

Coping Strategies During Covid-19 Pandemic: A Review of Literature

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ABSTRACT

Covid-19 outbreak in the year 2019 has been a major struggle for every human-being in many aspects – academically, financially, emotionally (to name a few). Mental health, which already was an emerging issue in the entire world, was aggravated during this time. There was increasing boredom, restlessness and suffering from severe mental health disorders. To deal with them during the pandemic, coping strategies were availed by everyone, which are the ways to deal with the increasing personal, interpersonal problems and putting efforts to deal with stress, loss and conflicts that come on the way in our day to day lives. Studies have shown various responses of the subjects from around the world. The emotional and coping responses of aging individuals were very positive due to their awareness of time limitation. Many older people have shown strong resilience and self-engagement during the pandemic. Virtual reality exercise has been an effective tool for the old people which increased the motor abilities, decreased obesity. Regarding mental health, studies have shown that cognitive appraisal and emotion-focused coping were effective tools for a stable mental health. Mindfulness exercises, Yoga have been ways for good mental health. Positive reframing about the negative events about pandemic brought general well-being. Strategies to cope with the pandemic have differed with respect to age. Even with increasing stress and negativity, many chose positivity and a way to work on themselves. The following research paper uses a narrative method that reviews literature on the coping strategies procured by the late-middle adults and older adults, and the effectiveness of coping strategies on each one's mental health during the ongoing pandemic through researches from across the world.

Keywords: Coping Strategies, Mental Health, Pandemic, Positivity, Well-Being

Pandemic and Well-Being

With the imposition of lockdown and quarantine in the entire world due to the outbreak of Coronavirus, which the World Health Organisation declared as a Pandemic - many supportive elements for a nation came to a halt. Academic institutions were shut, work-from-home became the new normal and staying indoors by confined to the

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four walls was a compulsion. Vulnerability rose among everyone due to the uncertainty around. For months together there was no proper engagement for many – people lost jobs, education was delayed, socializing was shut and suddenly it was only about masks, cleanliness and sanitization.

Switching happened from offices to homes, schools to online classes. The remote areas who do not have proper access to technology had to face dire consequences of this change. Though urban areas have facilities to many things, their issues were on a different but equally challenging. Many people lost jobs and migrants never reached home. There was nothing good to consume about the world.

On the very other hand, families came together to the dining after years, there were family conversations, creativity was building up in the kitchen and art. In a general sense, the word of mouth says, this pandemic has been a boon as well as a bane to every individual.

Mental health is a matter of concern and an ongoing stigma in many places across the globe. Speaking out on this topic and breaking the cocoon is a challenge due to family and societal pressure. The pandemic has taken a toll on the mental health. There is proneness to overthinking which is leading to anxiety, depression and many other disorders. Fear is rising day by day. The physical well-being and emotional well-being is also at stake due to less care given to mental health. The consumption of information about the circumstances is very negative for everyone which has paved a way for many unwanted thoughts irrespective of the age. Thoughts can be considered as the root of mental health and when unwanted thoughts increase, mental health well-being is tedious.

Mental health becomes fragile when there is exposure to drastic change like this ongoing situation. Personal and social relations are almost devastated. There is reclusiveness. Now, how will an individual deal with so much of conflict? Psychology has highlighted the role of coping strategies as the ways of dealing with situations like these. Coping strategies are the ways to deal with personal issues and conflicting issues which in-turn ensure a better general well-being. Coping strategies are methods which are used as a part of an individual's daily schedule to avoid the regular loop of thoughts which are unhealthy.

Coping Strategies

Coping strategies are especially used for mental health well-being. They include – mindfulness activities, Yoga, journaling, prayers, art, cooking, cleaning, etc. Whichever coping strategy one chooses, it must be given enough priority to work as an effective tool for ensuring good health and avoided taken in loose terms. Consistency certainly improves the situation of an individual because of the awareness one gains in the entire process and improves the status to a satisfactory rate.

Coping strategies differ with respect to age due to generation gap and experiences are subjective, too. The current research paper throws light upon coping strategies that are used to deal with the pandemic. Students, working professionals, homemakers, frontline workers – all try to use some or the other type of coping skill because to conform to sudden changes. There is a bloom of usage of coping skills to restore positivity.

At a certain point, the same coping skill may be disengaging to many and studying its effectiveness helps recognize the importance of coping skills, in general. The effectiveness,

also, is subjective because of an individual's belief system and studying that will help in understanding the coherence of a population with change. Along with physiological comfort acquired through many ways, coping skills are the exercises for mind and studying its effectiveness is a strong tool to spread awareness on mental health.

Compared to young and middle adults, the late-middle adults and older adults choose different coping skills. They seem very regular in nature because of many such previous episodes more awful than the current pandemic that the current generation is bearing. Looking around, their years of experience and experiments with life gifted them awareness of situations and possible ways to deal with them. If this is one side of the picture, there are people (late-middle adults and old-aged) who find it quite a task to agree to the present scenario due to their regular habits as socializing, outdoor exercises and a normal life, in general. Studying the coping skills used by the late-middle and late adulthood helps understand the diversity of mind-set and variety of skills availed as well as the issues faced by them. It will also introduce us to how they have adapted to the new culture of staying indoors, learning technology and getting along with the new-normal. This research paper reviews the literature on the following objectives on coping strategies keeping in view the current Pandemic situation:

Objectives

- To study the effectiveness of coping strategies on mental health well-being.
- To study the coping strategies used by the late-middle adults and older adults.

Research Questions

- How effective are coping skills to ensure mental health well-being?
- What are the coping skills used by late-middle adults and older adults?

METHODOLOGY

Search Results

The review is presented on the topic Coping Strategies during COVID-19 Pandemic based on recent research studies. The mode of study is secondary method of data collection. The study includes a definitive description on the effectiveness of coping strategies on mental health well-being and the coping strategies used by the late-middle adults and older adults during the ongoing state of Pandemic.

Inclusion Criteria

A total of six peer reviewed empirical as well as qualitative journals, published in the year 2020 and 2021 were selected for the study. The publications are from various countries like South Korea, India, United States of America, Hong Kong and Midwestern countries.

- The review is based on both empirical and qualitative published journals.
- The review contains two research objectives and questions related to the coping strategies.
- The main focus is to capture some of the prominent coping strategies used during Pandemic by late-middle adults and older adults.
- The journals range from the usual strategies to some unknown methods, as well, which can be inculcated for a healthy lifestyle.
- The reviewed journal aims to promote psychological well-being.

Exclusion Criteria

The journal does not include coping strategies for any particular psychological disorder. It is a holistic approach towards the overall well-being of an individual during this period of Pandemic.

RESULTS

The following reviews of literature provide the results and description of the journals examined with supporting empirical data and qualitative narrative.

Coping Strategies during COVID-19 Pandemic

A 94-day longitudinal study by Joo Hyun Kim, Yerin Shim, Incheol Choi, Eunsoo Choi (2021) was conducted, in phase wise manner that included – initial outbreak of the virus and intense social distancing in South Korea. The study was performed through an online survey method via a smartphone application. The study sample constituted 10,464 participants from South Korea and at the final stage of both the phases, 35,846 observations were found. The observations were based on the measures – well-being and coping strategies. The well-being measure was done using a 10-item questionnaire and the coping strategy measure was done using the Brief COPE Scale which assessed preventive measures, cognitive appraisal and behavioral strategies. This study concluded that cognitive appraisal (acceptance, positive review) and behavior related appraisal (social connection, distraction from the usual, and religion) methods showed attenuation of decline in well-being and improved the psychological conditions whereas people who used more preventive methods (masks and sanitization) showed greater decline in psychological well-being. Though preventive measures are important, the other two methods showed increased well-being during the Pandemic in South Korea according to the study.

Amanda L. Shamblaw, Rachel L. Rumas and Michel W. Best (2021), performed a cross-sectional study to understand the association of 14 different coping skills with symptoms of anxiety, depression, and the overall quality of life, under the categories – approach or avoidance coping during Covid-19. The research was conducted on 1,000 participants through a validated Psychological tool known as the Amazon Mechanical Turk, also known as MTurk. The Brief COPE Scale (a 28 item self-inventory scale) was used to assess the categories of coping. The World Health Organisation Quality of Life – BREF (WHOQOL, a 26 item self-report measure) was used to measure the quality of life. Patient Health Questionnaire-9, Generalized Anxiety Disorder-7, Covid-19 Context (Yes/No Questions) – these were the materials used in the study. In order to measure the effectiveness of coping strategies, under the categories, the study has concluded that greater avoidance coping (substance use, venting, self-blame, denial, behavioural disengagement) results in degraded quality of life and accelerated the rate of depression and anxiety. At the other end, approach coping (positive reframing, emotional support, acceptance, planning, active coping) had been detrimental to the rates of depression and anxiety. The study supports association between active coping and positive reframing in the decline of depression and anxiety rates. It was also concluded as the most effective coping strategies that improved the psychological well-being.

Dannii Y. Yeung, Edwin K. H. Chung, Alfred H. K. Lam and Alvin K. K. Ho (2021), conducted a study to investigate the long-term effects of successful aging, emotional and coping responses because of the virus outbreak in the late-middle adults and older adults. A sample of 311 Hong Kong Chinese people took part in the study. They were recruited from an Adult Development and Aging Project. The study was formulated on four hypotheses. It

was conducted through telephonic interview method and included a questionnaire study. The emotional, coping responses were measured through Covid-19 survey and successful aging was measured using the baseline survey of Adult Development and Aging Project. It was seen that the successful aging and perceived time limitation were completely measured. Coping strategies measured problem-focused and emotion-focused coping. The results showed an association between successful aging and perceived-time-limitation. It also concluded that, those who perceived themselves under the category of successful aging, reported more positive emotions and less negative emotions. In that case, both the coping strategies – emotion-focused and problem-focused, were availed by the late-middle adults and the older adults who supported successful aging and ultimately, deal with the ongoing situation.

Heather R. Fuller and Andrea Huseth Zosel (2020), conducted a research study on a Midwestern sample of 76 older adults over a telephonic call interview to know about their experiences and restrictions like social distancing in the initial lockdown period. A semi-structured questionnaire was designed and perceived coping scale was also used to gather data over the telephonic interview. The subjects expressed their opinions to the open-ended questions and also rated their perceived level of coping to assess the quality of life and general well-being. The quantitative aspect of the study resulted in positive perceived coping rate with 2/3s rating more than eight score. The qualitative aspect of the study, which were direct experiences of the subjects have concluded the effective coping strategies used by older adults and that included – staying busy – individual activities, routine; seeking social support – communication with the near and dear, adapting new communication technologies; and having a positive mind-set – acceptance, faith, optimism. Particularly, this study concludes the resilience of older adults as well as their variability and strength.

Zan Gao, Jung Eun Lee, Daniel J. McDonough and Callie Albers (2020), performed a Virtual-Reality (VR) exercising tool to promote the physical well-being and overall favorable health outcome in older adults. VR exercise is a widely used method to improve motor abilities, reduce obesity and psychological health and it engages the subject in a computer-generated, multi-sensory, 3D-World – where they interact with the virtual environment using exercise tools. The results have shown that – with VR, the motor abilities have accelerated and promoted sensorimotor and cortical plasticity. Immersive memory training has enhanced the cognitive abilities in older adults which are on the verge of decline with aging – with effective cognitive abilities, the mental health of older adults was also found to be promoted. VR along with CBT also includes Tai Chi and Yoga and during this study, the psychological well-being was greatly promoted in the older adults. It led to significant rise in balance and memory.

Dr. Sajni Devi (2020), conducted a narrative and conceptual study related to psychoanalysis, psychological responses and coping strategies. The study reviewed literature on various coping strategies and their effectiveness with respect to good mental health. The study concluded that psychological resilience is an effective tool of coping that promotes mental health. It also proposed that awareness of emotions and self-confidence are key tools. It also focused on ground-level activities like taking enough precautions to avoid anticipated risk and reducing mental health illness. The narrative also described the importance of kindness and being there for every individual during the tuff times to ensure their good health.

CONCLUSION

The current study on reviewing the literature was based on two objectives which included – effectiveness of coping strategies on mental health well-being; coping strategies used by late-middle adults and older adults during the ongoing Pandemic situation.

The review of this literature on the effectiveness of coping strategies has been delineated in a descriptive manner. Various coping strategies were used by the researchers to study the mental well-being and in-turn the overall well-being of the subjects. Research has successfully proven the promotion and acceleration of mental health with the usage of coping strategies to cope with the ongoing situation. Approach coping, emotion-focused and problem-focused coping are considered to be the widely used coping strategies.

The strategies to cope used by the older-adults differed in terms of their mind-set and experiences. Their successful aging positive perception have led to positive emotional and coping responses. Having greater engagement, minimal socializing has been some other effective tools for the late-middle and older adults. Going with technology, VR exercises have shown drastic improvements in physiological as well as psychological well-being in older adults promoting motor abilities, cortical plasticity and reduction of obesity.

Certainly, coping strategies can be viewed as the need of the hour. It has been more than a year to the virus outbreak, people are getting used to the new normal which has brought a huge amount of unacceptable change. The recommended coping strategies for the general well-being, which encourages strength to deal with the adversities of life involve:

- Promoting resilience – on a personal level.
- Daily exercise - physical, mental and cognitive exercises.
- Practicing gratitude and acceptance.
- Staying positive
- Consistency to maintain the chosen coping strategies.

Promoting holistic coping strategies can be considered as strengthening the recessive tone of mental health and emotional health. During this time, when most of the works are carried out on a virtual level, holistic coping strategies can be learnt, as well with effectiveness.

Now, gaining strength comes when an individual has a plan and that is when coping strategies come into picture. Even a small method becomes effective in a longer run and ensures good health. They help to keep the distress and mental strains away and push towards a better daily living.

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Coping Strategies During Covid-19 Pandemic: A Review of Literature

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Conflict of Interest

The author declares no conflict of interests.

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