

## Mediating the COVID-19 Pandemic through Positive Psychology

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### ABSTRACT

In the past two years, the world has witnessed the gravest pandemic probably the present generation would ever experience. The numbers quoted about the exigencies have time and again been contested for being misleading the humanity at large. The damage caused is multidimensional. One such area is the mode of livelihood which was deeply impacted. It has indeed exhausted quantum of psychological capital of people effected. This study aimed to explore the mediating role of optimism and hope in the relationship between coronavirus stress and those who lost their jobs during the pandemic. The sample of the study consist of people from the working age group. Qualitative method of research is used. The findings emphasize that hope and optimism are potential sources of explanation for how coronavirus stress is associated with subjective well-being.

*Keywords: Mediating, COVID-19, Pandemic, Positive Psychology*

### Positive psychology

Positive psychology is comparatively a new field of psychology. It has been set up as the scientific study of positive functioning and thriving on personal, social, cultural and universal levels of life. Positive psychology was presented by Seligman and Csikszentmihályi (2000) as “a science on best qualities of life”. Since its foundation, it demonstrated fruitful in making modifications in psychology and drawing consideration of psychologists from sufferings and other negative perspectives of life to endeavoring towards better understanding of well-being and building on the finest human qualities that make our life worth living.

One curious thing to take note is that the targets of western positive psychology are comparable to some extent to Indian psychology, which has its roots in Indian philosophical and spiritual literature. Positive psychology and Indian psychology have similar concerns about human life’s ultimate purpose. Rao has recommended a potential proposal in 2014, claiming that Indian psychology might give a noteworthy and compelling meta-theoretical framework for sustaining positive psychological aims.

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Received: June 16, 2022; Revision Received: August 14, 2022; Accepted: August 29, 2022

### Hope

Hope, as a construct, can be perceived as a way into a more joyful future. Assuming that one loses the key, the entryway stays shut. Assuming an individual loses hope, the person remains secured in difficulty and vulnerability. In psychology, hope has been perceived as a multidimensional concept. Dufault and Martocchio (1985) identified six elements of hope which are - affective, cognitive, behavioral (psychological, physical, social, and spiritual), affiliative (hope in relationships), temporal (drawn from the past, the present, and the future), and contextual (initiated within a given context).

The difference between hope and other related categories such as optimism, self-efficacy, self-determination, resilience, and others has moreover been clarified by positive psychology research investigate. In reasoning, philosophy, human studies, behavioral sciences, and other social sciences, hope is characterized as a positive desire and want for something to happen within the future.

Researches differentiate between two fundamental concepts of hope: dispositional hope (individualistic, cognitive point of view) and perceived hope (supernatural, spiritual perspective). Snyder (2000), who is considered to be the creator of the cognitive theory of hope gave three components of hope: goals, pathways (plans to realize the goals), and agency (goal directed energy). He characterized dispositional hope as ‘the figure of perceived capacities to supply routes to desired goals, nearby the perceived motivation to utilize those routes. Another concept of Perceived Hope was given by Krafft in the year 2014, on the other hand is relatively a broader concept, i.e., feeling hopeful amid a deeper sense, having a fundamental trust in positive results, especially in troublesome life circumstances which can't be directly controlled.

### Optimism

Winston Churchill once said, "A pessimist sees the issues in each opportunity; an optimist sees the chance in every difficulty". According to various researches on Optimism on the normal, citizenry are wired to be more idealistic than not. To various psychologists, optimism reflects the notion that the results of occasions or encounters will usually be positive. Others contend that optimism is more an explanatory style. According to this notion it dwells inside the way individuals clarify the causes of occasions. Optimists are likely to discover the causes of failure or negative experiences as brief rather than fixed, definite rather than universal, and external instead of internal. Such an outlook empowers optimists to more effectively see the probability of change.

Optimism doesn't mean engaging in aspiring or imaginary thinking. It's how you observe the planet that provides more agency to the optimist as being a least of somewhat responsible when life goes well. These people have more advantageous viewpoints and have an inclination to degree longer than their more pessimistic partners. They are moreover less helpless to the negative impacts of illness, fatigue, and depression. Optimism though is a positive construct but an unlikely belief that a person's future is going to be filled with only positive events can lead them to require pointless dangers, especially with their wellbeing and finances.

### Optimism, Pessimism, and Realism

Some optimists attribute generous thought processes to others and interpret situations within the absolute best light; others just disassociate their inner disposition from outside circumstance. Being optimistic isn't essentially always the “best” strategy. Research appears

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that hardening a sunny disposition with a little dose of realism, or perhaps pessimism, can be the only much appreciated to construct resilience and accomplish one's goals.

### **Covid 19**

The COVID-19 crisis has had, and continues to possess, a significant impact on individuals throughout the planet. As a result of the pandemic, individuals face continuous changes in various aspects of their lives, like health, employment, and family life. This accumulation of multiple sources of stress could increase feelings of psychological distress and reduce feelings of wellbeing for several individuals. Wellbeing is often defined because the evaluation, either positive or negative, of one's life and quality of functioning in life is dependent on our subjective evaluation. This definition is in accordance with second wave of positive psychology, which posits that wellbeing should be understood and should be supported by the situational context during which individuals may experience a mixture of positive (e.g., positive affect) and negative (e.g., distress) wellbeing. Further, wellbeing can include both hedonic (e.g., low levels of stress) and eudemonic (e.g., meaning in life) aspects. As a crucial, yet still understudied component of wellbeing, meaning in life denotes to "the degree to which people comprehend, include up of, or see importance in their lives, in the midst of the degree to which they see themselves to have a reason, mission, or overarching point in life".

### ***The Stress of Losing a Job***

Whether we've been laid off, downsized, forced to require early retirement, or seen contract work dry up, losing employment is one among life's most stressful experiences. Apart from the apparent financial anguish it can cause, the strain of losing employment can also take a crucial toll on the mood, relationships, and overall mental and emotional health.

Our jobs are often quite just the way we make a living. They influence how we see ourselves, also because the way others see us. Although you didn't love your job, it likely provided you a social outlet and gave a structure, purpose, and about to your life. Suddenly finding yourself out of labor can leave you feeling hurt, angry, or depressed. You'd possibly be questioning your identity, grieving all that you've lost, or feeling anxious about what the longer term holds.

Depending on the circumstances of your unemployment, you'll feel deceived by your boss, feeble over the heading of your life, or fault yourself for variety of seen deficiency or botch. The strain and stress can feel overpowering. But notwithstanding of how distressing things seem immediately, there's trust. With time and then the proper coping techniques, you'll come to terms with these difficulties, ease your push and uneasiness, and progress in conjunction together with your working life.

### **CASE STUDIES OF THE PARTICIPANTS**

Mr. B was temporary employee in a reputed organization. He was very much satisfied with his job. During the pandemic, his company started getting rid of the workers who were temporary and were paying only to the permanent staff as there was less production thanks to which providing salaries to any or all the workers was becoming difficult. Mr. X also had to allow resignation from the corporate. Due to these reasons, now Mr. X was very much stressed out as he was the only bread earner in his house. This happened during the primary wave of the pandemic where it had been becoming difficult for people to satisfy their basic needs. While, Mr. X didn't lose hope and was optimistic towards his future. He overcame many challenges after losing the duty, because it was becoming difficult for him to search

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out employment during the pandemic as no company was hiring new employees. Recently, he got a permanent job in an another reputed company where he's much satisfied both with his income and also the organizational environment.

Mrs. T was a tuition teacher and accustomed to give classes to the scholar students at her home only. Her life was excellent. She was earning a decent amount and was taking care of all the members within the family as her husband was unemployed. Because of the effect of pandemic, parents were now more concerned about the lives of their children and weren't allowing them to go out from their respective homes. Also, now students started taking classes from online tutors thanks to which the duty of Mrs. T was now in danger. Only few students were taking classes from her but that too was for a short time only. Slowly and gradually not a single child came to her tuition center leading to financial problems in her family. Now over this case, she even lost her husband to Covid. Even after all these hardships she didn't lose hope as she made herself clear that she must work flat out so as to take care of her children. Mrs. T is now trying to adapt to the current online means of learning and is much confident that someday she is going to overcome all her problems and can lead an honest and far better life.

Mrs. L was a primary teacher at a reputed school from 5 years. Her son was also studying within the same school. Her husband was working in a very reputed organization. The school principal was replaced who as per Mrs. L was very cruel. She wasn't providing proper facilities and also the salaries to the teachers. Mrs. L and lots of teachers were dissatisfied with the principal but thought that complaining against the principal isn't very easy so they decided to stay quiet. Due to the pandemic, she lost her husband and now it had become very difficult to keep up her house and also to pay the varsity fees of her child. She was asked to convey resignation when she gave the letter of fee concession of her child. This worsened matters as now she was unemployed and also her child was given TC from the varsity. Mrs. L therefore decided to try and do small chores like tailoring, put her child in another school. She attended many interviews in various schools, but was rejected as schools weren't hiring teachers anymore, thanks to the pandemic. Therefore, recently she started a web business of selling clothes. Initially, it was absolutely becoming difficult as she wasn't much equipped with technology, but slowly and gradually, she got adapted thereto. Even when she was unemployed, she didn't lose hope and was optimistic towards her future.

Ms. M was the owner of a reputed event management company. Many people trusted her and were very much impressed by the work. Their earnings were totally dependent on big events. Whenever she signed a new contract, she along with her colleagues used to purchase all the materials related to that event 2-3 months prior. As the pandemic situation rose, people started to cancel their contracts with the company as lockdowns were announced and people gatherings were minimized. Many companies were providing services online. The company of Ms. M was now facing losses and their stocks were also getting damaged. Because of social distancing rules, they were facing financial problems. Due to this, she had to take out many employees from her company as providing them salary was becoming difficult. Also, she had to reduce the salary of their permanent staff. But even after this she didn't lose hope and is continuing her business because of her interest in this field. Ms. M is very much optimistic that one day everything will be normal again.

Mr. P was an employee in a reputed organization. Due to the pandemic situation, he along with many employees was taken out from the company. Initially he suffered a lot as he was the only bread earner in the family. So he decided to start a cookie business online which

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turned into a success but also faced many problems, in which adapting to the technology was the very first one. Even after many challenges he didn't lose hope as he was doing something in which he was very much interested and was satisfied with his work. Now his business is running in a good pace. He is earning a good amount of money and now once again his life is normal. He is also very much optimistic towards his future.

Mr. D was a private taxi owner who had many clients in the city. His family was living in their native village only. He used to send money to his family as he was the only bread earner. As the pandemic situation rose, and lockdowns were announced, only few people were getting out of their homes. This affected his job and his earnings. It became difficult for him to tell this to his family as he doesn't want his family to worry. Mr. D had to leave his rented house to cut down costs in order to send money back home. Also, he could not leave the city and go back to his village as there was no work for him there. For much time, he lived under the shed of a factory and used to borrow money from his friends to send to his family. Even after facing many difficulties, he didn't lose hope and was optimistic towards his future. Now he is working in a factory as wage laborer and is working hard to pay off the debts of his friends and also to send money back to his family.

Mr. G was a salesperson who used to sell products door to door. Due to his extrovert personality and his skills, he used to please many clients. But due to the on course of the pandemic, he was told to avoid visiting outdoors and to do online sales, i.e., through phone calls. This created the problem, as from now it was becoming difficult to Mr. G to please the clients as he knew that only verbal communication will do nothing to sell a product, body language of the employee matters much more than that. It was becoming difficult for him to now maintain the job. He was told to leave the organization later, and from now the problems rose. He suffered very much in order to earn a job as he was the only bread earner in his family. But after much suffering, he got a desk job in a sales company only. Mr. G had told that during his bad time, he didn't lose hope and was very much optimistic that one day he'll get a job in which he is interested.

Mr. R was an aged employee in a reputed organization. He was committed emotionally towards his job and decided to continue the job even after the age of retirement. As the pandemic situation rose, the production of the company decreased, which resulted in the company to face losses. Therefore, the organization started to taking out the temporary employees first, in which many people became jobless. After that, employees who were much aged were also asked to give resignation in which Mr. R was one. This disappointed him as leaving an organization which he served in for many years, was very difficult. However, this didn't make Mr. R to lose hope and optimism from the future. For now, he is not working in any company.

Ms. S was a small road side food vendor. Her family consists of her husband, son (eldest) and two daughters. She is the major bread earner of the family. Her husband works as a contract labor. She is supported in her work by her son and elder daughter. Her eatery is considered to be the best spot for people of all ages. She used to serve people according to their special requirements despite being heavy hours. Due to covid 19 induced lockdown and resultant precautions her eatery was shut down. Suddenly all her business came to halt. She had to dispose off all the preparations, vegetables and other edibles she had within one week. Her husband was also not getting work as he was a contractual labor. For 2.5 months all her business was shut. Yet with her love for cooking and confidence in herself she was never found to be dejected. She was optimistic that the people who love her food will

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definitely reach her. She started making food in small amount in her home. People nearby her started ordering food from her. Slowly other customers also came to know about where Ms. S resides and started ordering food from her. Ms. S made all efforts to follow all the covid protocols. She strictly instructed her customers to follow the same so that no-one gets into any trouble. This way with her belief in her abilities and being positive at grim situations she was able to get out of it.

Mr. K was working as an office attendant in a small organization. His family consists of his wife and 3 sons who are in the age group of 12-16 years. Due to pandemic he had to leave the organization. His life suddenly came to standstill. He was the sole earner of his life. But due to his resilience and positive attitude towards his life he was hopeful that he will find out a way out of this situation. Initially he resorted to online work like data entry but couldn't earn enough to sustain his family. Still, he didn't loose hope. Then he decides to open a grocery in the back side of his house. He made all the required arrangements in that particular room and started a small grocery store. God being kind his store is attracting a good number of customers even today. He is supplementing his earning by doing some online work as well. He is even planning to rent a small shop in a prime location in few months time.

### **DISCUSSION**

The most surprising result of the research was the positive responses the participants gave of being hopeful and optimistic towards their future. These responses, however, could be attributed to their alternative job opportunities, having high self-esteem and self- efficacy. The less surprising result of the research was the negative responses the participants gave of having high level of stress and anxiety due to job loss.

There can be a number of explanations as to why participants gave negative responses of job loss. One of this could be because of the responsibilities they manage. There were many participants who were the only bread earner in their respective families. In that condition, the job was the only way of survival, and no job meant no money.

Another possible explanation might be having no other job alternative. As many people were asked to resign from the organizations due to lack of production or having debts. No other companies were hiring them as the economy was getting weaker due to the pandemic.

The overall results of this study shows that even with job losses due to the pandemic, people have not lost hope and are optimistic about their future. They have a positive attitude that makes many of them to work hard. In summary, optimism and hope are important adaptive phenomena that promote happiness, quality of life, and psychological adjustment in the general population and in specific groups, such as those living with mental health problems. People who are optimistic and hopeful are better adapted to adversity, are less likely to develop mental disorders and exhibit healthier behaviors and related to more life satisfaction.

### **CONCLUSION**

There can be no doubt that hope and optimism are important adaptive phenomenon that foster wellbeing, quality of life, and psychological adjustment in general population. The purpose of this research was to identify hope and optimism among individuals who lost their job. Recent research on job loss incidents has provided a more complete understanding of hopeful and optimistic people who lost their jobs due to Covid-19. Based on the analysis

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conveyed, it can be concluded that more than 50% of the participants, even though were stressed out due to their job loss, were very much hopeful and optimistic towards their upcoming future.

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### **Acknowledgement**

The author(s) appreciates all those who participated in the study and helped to facilitate the research process.

### **Conflict of Interest**

The author(s) declared no conflict of interest.

**How to cite this article:** Shreya, A. V., Sarita & Narayan, S. (2022). Mediating the COVID-19 Pandemic through Positive Psychology. *International Journal of Indian Psychology*, 10(3), 470-476. DIP:18.01.046.20221003, DOI:10.25215/1003.046