

# Positive Coping and Well- being of Corporate Professionals during the Covid-19 Pandemic: A Single Case Study

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## Abstract

**Purpose:** The aim of the study is to understand the positive coping strategies used by the corporate professional during the COVID- 19 pandemic and how it shapes his or her well-being. The main purpose of the study was to understand the kind of strategies and responses the professional chose to face challenges during the COVID -19 pandemic. **Methods:** The research study is based on the phenomenological approach in qualitative research analysis. The data analysis used to arrive at the findings was Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA). The experience of the participants and the meaning the participant attached to the experiences is what is captured and analyzed using IPA. The study is based on the results obtained by interviewing one participant from a group of 20 professionals who were interviewed. **Findings:** The major findings presented in the study are that the corporate professional, when faced with challenges at work due to the COVID- 19 pandemic adapted positive coping strategies. These factors were shown in the study to have helped the professional to cope successfully with the challenges and enhance the physical and psychological well- being of the professional. **Originality:** The findings of the study are completely original as they were obtained by the researcher after conducting in -depth semi structured interview on the professionals.

**Keywords**— Positive Coping, Well- being, Covid-19 pandemic, Corporate Professional

## I. INTRODUCTION

The Covid-19 pandemic has had a very disastrous impact all around the world. The Covid-19 pandemic has been a catastrophe which has been impacting every aspect of one's life. The pandemic has been a threat to the health system as well as to the economic system all around the world. The past few years have been shaped by uncertainty all over the world. The financial burden of the pandemic reflects on the lives of the average citizens all over the world. The economic crunch caused by the pandemic has impacted the livelihoods of millions of people across the world. The first half of the pandemic witnessed massive layoffs. The Covid-19 pandemic has shaken the world

and has sent the world into a state of fear and anxiety. Anxiety around finance and health has been two major concern which have been observed all over the world. According to Leibowitz (2020), the economic instability has left around sixty – two per cent of the American workforce physically and psychologically exhausted. Studies suggest that work – related stress and anxiety has left many people on the brink of psychological and physiological breakdown.

The aim of the research is to understand how the corporate professional, who has extremely over stretched working hours and other harsh professional challenges, has coped with the Covid-19 pandemic. Living with the pandemic

has been a challenge for everyone. Longer work hours and uncertain work atmosphere adds to the pressure of the pandemic. The way each individual responds to the crisis is however unique. The manner in which people respond to a crisis helps to determine the coping styles used by them. The present research study shows that the professionals interviewed for the study have shown positive coping styles which has helped them navigate these testing times quite successfully. The research paper has used the findings from a single interview to understand certain themes that have been derived during the qualitative analysis and has helped us look deeply into the positive coping strategies used by professionals.

The positive coping strategies used by professionals' sync in with the PERMA model of well-being developed in Positive Psychology. The PERMA Model of Positive Psychology proposes that there are human strengths which acts as protective elements against mental health problems and some of those strengths are courage, future mindedness, optimism, inter-personal skills, faith, work ethics, perseverance, the capacity for flow and insight (Seligman and Csikszentmihalyi, 2014). The human strengths mentioned is quite relevant in the context of the Covid-19 pandemic as the whole world is fighting one of the most emotionally and exhausting scenarios of the recent times, where primary health care and economic systems are all at the brink of collapse. The PERMA model of well-being focuses on the strengths of an individual. It empowers the individual to utilize the strengths given to fight out the challenges in life. This model gives hope and a positive attitude for the individual when faced with difficult situations in life. The main theory used in this research study is the theory of well-being using the PERMA model. This theory is pivotal in enhancing the drive, direction, hope and optimism in an individual while faced with challenges.

The present research study explores the themes around the positive coping strategies used by professionals during the COVID-19 pandemic.

The study also explores the themes around the work-related challenges faced by the professionals during pandemic. The depth of the experience and perspective of the professionals have been understood and analyzed using the qualitative research method. The literature reviewed for the study highlights the highly stressful work environment in corporate organizations and the role of positive psychology in improving the overall well-being and efficiency in professionals. A study by Pollard (2001) shows the impact of reorganization and downsizing in a professional's life. It severely impacts the psychological and physiological health of an employee as it suddenly opens up a vast set of uncertainties for the professional whose main source of living is closely tied to the paycheck received from the organization. Therefore, the stress and anxiety it causes in the life of a professional is extremely severe. Another study by Greenglass and Burke (2001) highlights the apprehension faced by professionals in the event of reorganization and downsizing in a company. Most of the professionals fear of losing their jobs and those who retain their jobs fear performing efficiently in the new systems which might be totally unfamiliar and intimidating for them. This can be a challenge to their productivity and competence.

A study carried out on professionals in Canada shows that insecurity at work place was shown to have repercussions on the health of employees. The study highlights that job insecurity was seen to impact the professionals who had weaker financial and social backgrounds (Scott-Marshall, H, 2010). A study by Jung in the year 2013, points out that there is a strong positive correlation between job stress and mood regulation. The results show that the high burn out rates in professionals had a major impact on their well-being. The high burn out rates lead to restlessness and unhappiness and caused extreme exhaustion in the professionals. However, the study was only conducted on professionals who worked in the IT sector in South Korea. (Jung, 2013).

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Another study shows that individuals who share positive emotions frequently with their partners and close ones report higher marital satisfaction as well as satisfaction in life. Engagement in positive emotions have shown to be central to being content and happy in life

(Johnson et.al.,2018 ).

Studies reviewed for the present study explores how extreme stress and uncertainty at work impacts the psychological and physiological well- being in professionals. The positive impact of positive psychology on well- being in individuals have also been reviewed. However, these studies have not been carried out in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic. Therefore, the impact of stress on well- being and the role of positive psychology in enhancing well- being has been explored in the present study.

## II. METHOD

The present study is a phenomenological research study. The sample for the research study are corporate professionals who have been employed in Corporate Organizations

around the world. The data has been collected by conducting semi- structured in-depth interviews. The lived experience of the professionals during the pandemic has been explored using the interviews.

Phenomenology is rooted in the lived experience of an individual and how it is engraved in a person's consciousness and the meanings associated with it. Phenomenology explores the experience of the individual. Phenomenology aims to experience the individual's story and perception and to understand the meaning given to the experience by the individual (Suter, 2014).The sampling procedure chosen for the research study is Purposive Sampling. Purposive sampling is carried out by selecting participants based on a predetermined criterion. The present study is based on the results obtained by interviewing one participant from a group of 20 professionals who were interviewed. The population for the study is a group of professionals with highly specialized skills who work in Corporate Organizations around the world. The participants were handed out an informed consent form which elaborates the ethical guidelines followed for the present research study. The interviews were conducted with the informed consent of the participants.

## III. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

One super-ordinate theme of positively coping with challenges constitute the results identified in the present research study.

*Table 1: Super-ordinate and subordinate themes*

Super- ordinate Theme	Subordinate themes	Key Words and Meanings
Positive Coping	Attitude Positive Emotions Lifestyle	Gratitude, Appreciation for things in life, More time with family, Positive approach, Healthier eating habits Increase in physical exercise, positive changes.

### Theme One : Positive Coping

The last year was a very tough year for everybody around the world. The interviews with professionals revealed the stress and anxiety experienced by professionals and the various challenges that they faced. The

professional who has been chosen for this study has also narrated his experience over the last year and how that affected him on various levels. However, he also shares his journey on overcoming the obstacles efficiently. The coping strategies that he used all through these years were very effective in helping him live through these stressful situations at work. The three major sub-ordinate themes which were identified were attitude, positive emotions and lifestyle. The professional whose interview has been chosen for this study, was able to cope positively with the stress and challenges at work due to his attitude towards work as well as life. An excerpt from the interview is given below:

When we started it was a no activity time frame. My head the retail section, all the showrooms . Our business is completely from field. So first two weeks we did not know what to do. Then slowly we got into the culture of work from home. We started familiarizing with the process and with our team. We thought of ways of generating revenue. Obviously we can't sell a new connection. That was a problem. But we started looking at other possibilities. The data requirement of customers increased so we made it a point to inform them of our packages and how to upgrade their data plans. That helped us explore a new source of revenue. Having a more rationalized dream and things could be done in different ways as well was what I discovered and used in my work life. You can cut down expenditure and still enjoy (Participant 14, personal communication, May 25, 2021).

The excerpt from the interview shows how the professional who headed the entire team had to explore alternatives in order to generate revenue and prevent their business from shutting down. This clearly shows the positive attitude the professional must have used to work around such a stressful and anxiety provoking situation. The business would have shut down and they had to come up with ways to function in the pandemic. The professional who has selected was heading the team responsible for generating the revenue. It required a lot of effort from his

side to keep the team running at such a stressful and economically dull moment. The creativity, practicality and the sense of gratitude that he had helped him live in the present and enjoy the things that he has despite facing immense pressure from work. This attitude was definitely a huge element which helped him cope positively with the challenges that he faced.

The main aspects which come under the positive emotions is the positive approach taken by the professional and the decision to focus on the positive changes that has happened during the pandemic. An excerpt has been given below from the interview with the professional.:

Kids and wife enjoyed having me home and I also got involved in all the household chores. Teaching my daughter was also nice. So that was quality family time. Then after a month, it got to everyone. Staying at home. So then when restrictions were relaxed we started going for drives without getting out anywhere. But my daughters coped well with their online classes. They loved having me around. So we enjoyed being together. And we all started helping each other quite well. (Participant 14, personal communication, May 25, 2021).

The excerpt from the interview shows that the professional decided to focus on the positive changes that has come out of the pandemic rather than focussing on the stressful aspects of his life. Another major sub-ordinate theme which has a huge role to play in positive coping is the lifestyle adopted by the professionals. The excerpt given below from the interview shows the lifestyle choices the professional has been following in his life which has helped him attain the right attitude and balance to stay focussed in his life:

Being disciplined has been very important to me. As a family we are in better health as we eat more home cooked food now. So health wise and with my life in every sense being disciplined and being organized has been very helpful for me (Participant 14, personal communication, May 25, 2021).

The excerpt from the interview has highlighted the aspect of being disciplined and following a systematic pattern of living both health wise

and otherwise in life as a very crucial factor which has helped the professional to stay focused and cope positively with the stress and strain of the pandemic.

Studies have shown that positive coping plays a huge role in helping one to face difficult and challenging situations in life. A study by Shukla and Srivastava highlights how emotional well-being of professionals get disturbed due to the anxiety and stress experienced at workplace. The study shows that people with higher Emotional Intelligence (EI) manage challenging situations effectively. EI was shown in the study to have a significant role in reducing stress and the study also shows that EI traits can be developed in adults with the right guidance and practice. (Shukla and Srivastava, 2016) Emotional Intelligence is one characteristic trait as shown in the study which helps individuals to positively cope with stress and anxiety.

#### IV. LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

A limitation of the study is that the researcher was unable to interview the professionals in person. The interviews were conducted virtually. Therefore, the virtual interviews were unable to capture the verbal cues as effectively as that of the physical interviews.

#### V. IMPLICATIONS OF THIS STUDY

The findings from this study can be used in everyday life for positively coping with difficulties and challenging situations. The study focuses on the positive coping strategies used by professionals to handle stressful situations. The methods and thinking patterns adopted by the professionals can be effective in other fields as well. The school settings, hospital settings and hospitality industries are fields where individuals experience various kinds of stressors. The positive coping mechanisms and thinking patterns adopted by the professionals can be very helpful in these settings as well. The attitude and positive coping strategies can also be very helpful for home makers and new mothers who have their own challenges to deal with. The positive attitude and thinking pattern can be very helpful for home makers and new mothers to handle

their everyday challenges. Therefore, the findings from the study can be useful for various sections of the society.

#### VI. CONCLUSION

The study focuses on the experiences of the professional during the COVID-19 pandemic and the various coping strategies that the professional employed which helped him handle the stress and work challenges effectively.

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