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The Jordanian translator in the era of COVID-19 pandemic: Challenges and perspectives

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Abstract: COVID-19 is an unprecedented global health and socio-economic crisis, with cascading effects. In a bid to combat the pandemic, Jordan has imposed extreme measures, including border shutdowns, declaring a state of emergency, and a lockdown. These measures have had an adverse impact upon businesses and professions, including translation¹. Translators play a significant role in disseminating health information in times of crisis. This paper reports the results of a large-scale survey of translators' perspectives in the Jordanian context on the pandemic and its effects on their role and profession during the time of COVID-19 restrictions. A quantitative five-scale Likert questionnaire was completed by 106 in-house and freelance professional translators. The results showed that COVID-19 has had adverse effects on translators in the Jordanian context. Translators faced several challenges during the pandemic, including career change or loss, lower income, increased workload and time pressure, high-level job demands, unclear job prospects, and anxiety about their future. The results also highlighted that language service providers (LSPs) as well as translators need to play a more active role during times of crisis. The findings of this study suggest that further research is necessary to investigate the effect of COVID-19 and similar pandemics on translators' experiences of occupational stress and job satisfaction in Jordan.

Keywords: Translation profession; translator's role; COVID-19; crisis translation; Jordan

1. Introduction

Crisis Translation is an emerging area of research in Translation Studies (TS) combining translation and interpreting (T&I), disaster risk reduction, and risk and crisis communication (Federici and O'Brien, 2019). The study of translation for emergencies and crises has recently emerged as a research area,

¹ The word 'translation' is used here as an umbrella term to cover both written translation and interpreting.

and it still requires further attention (Federici, 2016; Cadwell and O'Brien, 2016). The call for investigating crisis translation comes at a time when many computerised models to manage and respond to disasters and emergencies ignore or downplay the role that languages and cultures can play in crisis management (Federici, 2016, p. 5). Crisis situations are disruptive events with 'cascading effects' that extend for long periods of time. Their effects are felt at the immediate and surrounding communities, socially, economically and psychologically (Federici and O'Brien, 2019). During crises, dissemination of timely and accurate information is paramount for responding, mitigating, and helping the affected individuals and communities (Federici et al., 2019). Crisis Translation Studies (CTS) has primarily focused on translating and interpreting in times of conflict and war (Inghilleri, 2009; Baker, 2010; Inghilleri and Harding, 2010), translation and interpreting services during natural disasters (Cadwell, 2014; 2016), translation training needs in crisis situations (Cadwell and O'Brien, 2016; Al-Shehari, 2019), and national approaches to language and translation (Federici et al., 2019; O'Brien et al., 2019). Despite the growing interest, further research is still needed to investigate the role of language and translation in crisis situations and their cascading effects (Federici et al., 2019).

The novel Coronavirus constitutes a global crisis situation. By the end of September 2021, infection cases stood at almost 233 million, and the death toll passed 4,750,000 (World Health Organization (WHO), 2021). In their bid to combat the spread of the disease, countries took severe measures, such as lockdowns and movement restrictions. These measures have had cascading effects and have disrupted the lives and livelihood of millions, including translators and interpreters. The Translation Automation User Society (TAUS) predicted that 2020 would be a difficult year for the translation profession, translators and LSPs, largely due to COVID-19 (2020). Recent warnings by the WHO state that there is little chance of returning to normal life "in the foreseeable future" (2020). In light of this, it is worth exploring how this pandemic has affected translators. Drugan (2013, p. 3) asserted that translators constitute "the bedrock of the industry" and are also invaluable in disseminating information in crisis situations. Moreover, studies focused on translators as professionals represent a well-established research area in TS (Viaggio, 1992).

The current research investigates the Jordanian translators' views of the effect of the COVID-19 pandemic on the translation profession. Jordan, like many countries, has taken tough measures to fight the virus spread. In March 2020, the country declared a state of emergency, and imposed a complete lockdown for almost two months, including business shutdowns, border closures, and schools and universities moving to online learning. According to a 2020 joint survey conducted by the International Labour Organization (ILO) and the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), the COVID-19 pandemic and its accompanying lockdown have had a significant impact on industries and "micro and home-based business" in Jordan (Kebede et al., 2020, p. ii). ILO's survey is not representative of all industries in Jordan and the translation and language industries are markedly absent. To the best of the researchers' knowledge, there is no information on how translators and LSPs have dealt with the pandemic, or how it has affected their lives and livelihoods. This study contributes to detailing operating conditions among translation professionals in crisis situations and furthers our understanding of an under-researched group of professionals in the Jordanian context.

2. Literature review

2.1. Previous studies

Emphasis on the role of translation in crisis situations has risen steadily in the past few years. Cadwell (2014) conducted a small-case study of 28 foreign nationals using semi-structured interviews following the 2011 Japan earthquake. Three main themes were elicited from the data. The first theme indicated that various translation and interpreting needs existed, particularly when gathering information on the disaster as opposed to communicating with others, highlighting the importance of having translated information at hand. The second revealed the voluntary and human nature of mediation with limited mention of translation technologies, and the neglect of translation and interpretation in disaster preparation. The final theme showed loss of some mediation efforts where different media outlets were concerned (radio, internet and social media). The study provided valuable insight into the need for translation, language and cultural preparation in disaster planning.

O'Brien and Cadwell (2017) highlighted the importance of translation during the Ebola health-crisis in Kenya in 2014 by testing comprehension levels among 200 rural and urban Kenyans using English and Kiswahili texts. The study showed that translation to Kiswahili was much more effective than English in conveying health-related information. Respondents preferred to receive spoken information rather than written content, contradicting results in Cadwell (2011), and implying that communication modes might be affected by cultural differences in crisis situations. Alexander and Pescaroli (2019) highlighted the function of language and translation in cascading crisis situations, including working in multilingual populations, with migrants, and cases of humanitarian deployment. They also warned against neglecting the role of translation in crisis situations, which may “contribute to escalation of secondary emergencies” (p. 19).

Al-Shehari (2019) investigated training needs and challenges in the crisis situation in Yemen, which was deprived of professional translators due to war. He interviewed 12 volunteer translators and interpreters (T&Is). The results highlighted the T&Is' activist role in drawing attention to the Yemeni crisis and the need for proper training which was shown to be lacking in translation in general, and crisis translation in particular. The study also pinpointed the importance of understanding the cultural conventions within which translators work. It recommended exploring the policies that underpin any training carried out by international organisations and its potential usefulness for translators and interpreters. While the study focused mainly on T&Is' views, further research into international organisations' practices and tendencies is needed.

The above studies, no doubt, contribute to our understanding of the emerging field of crisis translation. The current study contributes to this debate by investigating how COVID-19 might affect the work and life of translators in Jordan. It explores Jordanian translators' views of their profession, role, engagement with LSPs and direct clients as well as their views on LSP roles in such crises. The next section provides a brief background on the little research conducted on the translation profession in Jordan. It also highlights some challenges in carrying out this type of research in the Jordanian context and its future needs.

2.2 The translation profession in Jordan

Jordan's central location in the Middle East, a conflict hot zone, and the country's stability have made it home for a large body of Non-Governmental

Organizations (NGOs) and a hub for media outlets requiring constant translation services (Khoury, 2017). As a result of the continuing socio-political conflict in the region, Jordan hosts large numbers of refugees, mostly from neighbouring countries. According to the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) records, Jordan is home to 750,000 refugees including 659,000 Syrians, 67,000 Iraqis, 15,000 Yemenis, 6,000 Sudanese, and 2,500 refugees from a total of 52 other nationalities (UNHCR, 2020). Unofficial records estimate higher numbers. Catering for the needs of the media, NGOs, refugees, and the Jordanian public drives great demand for translated content, mainly to-and-from English. Despite this demand, translation as a profession and the translator's role in the Jordanian society remains largely unexplored.

In response to the growing interest in the translation profession, Jordan saw the introduction of the first local translator-related association in 1993, namely, The Jordanian Translators' Associations (JTA). This was followed by the establishment of the Association of Professors of English and Translation at Arab Universities (APETAU) in 1997 and the Jordanian Association of Translators and Applied Linguists (JATAL) in 2007. Despite the existence of these translator-related associations, little is known about translator numbers, specialisation, remuneration, and work mode. Unlike their counterparts in the European translation market, who view joining a professional translation body as important for their careers (FIT, 2020), Jordanian translators are reluctant to join the aforementioned associations². Additionally, LSPs business register at the Ministry of Trade and Finance is not regularly updated, and translation is grouped with other services, such as publishing and media (Mahadin, 2018).

The lack of regulation and fragmentation has hindered proper investigation of the translation profession in Jordan. Much of the previous research on translation in the Jordanian context has tended to be impressionistic in nature and lacking sufficient empirical evidence (Abulhaija, 1992; Shunnaq, 1998; Yousef, 2004). According to Olimat (2010), translation remains a largely uncelebrated profession, and translators' contribution to the Jordanian culture is often invisible. He found that the majority of Jordanian translators did not specialise in a specific field. Other studies that investigated the situation and challenges of the translation profession on the ground and relevant associations in Jordan underscored the role of socio-cultural and political changes in the Middle East as propellers of the translation movement in Jordan (Ayyoub, 2011; Al-Hamad, 2014).

Reflecting on his experiences as the president of the Jordanian Translators' Association, Shunnaq (2016) highlighted the stark reality of the profession and the failure of promoting translation as a respected career in the public and private sectors. Due to the lack of official records of professional translators and interpreters, he warned against translation practices by random individuals and commercial offices with poor language competence. Furthermore, he maintained the need for regulation of all aspects of the profession, such as certification and contractual status.

More recently, studies focusing on the relevance of training to the profession found that university graduates are not ready to operate in the market

² In a phone conversation with Prof. Suleiman Abbas, head of JATAL, he indicated that numbers are low and fluctuate annually. The current number stands at 35, but this is not limited to translators, and no distinction is made between translators and applied linguists upon joining. Once translators realize the association cannot help with job prospects, they do not renew their subscription (S. Abbas, personal communication, 25 July, 2020).

as a result of the mismatch between training and market requirements (Khoury, 2017; Mahadin, 2018). Based on PACTE's 2003 competence model, Khoury (2017) recommended amendments to translation programmes and curriculum design to better equip university students with the necessary competences. Similarly, Mahadin's (2018) qualitative investigation of market needs and training provision and compatibility in public and private universities highlighted the stark reality of the translation profession, challenges associated with access to the profession, and the effect of lack of regulation and standardization.

3. Method

3.1 Instrument

This research investigates the perspectives of Jordanian translators on the current status of the translation profession in Jordan in the era of COVID-19. A questionnaire was used as research instrument due to the advantages it offers: close-ended statements which consist of a set of clearly defined answers simplify the survey process for respondents and are easily coded and analysed (Hyman and Sierra, 2016). The questionnaire consisted of seven sections. The first section included an information sheet, research aims, and significance as well as the consent form. The respondents were encouraged to discuss their participation with others and to ask the researchers for further information. They were informed that participation was voluntary, that participation would be anonymous and confidential, and that only anonymised data would be published in academic journals. All the collected data was password-protected and only the researchers had access to it.

The questionnaire was formulated in English, and prior to its distribution to professional translators, a panel of translation experts and two UK university professors (from the University of Edinburgh and Liverpool John Moores University) reviewed the questionnaire's content, language, and design. Minor amendments were suggested, including moving statements from one section to another and deleting a statement on sign language interpretation, which was deemed irrelevant. Furthermore, some grammatical, stylistic, spelling, and punctuation corrections were suggested. The final version of the questionnaire was revised based on their feedback.

The questionnaire received ethical approval from the Scientific Research Deanship at Al-Balqa Applied University. Due to the COVID-19 restrictions and the difficulty of accessing Jordanian translators on the ground, a link to the questionnaire hosted on Google Forms was circulated to their emails via a professional network (LinkedIn). Although a face-to-face questionnaire may provide more sincere and genuine responses (Hewson et al., 2003), the internet-administered questionnaire has allowed the researchers to reach a relatively large pool of respondents in the Jordanian context, which would not have been possible otherwise. A total of 106 translators completed the questionnaire, which went live on 20 July, 2020, and was closed on 10 August, 2020.

The second section gathered demographic information on the respondents' gender, qualifications, experience, field of work, and employment status. The following four sections included a number of close-ended statements dealing with different topics to achieve the main objective of the study, i.e. investigating the COVID-19 impact on Jordanian translators. These topics covered the COVID-19 pandemic and the translator's role, the COVID-19 lockdown and the translation profession, the COVID-19 pandemic and translators'

engagement with LSPs and direct clients, and the COVID-19 pandemic and LSP's responsibilities. The respondents were requested to express their agreement or disagreement with each statement based on a five-point Likert scale. The final section included an open-ended question to give the respondents an opportunity to provide relevant comments and suggestions.

3.2 Data analysis

The participants' responses to the close-ended statements in sections 3 to 6 were collected based on a five-point Likert scale. Hence, they were analysed using descriptive statistics, whereby the basic features of a data set are described and outlined (O'Leary, 2014). Quantitative findings were tallied and reported as percentages and numbers. In the open-ended question section, a qualitative thematic analysis was carried out and the emerging themes were discussed in a separate section.

4. Findings

4.1 Demographic information

The second section of the questionnaire collected demographic information of the respondents. Data analysis shows that about three quarter of the participants (75.5%; n=80) are female, and the rest (24.5%; n=26) are male. The female representation in the Jordanian market is in line with Pym et al. (2012) and FIT (2020) studies, which estimated that more than two-thirds of professional translators worldwide are female. The respondents were categorized into three groups according to their translation experience. Nearly half of the respondents (47.2%; n=50) had been working as translators for less than five years, whereas the translation experience of around one third of the respondents (32.2%; n=32) ranged from 5 years to 15 years. Finally, less than one quarter of the respondents (22.6%; n=24) indicated they had been working as translators for more than 15 years. Regarding a question on their highest level of education, responses were evenly distributed. Half of the respondents (50%; n=53) completed an undergraduate university degree, while the second half (50%; n=53) held a Master's or a PhD degree. In response to a question on their field of work, the majority of the respondents indicated that they had been working in multiple translation fields (political, legal, media and journalism, economic and business administration, medical, literary, educational, military and security forces training, public relations and consultations, financial, e-commerce and marketing, refugee contexts, information technology, occupational health and safety, and entertainment). This distribution is in line with Olimat's (2010) and Mahadin's (2018) findings. In terms of their employment status, more than half of the respondents (52.8%; n=56) indicated that they worked as freelancers along with their full-time jobs, such as teaching, while 46 respondents (43.4%) were full-time translators. The remaining four respondents (3.8%) had been working as full-time translators in translation agencies and were also operating as independent part-time translators with direct clients.

4.2 The translator's role

This survey section allocated four close-ended statements dealing with the translators' role in the global response against the COVID-19 pandemic. It evaluated the translators' role in translating COVID-19 information for official authorities, producing COVID-19 related translations for international

institutions, providing consistent and felicitous translations of COVID-19 information for target readers, and offering vital help in translating COVID-19 materials on a voluntary basis.

More than three quarters of the respondents showed agreement with the translator's significant role in the global response against the COVID-19 pandemic through translating relevant materials for official committees and governmental bodies. Only 10 respondents showed disagreement while 16 respondents provided a neutral response. Additionally, more than 80% of the respondents showed agreement with the second statement on the translators' role in translating COVID-19 information for international organizations as a part of the global response against the pandemic. Roughly 10% of the respondents expressed a neutral response. Only 9.4% showed disagreement.

Table 1: Respondents' views on the translator's role during the COVID-19 Pandemic.

COVID-19 Pandemic and the Translator's Role					
Statement	Strongly agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly disagree
As a translator, I play a significant role in the global response against the COVID-19 pandemic by producing relevant translated information to official governmental bodies.	49 46.2%	31 29.2%	16 15.1%	7 6.6%	3 2.8%
As a translator, I play a significant role in the global response against the COVID-19 pandemic by producing relevant translated information to global and international organizations.	49 46.2%	36 34%	11 10.4%	7 6.6%	3 2.8%
As a translator, I produce reliable, accurate, and timely COVID-19-related translations to target readers.	52 49.1%	34 32.1%	12 11.3%	6 5.7%	2 1.9%
As a translator, I offer voluntary COVID-19 translation services to keep individuals and communities updated.	22 20.8%	31 29.2%	28 26.4%	19 17.9%	6 5.7%

In the third statement, about half of the respondents expressed strong agreement with the significance of producing reliable COVID-19 translations to the target audience. Also, nearly a third of the respondents expressed mild agreement with this statement. These findings indicate that the majority of the respondents realized translators' pivotal role in providing an appropriate translation of COVID-19 information for the general public. Only 7.6% of the respondents showed disagreement, while 11.3% were neutral. Finally, 50% of the total number of the respondents stated that they offered voluntary translation services to keep individuals and communities updated about COVID-19. Nonetheless, 23.6% of the respondents showed disagreement. Approximately a quarter of the respondents provided a neutral response to this statement. The following section investigated the translators' views on the profession in light of COVID-19.

4.3 The translation profession

The second section of the questionnaire, by far the longest, with 9 close-ended statements, surveyed a large number of issues facing professionals in the translation industry during the pandemic, such as job loss, income decrease, work volume decrease, tight deadlines and short-notice translation, working from home, increasing work demands, and continuing professional development (CPD).

The analysis shows that about 60% of the respondents expressed agreement with the statement that the profession was affected by lockdown restrictions. Nearly a quarter of the respondents showed disagreement and 8.5% expressed strong disagreement. Less than 10% of the respondents were neutral. It seems that the translation profession in Jordan was negatively affected by the pandemic and its local lockdown restrictions. Regarding the second statement, 17% of the respondents reported that they lost either individual commissions or had their translation employment contract terminated due to lockdown restrictions. However, 17% of the respondents were undecided, which may suggest that they were unsure about their future translation careers in the era of COVID-19, and they might be anxious about their professional security. These are alarming figures, especially since this research was conducted during the first six months of the COVID-19 pandemic. These figures could possibly increase in the future with the epidemiological situation of the pandemic worldwide.

Around 60% of the respondents expressed agreement that they witnessed a decrease in their translation income during the period of COVID-19. In addition, about 10% of the respondents were unsure whether they witnessed a decrease in their translation income. Less than one third of the respondents expressed disagreement regarding this statement. Similarly, two-thirds of the respondents showed agreement that there was a decrease in translation work volume and work hours due to COVID-19 lockdown. By contrast, less than one quarter of the respondents showed disagreement, and less than 10% of the respondents provided a neutral response.

More than half of the respondents expressed agreement that there was an increase in short-notice translation work because of COVID-19. Tight translation deadlines imposed by LSPs may be attributed to the need for translating specific text types, i.e. medical texts for crisis communication to the public. Less than 20% of the respondents expressed disagreement, whereas 26.4% of the respondents provided a neutral response. More than 40% of the respondents agreed that they faced difficulties in translating texts at home

because of the presence of family members. By contrast, less than 40% expressed disagreement. Less than 20% of the respondents were unsure whether their translation work was affected by the presence of relatives. It can be concluded that although more than half of the respondents (52.8%; n=56) had been working as freelancers, most freelancer respondents' work was affected by the presence of family members, probably mainly children.

Table 2: Respondents' views on the COVID-19 pandemic and the translation profession

COVID-19 Pandemic and the Translation Profession					
Statement	Strongly agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly disagree
I faced different challenges in my profession due to the lockdown restrictions.	28 26.4%	33 31.1%	10 9.4%	26 24.5%	9 8.5%
I lost my translation job as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic.	6 5.7%	12 11.3%	18 17%	43 40.6%	27 25.5%
I witnessed a decrease in my translation income during the COVID-19 lockdown.	25 23.6%	37 34.9%	10 9.4%	23 21.7%	11 10.4%
I witnessed a decrease in translation work volume and work hours as a result of the COVID-19 lockdown.	22 20.8%	48 45.3%	10 9.4%	15 14.2%	11 10.4%
I witnessed an increase in short-notice translation work as a result of the COVID-19 lockdown.	19 17.9%	39 36.8%	28 26.4%	17 16%	3 2.8%
I found it harder to translate at home due to the family presence during the COVID-19 lockdown.	13 12.35%	31 29.2%	20 18.9%	37 34.9%	5 4.7%
I found it difficult to meet deadlines during the COVID-19 lockdown.	8 7.5%	14 13.2%	20 18.9%	36 34%	4 3.8%
I received increased translation work demand from direct clients or language service providers (LSPs) due to demand for COVID-19 related information.	10 9.4%	23 21.7%	33 31.1%	36 34%	4 3.8%
I used my time during COVID-19 lockdown to do online Continuing Professional Development (CPD).	12 11.3%	44 41.5%	25 23.6%	20 18.9%	5 4.7%

The majority of the respondents indicated that there was no difficulty in meeting deadlines as a result of short notice during the COVID-19 lockdown. However, more than 20% of the respondents showed agreement with the difficulty of finishing translation work on time, and less than 20% of the respondents were neutral. The data analysis shows that 33 respondents received increased translation work demand from direct clients and/or LSPs due to the growing interest in COVID-19 information. By contrast, 40 respondents did not receive increased translation work either from direct clients or LSPs. This finding might lend support to the second statement on translation job loss. Finally, 33 participants provided a neutral response.

The final statement indicates that more than half of the respondents used their free time during the COVID-19 lockdown to undertake online CPD. This finding supports previous research on translators' commitment to enhancing their skills (European Commission Representation in the UK et al., 2017) during crisis situations. Those respondents are aware of the role CPD can play in developing their translation skills and practices. Only 25 respondents showed disagreement, and similarly 25 respondents were neutral. The following section examines how the pandemic affected the translator's engagement with LSPs and direct clients.

4.4 Engagement with LSPs and direct clients

This section evaluated the effect of COVID-19 on the translators' engagement with LSPs and direct clients. It dealt with the impact of COVID-19 on daily interactions with LSPs and direct clients, introducing new modes of interaction, and an increased volume of online work.

Table 3: The respondents' views on the COVID-19 pandemic and translators' engagement with LSPs and direct clients.

COVID-19 Pandemic and Translators' Engagement with Language Service Providers (LSPs) and Direct Clients					
Statement	Strongly agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly disagree
COVID-19 pandemic negatively affected my daily interactions with LSPs and direct clients.	9 8.5%	43 40.6%	33 31.1%	16 15.1%	5 4.7%
COVID-19 introduced new ways of engaging with LSPs and direct clients, such as using virtual meetings.	26 24.5%	48 45.3%	27 25.5%	3 2.8%	2 1.9%
COVID-19 increased my online-work volume with LSPs and direct clients.	17 16%	41 38.7%	28 26.4%	18 17%	2 1.9%

Almost half of the respondents showed agreement with the negative effect of COVID-19 on translators' daily interactions with LSPs and direct clients. This finding supports leading industry stakeholders GALA (2020) projections on the challenges associated with COVID-19. Less than 20% of the respondents showed disagreement, while 31.1 % were neutral. Nearly 70% of the respondents showed agreement on using new ways of interacting with LSPs and clients. In relation to this, a number of respondents indicated that they had switched to a virtual environment with online meetings, and virtual interpretation sessions when responding to the final open-ended question (cf. 4.6). However, about a quarter of the respondents were undecided and less than 5% showed disagreement.

Over half of the respondents expressed agreement with the statement that there was an increase in the volume of online translation work during COVID-19. Only 18.9% of the respondents disagreed, whereas 26.4% were neutral. In addition to exploring translators' views on their engagement with LSPs and direct clients, and as translators work within networks of LSPs, project managers, and language vendors, the final close-ended section explored translators' views on LSP responsibilities during COVID-19.

4.5 COVID-19 and LSP responsibilities

Table 4: Respondents' views on the COVID-19 pandemic and LSP responsibilities

COVID-19 Pandemic and LSP Responsibilities					
Statement	Strongly agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly disagree
I think that LSPs should provide voluntary translation of COVID-19 related texts into as many languages as possible to support communities and individuals as a part of the global role at fighting COVID-19 pandemic.	26 24.5%	50 47.2%	25 23.6%	4 3.8%	1 0.9%
I think that LSPs should provide accurate translations of COVID-19 related texts for minorities and refugee communities in their own languages.	53 50%	43 40.6%	8 7.5%	2 1.9%	0 0.0%
I think that LSPs should work together with governments, aid agencies, and health workers to provide information on the COVID-19 pandemic.	50 47.2%	45 42.5%	7 6.6%	3 2.8%	1 0.9%
I think that LSPs should provide online training workshops for their translators (e.g. using new technologies).	47 44.3%	49 46.2%	7 6.6%	3 2.8%	0 0.0%

The final close-ended section investigated translators' views on LSP responsibilities during COVID 19. On whether LSPs should provide voluntary translation in different languages, 71.7% of the respondents showed agreement, 23.6% were neutral, and only 4.7% showed disagreement. The high level of agreement suggests that translators believe LSPs should play an important role in the fight against Covid-19 and supports previous studies highlighting the importance of translation in times of crisis (Federici, 2016; O'Brien et al., 2018). Additionally, there was high agreement on the need to provide minorities and refugee communities with translation. More than 90% of the respondents showed agreement, 7.5% were neutral, and only 1.9% expressed disagreement. The high-level agreement among the respondents reflects translators' views of the refugee reality on the ground in Jordan.

Nearly 90% of the respondents showed agreement with the role of LSPs in collaborating with local agencies and other international partners in exchanging Covid-19 information. Only 3.7% of the respondents showed disagreement, and 6.6% were neutral. These results lend support to the argument that translation can play a significant role during the planning and managing phases of crisis situations (Alexander and Pescaroli, 2019). The final statement investigates the LSPs' responsibility in providing employees with advanced training using online technologies. Over 90% of the respondents expressed agreement, 6.6% were neutral, and only 2.8% showed disagreement. These results demonstrate that there is a strong desire among Jordanian translators to improve their occupational skills. Providing training to translators can also help LSPs in the language industry on the long run as future projections show technology taking a bigger part in the industry post COVID-19 (TAUS, 2020).

4.6. Further comments by respondents

The final open-ended section asked the respondents to discuss any other relevant issues. 21 comments were provided and were coded and thematically analysed. The comments were classified into two themes. The first highlighted the financial impact and ramifications of COVID-19. It focused on the effect of the COVID-19 lockdown on pay, particularly in the case of freelancers as expressed by a respondent: "...many clients started to bargain more and negotiate lower prices for their documents, taking advantage of the fact that many translation offices increased their translation fees in an attempt to compensate for their losses during COVID-19 outbreak". Similarly, some respondents reported that COVID-19 translation was monopolised by certain LSPs limiting their access to work. Other respondents reported that there was an obvious decrease in demand for translation of other types of texts, such as literary texts. The financial effects of COVID-19 and its ramifications were also reported by The Globalization and Localization Association (GALA) where Middle Eastern countries witnessed a 50-60% decrease in products and services. To mitigate these effects, 46% of GALA respondents froze hiring, while 36% froze pay rises (GALA, 2020). Although some respondents did not report frozen pay rises, they did indicate that LSPs were pushing prices up to mitigate the losses incurred during COVID-19. Translators' pay, however, remained the same. Similarly, some respondents explained that direct clients were emboldened by the pandemic to pay translators less, negatively impacting their financial situation. These issues were particularly pertinent to freelance translators who felt unprotected due to the lack of regulation and certification in the Jordanian translation market (Mahadin, 2018).

The second theme was related to translators' sense of job security, where they struggled with anxieties and issues of mental well-being that impacted on

their lives and slowed down their ability to work. One respondent explained: “the extreme stress that I or anyone of my family could get sick, in addition to the financial ambiguity, had a great effect on the translation process and slowed it down, and made it even much difficult to focus”. Several studies had consistently highlighted the negative impact of future uncertainty, remuneration issues, and emotional fatigue on translators in normal situations (Hubscher-Davidson, 2017; 2020; Courtney and Phelan, 2019). The findings of this study show that crisis situations amplify such anxieties. Further investigation may yield a better understanding of how crisis situations affect translators’ job security.

5. Discussion

The study used a quantitative survey to examine Jordanian translators’ views on the effect of COVID-19 on their role, profession, engagement with direct clients and LSPs, and LSPs’ responsibilities in crisis times. The questionnaire was distributed to Jordanian translators’ emails via a professional network (LinkedIn) and 106 filled it in.

The majority of participants agreed that translators play a significant role in the global response against the COVID-19 pandemic in different ways. Translators can contribute to fighting the pandemic when translating COVID-19 information published by authorities, governmental agencies, and international institutions, such as the UN, UNESCO, WHO, and others. The lack of adequate translations of COVID-19 information into diverse languages may amplify the effect of the pandemic on individuals and communities. According to Alexander and Pescaroli (2019: 19), “translation could be critical to the management of cross-border crises”, such as COVID-19.

Most of the respondents highlighted the translator’s role in producing reliable and correct translations of COVID-19 information in official languages to target readers worldwide. Lindell et al. (2007) argued that timely and efficient conveyance of information is an essential part of mitigation, preparedness, and response to global crises. Similarly, O’Brien et al. (2018) asserted that it is necessary to increase access to information by individuals from different cultures who speak different languages. Therefore, there is a pressing need to ensure that emergency COVID-19 information and messages are understood by people around the world in their own languages. COVID-19 information, which should be translated and disseminated globally, includes, but is not limited to, symptoms and diagnosis, infection resources and transmission, prevention and precautionary measures, treatment protocols, travel restrictions, physical (social) distancing and quarantine, lockdown restrictions and other essential issues. This will enable individuals and groups to improve their knowledge and awareness of the seriousness of the COVID-19 disease. Many respondents reported that the translator’s responsibility may extend to offering voluntary translation services in emergency times and crises to keep individuals and communities updated. In critical situations, language is the main means of communication and mediation among people; hence, participants believed that translators should produce accurate translations of COVID-19 information on a voluntary basis. It is also necessary that COVID-19 relevant homepages and websites include updated information with fully searchable keywords in relevant languages at least.

The survey findings suggest that Jordanian translators encountered several challenges in their translation profession as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic.

These challenges may make Jordanian translators experience a high level of occupational stress. For example, 18 respondents indicated loss of freelance translation assignments or employment contract termination because of COVID-19 lockdown restrictions. Additionally, another 18 respondents were uncertain about the future. This is a disturbing sign of the serious effect of the pandemic on the translation profession in Jordan. Another result is that about 60% of the total number of the respondents demonstrated that there was a noticeable decrease in their translation income because of COVID-19 restrictions. This result supports FIT Europe survey's findings on similar COVID-19 related problems in the translation profession, including lack of work and slow business (FIT, 2020). It is well known that job security and work income are important factors of occupational satisfaction for any profession. Ruokonen and Mäkisalo (2018) found that changes in translation careers may result in negative and disturbing stress as well as a lower perception of professional status. It is evident that the COVID-19 pandemic negatively affected the Jordanian translator's job security and satisfaction.

The data analysis demonstrates that two-thirds of the respondents witnessed a marked decrease in translation work volume and work hours due to the COVID-19 lockdown. Rodriguez-Castro (2015) and Lee (2017) argued that the level of job satisfaction may vary according to the amount of workload. It can be concluded that occupational satisfaction can be gained if translators have suitable and average working hours. More than half of the respondents witnessed a marked increase in short-notice translations during the pandemic. Rodriguez-Castro (2015) introduced tight deadlines as an important factor of translators' experience of occupational stress and work satisfaction. It seems that unachievable and short deadlines are an observable phenomenon for Jordanian translators during COVID-19. Despite that, only about 20% of the respondents found that it was harder to meet deadlines during the pandemic, while the remaining managed to deliver translation tasks within tight deadlines. This is in line with Courtney and Phelan's (2019) finding that short deadlines and increased workload are not main causes of occupational stress especially for freelance or in-house translators because they can decline the offer of translation projects if their deadlines are unsuitable or unrealistic.

More than 40% of the respondents found that it was difficult to work at home due to the family presence during COVID-19. The respondents may have other domestic responsibilities, such as childcare and housework, particularly that 75.5% of them are female. In Jordan, there is a socio-cultural tendency for women to bear greater domestic responsibilities than men. These extra challenges may have an effect on the quality of translations. Translation work demand of nearly one-third of the respondents increased from direct clients or LSPs due to the translation demand for COVID-19 information. According to Cooper and Payne (1988), job demands include "intrinsic task requirements, the level of uncertainty, time pressure, and the amount and difficulty of work" (p. 128). It seems that some Jordanian translators felt overworked and stressed as a result of the demand for translating COVID-19 materials. However, the survey revealed a significant level of commitment amongst Jordanian translators to develop their skills through CPD during the pandemic. This type of commitment can help translators deal with the post-COVID-19 world and its projected changes. Exploring what type of CPD translators took can uncover how close Jordanian translators are to the pulse of the profession at large.

The survey results show that COVID-19 negatively affected the translator's interaction with LSPs and direct clients in the Jordanian market, which already lacks regulation and certification (Shunnaq, 2016; Mahadin,

2018). The pandemic exacerbated the monopolisation of work and pay. Another significant change that Jordanian translators witnessed as a result of the pandemic is the move into a virtual environment, including both translation and interpretation. It is possible that this shift affected in-house translators particularly as opposed to freelancers who are used to working online and conducting online meetings.

Respondents observed that LSPs should have an active role in providing accurate information during times of crisis, and work together with governments and health care providers. This is particularly pertinent as translators do not work in a vacuum, and translation is connected with various power and control relations at the international and global level (Cronin, 2003). Some respondents agreed that LSPs have a responsibility towards providing refugees and minorities with information in their own languages. The high agreement among Jordanian translators on the role LSPs ought to play could be interpreted as a straightforward ethical point of view on the need for disseminating information in times of crisis. This point of view can be elicited from the participants' responses to the close-ended statements in the third section of the survey, which suggest translators perceive themselves as capable of playing an important role in the fight against COVID-19.

In times of lockdown and movement restriction, providing accurate translation and timely information is necessary for international and local organizations providing services for refugees in Jordan. It is unclear if various translation needs were specifically addressed, particularly that the governments' inclusion of translation in the response to COVID-19 was generally lacking. This became evident during a live press conference of the prime minister where international journalists, covering the country's response to COVID-19, requested that translation and interpreting services be provided (Jordan Prime Ministry, 2020). Further research on the extent to which COVID-19 information was provided to refugees can explain whether refugee needs were met, and how involved official bodies were. Much of the previous research has not engaged with official bodies in the Arab world, so data remains scant (O'Brien et al., 2018).

6. Conclusion, limitations, and future research

This study underscores the adverse effects of COVID-19 on translators in the Jordanian context. In a country where translators lack any type of regulation or certification (Mahadin, 2018), a global health crisis like COVID-19 has had far reaching ramifications to their economic and future prospects. While Jordanian translators believe in the role that they can play in communicating much needed information in pandemic situations, their main concerns regard their careers. These concerns clearly focus on loss of career prospects/opportunities, reduction of income, increased workload, additional time pressure, unachievable deadlines, and job demands. All of these concerns should be considered by the research community, LSPs, and translators since they are major sources of occupational stress and low job satisfaction in the translation profession.

This study, however, is limited by the sparsity of existing literature, in particular, on the potential role and significance of translation in complex emergency and critical situations in the Jordanian context, and by the difficulty in accessing professional translators in Jordan. To the researchers' best knowledge, this is the first study of its kind that investigates the translation

profession in light of COVID-19. Further research should examine translators' experiences of occupational stress and job satisfaction during the pandemic, public service readiness in terms of language services in times of crisis, and translator training where crisis translation is concerned.

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