU Cultural Relations Platform (2021) and further substantiated by data from a survey conducted by CINARS<sup>1</sup>. According to the survey, a substantial portion of performance events were either postponed (38%), canceled (40%), or significantly reduced (22%) because of the pandemic. Consequently, nine out of ten artists had to curtail their international travel during the 2020–2021 season, with 60% expecting a return to normalcy no earlier than a year. Furthermore, the pandemic resulted in the closure and suspension of programs in several national theaters. In Argentina, during the COVID-19 pandemic, the public tender for Puntos de Cultura witnessed two significant calls, which marked a historic milestone for the program with an expanded budget. The first call received 1.061 applications from various regions of the country, ultimately awarding funding to 213 organizations. The second call closed on June 19th, and received a total of 1.936 proposals, as cited by the Ministry of Culture. Serafini and Novosel (2021) conducted interviews in which respondents emphasized the swift action undertaken by the National Ministry of Culture, particularly in contrast with the Ministry of Culture of the City of Buenos Aires. A cultural producer currently employed by the Buenos Aires City Government noted that the National Ministry of Culture swiftly implemented clear measures and effective communication, which were crucial in creating a sense of support within the sector. Consequently, the sector began receiving the necessary support expeditiously. Moreover, alongside government measures, there has been a notable contribution from artists and cultural workers in supporting their peers and local communities affected by the crisis. This support has been particularly significant in cases where governmental interventions are either insufficient or nonexistent. The crisis has presented an opportunity to address the issue of informality by developing suitable mechanisms and systems for supporting workers and enhancing the equitable distribution of public funds. Furthermore, the crisis has emphasized the significance of participatory and federal cultural networks, such as Puntos de Cultura, in mobilizing the caring capacities of the culture sector to support one another in times of need (Serafini & Novosel, 2021: 58-9). In Albania, the National Theater, Bosnia, Herzegovina's National Theater of Sarajevo, and North Macedonia's Macedonian National Theater. Moreover, various festivals in China have been canceled or postponed due to the pandemic, such as the Hong Kong Arts Festival, the Macao Arts Festival, the China Shanghai International Arts Festival, and the China Performing Arts Expo (Cultural Relations Platform, 2021: 16). In Indonesia, Sutopo et al. (2022) cite an interview with an independent theater director who, while pursuing her artistic endeavors, humorously remarks on her primary source of income being the clothing business, which has proven more profitable than the arts by providing her with sustenance for several years (Sutopo et al., 2022: 887).

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<sup>1</sup> Cultural Relations Platform is an EU funded project. IETM is the International Network for Contemporary Performing Art, and CINARS (International Exchange for the Performing Arts) is a nonprofit organization founded in 1984 and based in Montreal. (Cultural Relations Platform, 2021)

has emphasized the significance of participatory and federal cultural networks, such as Puntos de Cultura, in mobilizing the caring capacities of the culture sector to support one another in times of need (Serafini & Novosel, 2021: 58-9).

Theater professionals worldwide have experienced various income losses during the COVID-19 pandemic. In Indonesia, many individual workers in the creative sector have jobs with characteristics similar to those in the informal sector, often lacking union representation, job security, and adequate health and safety protections. With the lack of welfare support in the country's tax-transfer system, these workers, including those in the creative sector, may have limited or no access to state-sponsored social safety nets during periods of mobility restrictions. The impact of COVID-19 on young people working in the creative sector extends beyond financial loss, as previous studies have shown that the crisis's effects extend beyond financial difficulties (Sutopo et al., 2022: 879).

In Greece, the initial support measures implemented by the government were found to be unsuitable for the employment practices prevalent in the cultural industry. This led to the formation of artist unions and solidarity groups such as support art workers. Karakioulafi (2022) investigated the effects of the COVID-19 crisis on the job conditions and financial prospects of actors and actresses in Greece, as well as the actions they undertook during this time, based on qualitative research. This study reveals that despite containment and social-distancing regulations imposing limitations, enforced idleness and increased vulnerability prompted communal discussions and collaborative procedures as the actors recognized the precariousness of their work conditions. The president of the Hellenistic Actors Union expressed this sentiment, stating, "The Coronavirus brought so many bad things, but it also brought a good thing: it made us think, to look deep inside ourselves. Many colleagues found things inside themselves that had been troubling them for years but that the rhythm of their work forced them to keep buried. The memoranda did great damage to our sector. We lived for more than 12 years of complete insecurity. Actors were paid 200 euros in terms and conditions that were degrading. We were all forced to make concessions and tolerate a lot" (Karakioulafi, 2022: 19).

The OECD Policy Responses to Coronavirus (2020) presents a similar perspective, with an appendix providing an overview of the responses. The report highlights, "Hopefully, some governments and cities proved better policies that assist cultural and creative sectors. In order to support the survival of venue-based sectors, such as theatres and operas, which had to cancel their performances due to social distancing measures, cities in the United Kingdom, as well as Amsterdam and Helsinki, have suspended contractual performance targets for cultural institutions. However, these cities have continued to provide grants to these institutions." (OECD, 2020: 26).

Australia stands out as an example of a country with effective policies. The Australian government introduced a JobMaker plan worth AUD 250 million aimed at reviving the country's creative economy. This plan includes various initiatives, including seed investment through the Restart Investment to Sustain and Expand Fund, offering AUD 75 million in competitive grant funding to assist event and production businesses in organizing new festivals, concerts, tours, and events as social-distancing restrictions ease. Additionally, the plan includes Show Starter Loans, providing AUD 90 million in concessional loans to creative economy businesses for new productions and events that foster job creation and economic activity. Furthermore, the plan allocates AUD 35 million in direct financial assistance to support significant Commonwealth-funded arts and culture organizations facing threats to their viability due to COVID-19. Several governments have specifically targeted relief efforts toward creative and cultural organizations and workers. For instance, Italy suspended social security payments, welfare contributions, VAT, and other fees for museums, theaters, concert venues, and other cultural organizations (OECD, 2020: 31-33).

The OECD Policy Responses (2020) outlined various structural policies aimed at simplifying administrative procedures and financial measures to support the cultural sector. These measures included public funding, employment support, payments deferral, grants, subsidies for cultural institutions and individual artists, compensation for losses, loan provisions and guarantees, investment incentives, job retention, income support, unemployment benefits, and advanced aid. In addition, many countries have offered postponements and relief of dues to alleviate financial burdens. Governments also provided procedural flexibility to support the training and employment of creative workers. Knowledge mobilization and impact analysis are employed to inform decision-making, while digitalization, innovation, and review of copyright licensing support the use of digital content. Among these measures, Turkey has notably postponed dues in the cultural and creative sector, indicating the severity of the situation.

Due to the COVID-19 outbreak that started in the second half of the 2019–2020 season, many performances were suspended in Turkey (Table 1). Some cinema and theater shows transitioned to virtual platforms, and with pandemic measures in place, theaters remained closed, resulting in a significant decline in audience numbers, seats, and performances. During the 2019–2020 season, one out of every five theater halls (venues) closed, reducing the number of theater halls from 901 to 720 and 400 (from the 2018–2019 season to 2019–2020 and 2020–2021 seasons, respectively). Consequently, the number of theater shows in 2019–2020 decreased by 40% compared to the 2018–2019 season. The number of theater audiences decreased by 43% in the 2019–2020 season by 4,492,293 compared to 7,899,547 in the 2018–2019 season. In the 2020–2021 season, the situation worsened, with a 44% decrease in the number of theater halls and a 42% decrease in the number of theater seats compared with that in the previous season. Accordingly, in the same season, there were 400 theater halls, and the number of theater seats was 156,009.

The audience numbers decreased by 84%, reaching 714,864 attendees. The number of plays performed in theaters dropped by 73% compared with the previous season, with a total of 1,665 plays performed. The number of locally written plays performed in theaters decreased by 74%, while the number of translated (foreign) plays decreased by 67%. In terms of audience attendance, the number of viewers for locally written plays decreased by 84%, and that for translated plays decreased by 85% compared with the previous season. Additionally, the number of theater plays staged decreased by 79%, totaling 4,284 performances. The decline in the number of locally written plays and translated works performed in theaters was 79%, whereas the decrease in the presentation of children's plays within theater halls was 86%. The number of performances of adult plays decreased by 81% in 2020–2021 compared with 2019–2020, while the number of children's play performances decreased by 90%. In the same season, the number of adult play attendees decreased by 81% and the number of children's play attendees decreased by 90%. The number of children's plays performed in theater halls decreased by 84,5%, while the number of adult plays performed decreased by 63% in the 2020–2021 season (Veri Kaynagi, 2023).

**Table 1.** Turkey's theater statistics (2018-2021).

Season	2018–19	2019–20	2020–21
Number of theater halls	901	720	400
Number of theater seats	354,777	267,857	156,009
Number of theater audiences	7,899,547	4,492,293	714,864
Number of shows in theater halls	33,851	20,175	N/A
Number of theater plays staged	9,790	6,236	4,284
Number of original show audiences	5.9 million	3.3 million	500,000
Number of translated show audiences	2 million	1.2 million	200,000
Number of audiences for adult shows	18,598	11,729	2,229
Number of audiences for children's shows	15,237	8,446	845

Source: Compiled from TÜİK Bülten 2021–2022.

The COVID-19 pandemic has undeniably brought about challenges for the theater industry; however, it has also fostered a sense of solidarity within the community. This phenomenon was explored in a recent study, which revealed that theater actors have intensified their efforts to organize and support each other during these challenging times. Specifically, this study focused on the Turkish theater scene, highlighting how instances of solidarity witnessed during the pandemic empowered artists to advocate for their rights and amplify their voices. Detailed accounts of these solidarity initiatives are provided in the subsequent sections.

It is crucial to acknowledge that the tradition of organizing and unionization in Turkey predates the pandemic era, particularly within the entertainment and cultural sectors. While delving into a comprehensive history of labor movements in Turkey would offer valuable context, our paper's focus lies elsewhere. Thus, we provide only a brief overview.

The root of actor and actress union activism in Turkey can be traced back to the early 1960s, gaining significant traction by the mid-1970s with the establishment of various unions within the fields of cinema, theater, and opera. A notable milestone occurred with the "Grand Actors Meeting" on November 29, 2010, attended by approximately 500 industry professionals. This gathering marked the endorsement of a proposed project aimed at establishing the Actors Union of Turkey, driven by personal and independent efforts. Recognizing the need to unify theater professionals under one title. The Theater Cooperative was founded in May 2018 to address the economic challenges encountered by private theaters in Beyoğlu. Over a decade of endeavors, initiatives such as the Alternative Stages Union and Independent Theater Union paved the way for the cooperative's emergence as a suitable organizational framework. Distinct from the Actors' Union, which primarily advocates for actors' interests within production processes, the cooperative focuses on addressing the commercial challenges faced by private theaters functioning as institutions. This differentiation allows actors to engage both as union members and as institutional cooperative partners. The cooperative's objective is to champion the economic and legal concerns of theaters operating as legal entities, emphasizing collaboration with entities such as the Actors' Union. Moreover, various cooperative organizations within the sector address specific needs, with the discussed cooperative striving for comprehensive sectoral cohesion. (Tiyatro, 2019)

After the pandemic began, numerous theater actors and workers attempted to reach out to people confined to their homes by organizing online plays, live broadcasts, and virtual events. In addition, artists and cultural workers extended support to one another through the establishment of solidarity funds. Yiğit (2021) describes several instances of solidarity within the art world, including the following:

- Artists and cultural workers attempted to reach people at home by organizing online exhibitions, hosting live broadcasts, and



organizing virtual events. For instance, many museums have digitized their exhibitions and collections, while artists have performed concerts for audiences in their homes through live broadcasts.

- Solidarity funds were established by artists and cultural workers to aid those who were unemployed or experiencing financial hardships.
- Charitable events were organized by artists and cultural workers to show support for healthcare professionals and other frontline workers fighting the pandemic. Numerous artists organized concerts and other events to assist healthcare workers facing financial challenges due to the pandemic.
- Artists and cultural workers created different organizations and platforms to continue their solidarity after the pandemic. For example, many artists and cultural workers have united to form associations or platforms aimed at fostering solidarity and bolstering support for the art community in the future.

Yiğit's documented socioeconomic solidarity practices include the following:

1. Omuz (Shoulder): Omuz emerged as a solidarity platform tailored to theater workers facing unemployment or financial hardships due to the pandemic. This platform unites theater workers to offer mutual support and extend financial aid to those in need.
2. Artist Support Union: The Artist Support Union is a solidarity platform established to extend financial assistance to cultural and artistic workers in Turkey. Through donations and volunteer efforts, the union addresses the financial needs of artists and cultural workers, fostering a sense of communal support.
3. Theater Cooperative: The Theater Cooperative is a form that brings theater workers together to collaborate and be in solidarity. The cooperative was established to support each other in the production process of theater productions, share financial resources, and collaborate. Due to the serious financial difficulties created by the pandemic period for private theaters and independent theater actors, the Theater Cooperative and the Private Theaters Cooperative Union organized some campaigns to support the industry. Initiatives like the "We Have a Place for You" campaign allowed reservations to support struggling theater actors, with additional support from institutions, such as the donation of viewing cards to medical students (1000 viewing cards). Furthermore, private theaters advocated for industry support through a proposal package submitted to the Ministry of Culture and Tourism. The Actors Union also supported actors and dubbing artists. A report compiled by the IKSŞ highlighted global and domestic support efforts within the culture and art sector (Özarslan, 2021).
4. Orta Hareketi (Middle Movement): The Middle Movement is a platform dedicated to connecting artists involved in theater and performance arts during the pandemic, fostering collaboration and solidarity. This initiative facilitates the exchange of ideas and the establishment of solidarity funds among artists.
5. Cengaver Solidarity Fund: The Cengaver Solidarity Fund was established to help musicians and other cultural and artistic workers experiencing financial difficulties during the pandemic. Through donations, the fund provides crucial financial support to artists, enabling them to sustain their creative productions.
6. Corporate Support: Throughout the pandemic, several companies established funds to provide financial support to workers in the culture and art sector. These corporate funds play an important role in sustaining the culture and art community during challenging times.

## Methodology

The emergence of the COVID-19 outbreak in China at the end of 2019, declared a pandemic by the World Health Organization, caused havoc on both national and global scales. Among the sectors deeply affected, cultural and artistic life had devastating consequences. Recognizing this, a collaborative effort titled "The Effects of the Pandemic on Istanbul Cultural Life" was initiated through a protocol signed between Istanbul University and the Istanbul Provincial Directorate of Culture and Tourism in 2021. The primary objectives of this collaboration were to assess the pandemic's impact on Istanbul's cultural and artistic scene, provide suggestions related to these findings, and share the results with the public through a comprehensive report. The protocol included eight distinct fields: cinema, theater, music, publishing, librarianship, museology, exhibition, and festival-fair. Ethical approval for the research was obtained from the Istanbul University Social Sciences and Humanities Research Ethics Committee on February 21, 2022. This study focuses on the impact of the pandemic on theater workers, with data collection spanning four months from March to June 2022.

The methodology employed in this study is qualitative research, aimed at elucidating social phenomena within their natural context and formation. Unlike quantitative research, which primarily concerns itself with measuring occurrences, qualitative research seeks to understand and interpret the underlying meaning of various phenomena in the social realm. It employs techniques such as description, decoding, and translation to uncover deeper significance (Van Maanen, 1979). Rather than manipulating event variables, qualitative research seeks to uncover the variables themselves, utilizing open-ended questions, interviews, observations, and other methods to collect rich and detailed data. Although the number of participants in this study is limited, the data collected

are extensive and detailed (Ilgar & Ilgar, 2013). Qualitative research involves various methodologies, such as ethnography, phenomenology, content analysis, conversation analysis, discourse analysis, narrative analysis, and grounded theory (Jackson II et al., 2007).

This study employs a constructivist grounded theory approach to examine the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on the organizational behavior of individuals within the theater industry. Grounded theory, a qualitative research methodology, entails the systematic collection and analysis of data to develop new theories. It elucidates the relationship among conceptual categories and illustrates the theoretical frameworks within which they are generated, altered, and sustained. Unlike other qualitative methodologies, grounded theory emphasizes theory building (Merriam, 2009). Constructivist grounded theory, developed by Charmaz as an alternative interpretation of grounded theory, addresses concerns regarding researcher bias (Fassinger, 2005: 164). Charmaz contends that while traditional grounded theory is instrumental in developing new theories, it fails to acknowledge the researcher's integral role in the data generation and analysis process. She argues that researchers are inherently embedded in the environments they study, influencing the theory-generating process through their background, relationships, experiences, and perspectives (Charmaz, 2014: 41). Furthermore, she criticizes Glaser and his adherents for disregarding these preconceptions, which she considers essential for critical examination (Charmaz, 2017).

Constructivist grounded theory emphasizes the collaborative construction of theory between the researcher and participants, recognizing that knowledge is built through social interaction. It acknowledges the role of the researcher's own experiences and perspectives in theory construction. In this approach, the researcher actively engages with participants to cocreate meaning and develop theories grounded in data while reflecting on participants' perspectives (Ramalho et al., 2015). The methodology involves simultaneous data collection and analysis throughout the research process, employing various methods for sampling, data collection, and analysis (Çelik & Ekşi, 2018: 118).

This study utilized in-depth interviews as the primary data collection tool, defined as "a technique of collecting information verbally through conversation on the researched topic" (Baloğlu, 2020: 90). Semistructured interview guide, combining the characteristics of both structured and unstructured interviews (Bal, 2017: 283), was employed to facilitate the interviews. This characteristic of the semistructured interview guide facilitates the acquisition of comprehensive information on the subject while allowing for a more controlled direction of the interview (Coşkun et al., 2015: 95). Although questions are pre-prepared, the flexibility exists to pose additional inquiries as the interview progresses or to eliminate questions deemed ineffective (Bal, 2017: 283). Considering these aspects, a single semi-structured interview guide was designed for the research at hand, with adjustments made as necessary during the interviews to accommodate any sectoral differences that arose.

In qualitative research, data collection typically involves smaller samples that fully represent the research topic, employing non-probability-based sample selection (Shaheen, Pradhan, & Ranajee, 2019). Consequently, this study used non-probabilistic (judgmental) sample selection techniques. However, given the multifaceted nature of the study, which focused on the experiences of theater employees and included multiple objectives, a mixed (hybrid) sampling method was adopted (Gill, 2020). Within this mixed method, both maximum diversity (heterogeneous) sampling and snowball (chain) sampling methods were utilized simultaneously.

In utilizing maximum variation sampling, the objective is to involve diversity relevant to the problem, including similar, variable, and disparate situations (Grix, 2010, as cited in Baltacı, 2018: 249). In this study, given that inquiries were directed at different professional groups within the theater industry, maximum diversity sampling was employed. In addition, a snowball sampling method was adopted to access these professionals. This method involves initiating the process by asking questions such as "Who possesses the most knowledge about this subject? Who should I begin the interview with?" (Baltacı, 2018). By employing both sampling methods, a total of 18 individuals, comprising 9 females and 9 males, were interviewed (Table 2). The participants had an average age of 43 years, with females averaging 42 years and males 43 years. The youngest participant was 32 years old, whereas the oldest was 51. All participants were engaged professionally across various sectors within the theater industry. With the exception of three individuals, all reported working in multiple sectors. Notably, participants 4 and 17 exhibited the highest diversity in this regard. Their professions include roles in directing, playwriting, acting, and academia. Thus, this broad spectrum facilitated a comprehensive evaluation of the theater pandemic's impact on the sector.

A semistructured interview questionnaire was used throughout the research, comprising five sections. In the first section, questions such as "What was the impact of the pandemic on your sector? Can you evaluate it, especially taking into account the pandemic measures of the state?" questions were posed. In the second section, participants were prompted with questions like "What strategies did you or your sector adopt to navigate through the challenges posed by the pandemic?" In the third section, the participants answered the question, "What are the main problems that your sector is currently facing?" where they explained their personal experiences. In the fourth section, participants were prompted with a series of questions aimed at eliciting their insights and perspectives. These questions included: "What are your suggested solutions to address the challenges within your sector? Additionally, What are your thoughts on the pandemic measures? How do you evaluate the viability of operating at 50% capacity? Considering the dynamics of virus transmission, what are your recommendations for managing capacity utilization in cinemas

**Table 2.** Demographic structure of participants

Participants	Sex	Age	Jobs
Participant 1	Female	44	Performance maker and academician
Participant 2	Female	49	Actress, cofounder, and manager of a theater
Participant 3	Male	44	Director
Participant 4	Male	50	theater actor, General artistic director of a theater, academician
Participant 5	Female	40	Theatre artist
Participant 6	Male	35	Writer and manager of a theatertheater academician
Participant 7	Female	35	Actress, owner, and manager of a theater
Participant 8	Male	41	Actor
Participant 9	Male	58	Cofounder and director of a theater
Participant 10	Male	35	Theatre actor and instructor
Participant 11	Male	32	Theatre artist/proletarian
Participant 12	Female	47	Cofounder and manager of a theater
Participant 13	Male	44	Playwright, director of a theater
Participant 14	Female	34	Assistant director of a theater and academician
Participant 15	Male	50	Theatre Actor and Director
Participant 16	Female	38	Cofounder and General artistic director of a theater
Participant 17	Female	51	General artistic director of a theater playwright, director, performer, project manager/President of Theater Cooperative
Participant 18	Female	39	Playwright, cofounder, and performer of a theater

**Source:** Compiled from a study.

and theaters? Can you elaborate on the rationale behind your suggestions?" In the final section, respondents were asked for their opinions in addition to what was not asked in the questionnaire. Each interview, involving 18 participants, lasted approximately an hour.

Interviews were conducted using online platforms due to the ongoing COVID-19 outbreak during the fieldwork phase, necessitating this measure. This approach aligns with existing literature, which recognizes the potential of internet technologies to facilitate real-time qualitative interviews and the recording capabilities they offer researchers (Glesne, 2014: 179). The interviews were recorded and securely stored on the researcher's personal computer, with participants identified using pseudonyms. Data exceeding 300 pages, once transcribed, will be securely destroyed upon the completion of the research.

Subsequently, the transcribed data were analyzed using the MAXQDA Qualitative Data Analysis Program. The use of computer-based programs significantly streamlines data processing, allowing for efficient organization, calculation, and interpretation (Seyidoğlu, 2003:45). To enhance internal reliability, two strategies outlined by LeCompte and Goetz (1982) were applied (Yıldırım & Şimşek, 2004: 83). First, research data were presented directly through a descriptive approach. Second, to bolster the "acceptance" of results by others, multiple individuals were included in the study, aligning with the notion of research diversification for improved validity (Güler et al. 2012: 338). Consequently, two researchers actively participated in all stages of the scientific process.

### **Empirical Results: Psychological And Economic Effects of the Pandemic on Theater Workers**

Observations revealed overwhelmingly negative responses from participants regarding the state of theater workers during the pandemic (Figure 1). Responses included feelings of uncertainty, despair, exhaustion, and a sense of worthlessness, along with economic concerns such as precariousness, vulnerability, and financial and emotional strain.

Participant 13 expressed, "My friends and I were in a state of uncertainty and not being able to see the future," Participant 11 said, "Of course, we all fell into despair," and Participant 20 said, "Of course, the pandemic was very devastating for all of us." Participants preferred words such as "chaos," "darkness," "panic," and "shock," revealingunderscoring the profound and adverse effects of the pandemic on their well-being.

Participant 14 further clarified, "Chaos and panic in everyone," while Participant 4 remarked, "We are in an economic downturn,"

and Participant 12 said, "This period was a period of panic." A critical concern arises regarding whether the coping mechanism against the negative emotional effects induced by the pandemic will be individual or collective. Participants stated that they found solace through the psychological support provided by their peers within the industry. They also highlighted that the issue transcends individual experiences, emphasizing the need for collective solutions. Our study revealed the positive impact of the "ensemble effect" on theater workers, where the pandemic fostered unity and collaborative efforts among them, facilitating mutual support and resilience.



Source: Compiled from research data

Figure 1. Moods of theater workers.

Another significant negative impact of the pandemic on theater workers pertains to economics. Participants voiced grievances regarding financial hardships, job layoffs affecting themselves and their colleagues, career shifts, and difficulties receiving wages owed to them. Participant 18 lamented, "As theater workers, many of us rely on daily wages without additional social security, we go to work each day, earn a daily wage, and sustain ourselves. When live performance came to a halt, thousands lost their primary source of income, leaving us helpless." Conversely, Participant 11 remarked, "The pandemic has affected the performing arts sector due to its inherent reliance on interpersonal interaction. We create and present artistic works directly with people, unlike digital content or cinema. The pandemic, being a disease transmitted through contact, compelled people to stay home, resulting in a complete disruption of our sector."

Furthermore, individual efforts to cope with these economic challenges were noted (Figure 2). Participants stated that they received support from their families, friends, and colleagues within the industry despite the financial strain. However, disparities in the impact of the pandemic were evident across different roles within the sector. Lower-paid employees suffered more pronounced setbacks, whereas those with savings in higher-paid positions navigated the crisis with greater ease. Similarly, participants with skills in multiple areas faced fewer economic repercussions. It becomes evident that the ensemble effect involves both psychological and economic dimensions, as individuals within the sector unite economically to overcome the pandemic with minimal damage.



Source: Compiled from research data.

Figure 2. Theater workers' efforts to create side income.

During the pandemic, theater workers diversified their income streams by engaging in various jobs such as conducting diction and acting classes, waitressing, working as ice cream clerks, and crafting pastries and bags. Participant 10 described teaching online diction classes as a means for sustaining himself and continued his words as follows: "I earned the minimum amount of



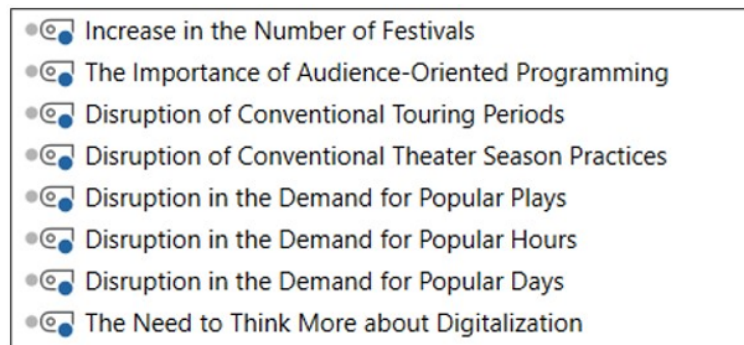
money from online courses that could afford the bread and pasta I bought. I received financial support from my family for apartment rent. When life improved a little bit, and the pandemic ended, I started working as an ice cream clerk in a café in Koşuyolu. This has been a challenging time. I had nothing else to do; I had no alternative.” Participant 18 shared, “When the pandemic began, I started working from home, I started writing, while my husband teaching online classes,” highlighting their family’s efforts to adapt to the new circumstances. Additionally, Participant 19 mentioned crafting bags and painting wood as alternative sources of income. With theater closures, knowledge exchange occurred through mobile phones and the Internet, fostering a sense of solidarity among workers in coping with economic challenges. Although they sought jobs outside the sector, these communication channels underscored that theater workers were not isolated in seeking solutions. The ensemble effect played a crucial role, both psychologically and economically, in alleviating feelings of loneliness.

### Fractures Created by the Pandemic

The pandemic has generated fractures in four different areas as perceived by theater works: (1) breakthrough regarding the disruption of established norms, (2) fracture regarding the problems of theaters (3) fracture regarding the future of theaters, and (4) fracture regarding the need for an organizational reform. Despite the negative impact, these fractures prompted creative ideation regarding future risk management. The ensemble effect emphasized the importance of collective solutions over individual solutions, urging a sociological approach to problem-solving.

### Breakthrough Regarding the Disruption of Established Norms

Theater workers have attested to the disruption of entrenched routines precipitated by the pandemic (Figure 3). Participant 14 noted an unprecedented surge in theater tours during the relaxed summer measures, alongside an increase in the number and duration of theater festivals. Participant 7 underscored the dissolution of the traditional seasonal framework, which typically spans from October to June each year. This participant elucidated the adoption of a new audience-oriented approach, necessitating earlier show times, a departure from previous practices, as curfew measures commenced at 21:00, as per Turkish regulations. Participants 9 and 18 highlighted a newfound contemplation of digitalization prompted by the pandemic-induced circumstances. However, they expressed reservations regarding its compatibility with the intrinsic essence of live theater. They argued that the art form thrives on the immediacy and intimacy of live performance. Despite the disruption, a positive outcome emerged in the form of the sector’s inclination toward flexible structuring for the future. Innovations could be introduced in touring programs, outdoor events, and the scheduling of performances, deviating from established norms. The ensemble effect reveals the potential for mutual learning and collaboration among theaters in navigating these transitions. The cohesion fostered before the pandemic has rendered collective action imperative for all stakeholders amidst the crisis.



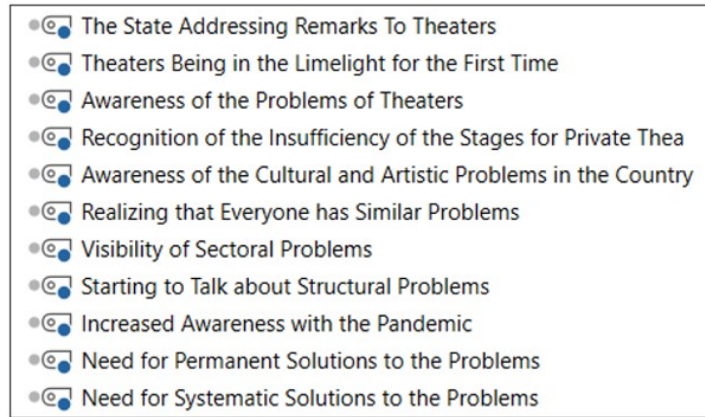
Source: Compiled from research data.

Figure 3. A breakthrough to disrupt established norms.

### Fracture Regarding the Problems of Theaters

Participating theater workers highlighted the myriad challenges faced by theaters during the pandemic, emphasizing the resulting fracture within the industry (see Figure 4). Participant 7 stated that the government started to address the situation in theaters after the pandemic hit, illustrating, “I had a meeting with the Minister of Culture and Tourism for the first time, which was previously not possible as we couldn’t go beyond the deputy secretary level. We need to evaluate this situation.” This warrants careful evaluation.” Participants underscored how the pandemic created an ensemble effect within the sector, prompting efforts to address pre-existing disorganization among theaters and their employees. Here, the necessity of the theaters to unite under one roof in terms of their demands from the government was emphasized, and they stated that the employees started to work harder to seek their rights by

organizing around unions. Participant 11 claimed that the organizing of theater workers, which started just before the pandemic, accelerated with the pandemic and was described as follows: “This has not happened throughout the history of theater in Turkey. Today, the existence of nearly 70 theaters in the *Theater Cooperative*, approximately 70 theater artists in the *Theaters Initiative Association*, hundreds of theaters in the *Long Live Theater Initiative*, and the establishment of regional cooperatives across Turkey are steps that have taken place for the first time.” This development signals a significant shift toward organized advocacy among theater workers to address their grievances. Moreover, participants noted a growing recognition of theater and workers issues by the government, attributing this heightened awareness to the pandemic. This newfound visibility has emphasized discussions on structural problems within the sector, raising hopes for long-term solutions. It is anticipated that these discussions will pave the way for positive steps in resolving systemic issues in the medium and long term.



Source: Compiled from research data.

Figure 4. Fracture regarding the problems of theaters.

### Fracture Regarding the Future of Theaters

Participants in the study highlighted a fracture concerning the future of theaters (see Figure 5), with a significant focus on the recognition of the importance of digital archives. private and state theaters are currently lacking in this regard, emphasizing the urgent need for concrete steps to address this deficiency. Participant 2 reflected on this issue with self-criticism, stating, “We have come to realize the importance of our profession. We have been writing on water. We lacked an archive comprising photos or video recordings of our experiences, testimonies, and productions. We neglected these aspects and lived day to day. Recognizing this, we plan to establish a professional digitalization structure for our theater.” Additionally, Participant 19 highlighted technological inadequacies as another dimension of the digital archive issue, asserting, “We should have been prepared to do anything online. Therefore, we should have had training on digital issues.” The pandemic prompted a critical self-assessment, which led to the realization of shortcomings in this regard. For the ensemble effect to become institutionalized in the sector and foster enduring collaborations, robust archive information is imperative. Creating and sharing similar documents among and sharing similar documents among theaters will enable the sector to draw strength from its historical references, making this a significant milestone.

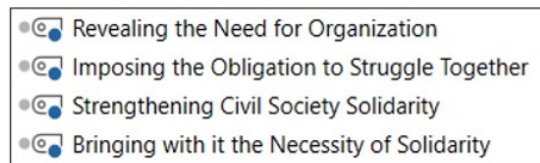


Source: Compiled from research data.

Figure 5. Fracture regarding the future of theaters.

### Fracture toward the Need for Organizational Reform

Participants emphasized that the pandemic revealed the need for organizational reform within the theater sector, noting that pre-existing initiatives gained momentum during this period (see Figure 6). This section epitomizes the essence of the ensemble effect, with participants highlighting intensified efforts toward collective action and organization. They observed that the adversities of the pandemic served as catalysts for theater workers to unite and advocate for change, fostering hope for the future. Participant 14 remarked, "Initiatives such as the *Theater Cooperative* and the *Long Live the Theater Initiative* aimed to unite individuals and amplify their voices, achieving some degree of success." This assessment underscored the importance of the urgency of organizational efforts. Expressing similar ideas, Participant 11 emphasized that the pandemic's most significant contribution to the theater sector was in terms of organizational development. They elaborated, "Rather than engaging in discord, we began to unite and voice our shared grievances. We realized our collective struggles and resolved to march forward together. The pandemic heightened this awareness. Before the pandemic, conflicts marred production processes in various spheres, but after the pandemic, solidarity prevailed. I believe this unity will endure."

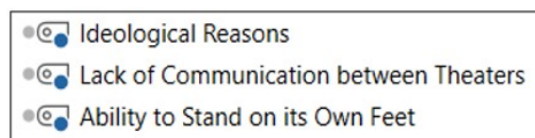


Source: Compiled from research data.

Figure 6. Fracture toward the need for organization.

### Opinions on Solidarity in the Theater Sector

During the research, when questioned about sectoral solidarity during the pandemic, most theater workers offered positive feedback. However, some workers stated ideological differences and communication breakdowns among theaters as obstacles to fostering a spirit of solidarity. They portrayed themselves as individuals capable of self-reliance (see Figure 7). Participant 12 articulated his findings on the subject, stating, "In Turkey, there is a lack of collaboration between the private sector, local governments, and NGOs in the context of theatr. I believe that this stems from certain unique issues in our country. For instance, when a theater receives support from the private sector, it may face pressure from the supporting entity regarding the content of its productions." Participant 14 stated similar sentiments, highlighting the challenge of limited inter-theater communication hindering collective action. Despite these hurdles, there remains a belief that the ensemble effect emerging within the sector will prove beneficial in addressing the pandemic's aftermath in the medium and long term. Participants emphasized the imperative of organization, noting that in extraordinary situations such as pandemics, social bonds are reinforced, solidifying the need for such collective endeavors and paving the way for institutionalization.



Source: Compiled from research data.

Figure 7. Reasons for those who think there is no solidarity in the sector.

Most of the research participants highlighted significant instances of sectoral solidarity among theater workers during the pandemic (Figure 8). In particular, the *Theater Cooperative* and *Actors' Union* were emphasized for their significant roles in fostering solidarity. Participant 15 remarked, "There was a solidarity that spread over some time. During that time, we tried to support each other." These words expressed a pattern of solidarity that spread over the long term. Participant 18 explains this support with a concrete example, stating, "An incredible solidarity started. Whenever someone needed assistance, immediate aid was extended. Groups would offer resources saying, 'We have this; let us give it to you.' (...) For example, one group was upgrading their stage ventilation systems; they gave us their old ventilation systems, free of charge." Participant 11 stated the support of the private sector alongside inter-theater solidarity and emphasized that collective ticket purchases provided theaters with much-needed relief. Participant 1 further expressed similar acts of solidarity among theater workers, where they established an aid chest to provide financial support to those in need. These examples epitomize the embodiment of the ensemble effect. Participants affirmed that although this spirit of solidarity originated during the pandemic, it is poised to endure beyond it.



**Source:** Compiled from research data

**Figure 8.** Reasons for those who think solidarity exists in the sector.

The theater workers who participated in this research were named the Theater Cooperative. It was emphasized that the *Theater Cooperative*, which completed its organization just before the pandemic, played a crucial role as an intermediary between theater workers and state institutions by developing advocacy policies during this period (Figure 9). The Cooperative took proactive steps by organizing open-air plays during the pandemic and encouraged local governments to do the same. This strategic move turned the crisis into an opportunity, allowing them to swiftly address institutionalization deficiencies. Participant 4 highlighted the importance of the cooperative's role, stating, "The organized and responsible behavior of the Theater Cooperative is the main reason many independent and private theaters survived. The pandemic's lining is the active and well-functioning Theater Cooperative we now have." Participant 12 expressed similar sentiments, saying, "Our greatest asset was the Theater Cooperative. Establishing it before the pandemic gave us valuable experience in unity, solidarity, problem-sharing, and gaining recognition from authorities. Achievements that might have taken years happened rapidly. Having a structure representing theaters in dealings with the Ministry of Culture and Tourism or local administrations was unprecedented. Its establishment before the pandemic and our collective progress increased our optimism. It showed us that positive changes are possible. Consequently, the number of theaters joining the Cooperative has gradually increased. I believe such progress was only possible through the Cooperative." Participants emphasized that the Theater Cooperative's effective negotiations with the government required a larger member base, advocating for the entire sector to unite under one umbrella organization. They also noted that increased participation of theaters and employees would amplify the ensemble effect, benefiting the entire industry.



**Source:** Compiled from research data.

**Figure 9.** Case of Theater Cooperative.



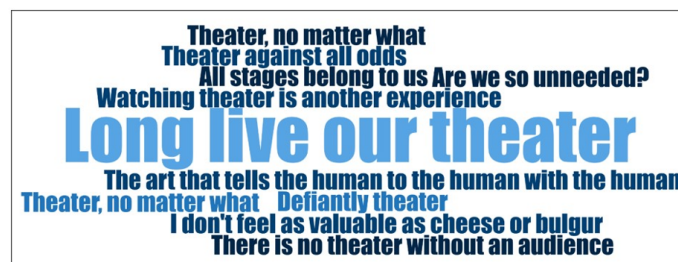
Research participants emphasized the crucial role of organized efforts in the theater sector (Figure 10). Participant 7 compared the theater sector to other cultural sectors and observed, "As theater workers, our level of organization surpasses that of musicians, despite our smaller numbers and lower visibility. Musicians may enjoy greater fame and recognition, but we have excelled in organizing ourselves. While we have faced complete shutdowns, numerous regulations have affected us due to the enclosed nature of our work." Participant 11 expressed pride in the theater workers' organization during the pandemic, stating, "Ironically, the only positive aspect of the pandemic for me was witnessing the strong organization among theater workers." Participant 12 highlighted the impact of organized efforts, particularly through the Theater Cooperative, stating, "Since the establishment of the Theater Cooperative, we have seen notable improvements and increased collaboration. This has infused a sense of hope and progress." Participants noted that the theater sector suffered the most from the pandemic measures and received the least aid. They attributed this disparity to a lack of organization within the sector, highlighting the urgent need for awareness and unity among workers. The Ensemble effect played a crucial role in promoting awareness and mobilizing workers toward collective organization.

- The Importance of Organized Struggle
- The Need for Organization
- The Need for Organization Comes from the Past
- The Accelerating Effect of the Pandemic on Organization
- Creating an Environment/Culture of Debate through Organization
- The Importance of Unionization
- Paving the Way for Public-NGO Cooperation
- Updating Legal Legislation
- The Fighting within the Community Must End
- Increasing Communication Among Theater Workers
- The Need for a Legal Framework for NGOs
- Theaters with Stages Opening their Stages to those without
- Mobilizing Solidarity
- Concerns about Organizing
- The Weakness Created by Organizing

Source: Compiled from research data.

Figure 10. Opinions on organized struggle.

Highlighting the imperative nature of organized efforts among theater workers, Participant 15 emphasized, "Despite our diverse perspectives and personal differences, our shared profession compels us to unite and form a cohesive community." He stressed the importance of setting aside differences to collectively address challenges in an organized manner. Participant 17 noted previous attempts at organization, and remarked, "Organizing has always been a priority for us. Initiatives such as *Interdisciplinary Young Artists* and *Alternative Stages* united different disciplines. We even established the *Contemporary Performing Arts Initiative*, which eventually evolved into an association before dissolving. Organizing has been a constant agenda item and remains essential." Participants agreed that the pandemic accelerated the need for organization. Participant 17 added, "The pandemic underscored the importance of organizing for us. It served as a wake-up call, highlighting the necessity of collective action." Participants expressed their hopes for the future through symbolic phrases (Figure 11). Participants 2 and 7 conveyed their feelings and thoughts as "Long live our theater," Participant 11 as "All stages belong to us," and Participant 16 as "theater against all odds" and "theater, no matter what." These slogans, born out of collective sentiment, reflect the visible impact of the ensemble effect. Despite pandemic challenges, employees stressed the vital need for unity through these slogans, indicating that the ensemble effect, even during adversity, can catalyze sector dynamism in terms of organization and institutionalization.



Source: Compiled from research data.

Figure 11. Slogans developed by theater workers.

### Ensemble Effect And Significance In The Theater Sector During Pandemic

The extreme conditions brought about by the pandemic brought to light the vulnerable and dependent positions of workers, leading to an increased focus on solidarity, worker organizations, and unions. Despite the absence of the term “ensemble” in the literature, it is evident that COVID-19 strengthened the collective movement and solidarity among workers across various industries, including the art and theater sectors. For example, Rosenkrantz (2021) noted an increase in labor organizations during the pandemic, particularly as the political climate shifted in favor of unions. This trend was especially notable in the tech sector, where workers who had previously opposed unions changed their stance during COVID-19.

Conversely, Edelman et al. (2021) highlight how theater freelancers established social networks outside traditional unions, fostering solidarity through informal chats, emotional support, organizing awareness-raising walks, and checking on colleagues’ well-being. These organizations not only served social purposes but also facilitated skill development, professional growth, and adaptiveness, fostering a sense of optimism within the community.

Karakioulafi (2022) conducted a study involving 37 Greek actors and representatives from various communities, revealing that actors, who recognized the precariousness of their working conditions gravitated toward collective action, leading to the emergence of various organizations.

Solidarity and organization play crucial roles in enabling artists to support one another throughout the production process, fostering collaboration, and establishing solidarity funds (Table 3). In theater, an ensemble refers to a cohesive group of actors working together as a team to create a production. Each ensemble member contributes their unique skills and talents to the performance, fostering mutual support and a unified production. The ensemble concept is fundamental and promotes collaboration, mutual support, and collective creativity. Similarly, examples of solidarity and unionization in the theater industry during the COVID-19 pandemic reflect the ensemble concept. Different groups of artists and cultural workers united to support one another and advocate for their rights during challenging times. This ensemble approach facilitated collaboration, mutual support, and collective action, aiding the theater industry in navigating pandemic-induced challenges. Furthermore, the ensemble approach underscores the importance of collective creativity within the theater industry.

**Table 3.** Number of affiliated independent theaters in the last 5 years in Turkey

YEARS	THEATRE COOPERATIVE
2019	32
2020	55
2021	64
2022	70
2023	73

Source: Compiled from Theater Cooperative website 2019–2023

The pandemic has compelled artists and cultural workers to tap into their creativity and devise new strategies for promoting and expanding the impact of art. Through collaborative efforts and the exchange of ideas, the theater industry has developed new approaches and adapted to evolving circumstances. In essence, the examples of solidarity and organization within the theater industry during the COVID-19 pandemic resonate with the ensemble concept in theater terminology. This ensemble-driven approach highlights the importance of collaboration, mutual support, and collective creativity in overcoming the pandemic’s challenges. Building upon these insights, we encountered a concept that we term the “ensemble effect” within the theater sector during the pandemic. Through our research findings, we evaluated how this effect manifested. We observed that this effect, particularly prevalent in the theater sector, brought the need for organizations that started just before the pandemic to its peak. The theaters and their employees, grappling significantly with the pandemic’s impact, collaborated to advocate for their rights and interests. This conceptual breakthrough emerged from in-depth interviews, revealing that extraordinary conditions such as epidemics can create a positive motivational surge within theaters and among their employees.

### Conclusion

The COVID-19 pandemic has profoundly impacted the livelihoods of numerous artists and cultural workers, leading to the cancelation of cultural and art events and creating challenging moments for all stakeholders in the sector, both in Turkey and globally. Various factors have contributed to the challenges faced by the theater industry, including inadequate working conditions for artists, loss or reduction in pay, rising unemployment rates, and difficulties in promoting and expanding the reach of art. Many

theater professionals work as freelancers, resulting in constantly uncertain schedules, a situation that intensified the pandemic. Performers have struggled to obtain benefits that could compensate for their lost income and assist them in making ends meet. Unlike employees with traditional “standard employment,” performers experience irregular employment patterns with numerous short-term contracts, often interrupted by periods of unemployment. This job insecurity can hinder their ability to accumulate sufficient rights to claim social benefits associated with formal employment.

This study examined the impact of the pandemic on theater workers in Istanbul, shedding light on the significant challenges faced by individuals in this industry. Comprehensive data collected from March to June 2022 revealed the profound effects of the COVID-19 outbreak on the theater community, causing significant disruptions in both their professional careers and personal lives. Participants highlighted the distinction between individual and collective responses to the negative impacts of the pandemic, emphasizing the significance of collective support networks. The concept of the ensemble effect emerged as a fundamental phenomenon, highlighting the psychological and economic advantages of cohesion within the theater community. Economic differences were evident among theater workers, with lower-paid employees facing more pronounced challenges than those with financial reserves or diverse skill sets. Despite theater closures, knowledge sharing persisted through mobile and internet communication channels, fostering a loose yet impactful solidarity network. This solidarity transcended beyond the pandemic crisis, stimulating discussions about flexible structural changes and the importance of sector-wide collaboration and organization for long-term sustainability.

The findings reflect several challenges faced by theater workers, ranging from financial insecurity due to canceled performances and venue closures to emotional distress stemming from extended periods of uncertainty and isolation. This study also highlights differences in available support mechanisms across various segments of the theater industry, with freelance artists and small-scale companies bearing the brunt of the economic downturn. Despite these challenges, the resilience and adaptability of theater professionals have been remarkable. Many artists have explored alternative avenues of artistic expression, such as online performances and virtual collaborations, showcasing the industry’s capability for innovation despite adversity. Furthermore, the emergence of solidarity and mutual support networks within the theater community has played an important role in minimizing the pandemic’s impact and fostering a sense of camaraderie during these challenging times.

Looking ahead, it is imperative to recognize the continuous need for support and advocacy for the theater industry. Policies that provide financial aid, access to healthcare, and mental health resources are critical in protecting the well-being of theater workers and guaranteeing the long-term sustainability of the performing arts. Prioritizing initiatives that promote inclusivity and diversity within the theater community is also essential to ensure equal opportunities for individuals from all backgrounds and circumstances. Furthermore, the ensemble effect observed during the epidemic has broader implications beyond the theater sector and could extend to other areas of art under similar extreme conditions. While the pandemic has presented unprecedented challenges for theater workers in Istanbul, it has also highlighted their resilience, creativity, and collective spirit, which are fundamental to the performing arts. By acknowledging the challenges faced by theater workers and implementing targeted interventions to address their needs, we can work toward building a more vibrant, inclusive, and resilient cultural landscape for future generations to cherish and benefit from.

In conclusion, this study underscores the transformative potential of the ensemble effect in mobilizing the theater community toward collective action, organization, and institutionalization. Despite the challenges posed by the pandemic, participants expressed optimism for the future, envisioning a strengthened and more resilient theater sector characterized by solidarity, collaboration, and effective advocacy. The ensemble effect may not only manifest within the realm of theater but also emerge in other artistic domains and during other extraordinary situations such as pandemics or any other crisis. This implies that future studies can explore collective responses and solidarity in varied contexts, presenting opportunities for contribution and advancement within our endeavors and the broader academic community.

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