

Dealing With Uncertainties during Pandemic and Lockdown

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Abstract

Individuals tend to become apprehensive and succumb to emotional challenges when faced with an unexpected situation. Perceived threat can escalate one to either fight or flight in dealing with the situation. There would be fear, anxiety, stress, powerlessness and loss of autonomy. Mindset plays an important role in going about managing the situation at hand more effectively. Fixed or Growth mindset can help an individual see where they are heading and make necessary changes. The study aims at finding out the how individuals deal with uncertainties during pandemic. The sample consisted of male and female students taken from various undergraduate and postgraduate colleges within Hyderabad. A simple Random Method is used. The mindset questionnaire developed by Jennifer Shannon, which consists of eight items was used. The findings from the study reveal that employing a growth mindset during tough situations like pandemic and lockdown would help deal with uncertainties in a better manner unlike a fixed mindset. Therefore enhancing one's growth mindset is essential.

Keywords: Mindset, Pandemic, Lockdown, Uncertainty

The 2019 novel coronavirus pandemic is unprecedented in modern times. Responding to it is not a straightforward public health problem (as many commentators—and even some scientists—appear to imagine). It requires reaching beyond normal science (Kuhn, 1962) to the science of exploring the unknown.

During this condition, individuals become apprehensive and succumb to emotional challenges in dealing with the situation (Leung et al., 2003). Studies state that the outbreak of SARS and Ebola virus disease in the year 2003 and 2014 had caused widespread public fear and fear - induced emotional reactions that went to an extent of impeding infection control (Shultz et al., 2016, Pearson et al.,2004). China was the first country affected by the pandemic outbreak of COVID - 19 and it had reported a severe mental health crisis in the effected regions (Dong,

2020). In addition to the fear of the disease, during the outbreak, general public were plagued by the availability of humungous information about the disease in various media sources (McCauley et al., 2013). This information strengthens general public's perception and meaning making on their vulnerabilities. Their probability to the exposure to the disease and one's resources to handle it acts as a potential stressor in their mind. Especially, it enhances the risk perception and plays a large role in shaping their anxiety and coping mechanisms too (Gilman,2010). Lot of studies were done on epidemics occurred during various period in 21st century particularly in different Asian, North American and European countries on general public's psychological responses. The studies inform that psychological disturbance during an outbreak can possibly leave the affected general public less capable of handling it (Taha et al., 2014; Blendon et. al.,2004; Balinska & Rizzo,2009; Hong & Collins, 2006; Leung et al., 2004; Rosling & Rosling, 2003). These studies findings show that the outbreak can lead the entire population to experience stress, anguish and make them feel vulnerable

It has long been understood that how a community responds to disaster depends to a considerable degree on its culture (Carr, 1932). Fear, for example, does not just depend on individual psychological profiles or the specific challenges that confront us. It is transmitted by social structures, history, and our relations to others (Elias, 1982). We learn how to manage emotions (Hochschild, 1979) and handle fears (Giddens, 1991) according to “cultural scripts” (Garland, 2001) that are catalyzed by “fear entrepreneurs” (Furedi, 2006).

The Holocaust survivor and psychoanalyst, Viktor Frankl (1959) famously observed how suffering is harder to endure in the absence of meaning. In emergencies, despite assertions to the contrary, it is usually not so much more information the public seeks (of which there is often a surfeit, both of sources and of content)—nor even official guidance about supposed misinformation—as an “ability to give meaning to unpredictable experiences” (Furedi, 2020). This requires moral vision rather than science or evidence. Equally, however, we ought not impart meaning where there is none (Durodié, 2007). A recent commentary, drawing on lessons from the Blitz for COVID-19, noted how, “optimistic propaganda actually lowered morale” (Niven, 2020). As Durodié and Wessely (2002) suggested, in relation to the 9/11 terror attacks, addressing “core beliefs” is more important in the long run than simply offering reassurance (p. 1901).

Dweck found in her research, has to do with how we view and inhabit what we consider to be our personality. A “fixed mindset” assumes that our character, intelligence, and creative ability are static givens which we can’t change in any meaningful way, and success is the affirmation of that inherent intelligence, an assessment of how those givens measure up against an equally fixed standard; striving for success and avoiding failure at all costs become a way of maintaining the sense of being smart or skilled. A “growth mindset,” on the other hand, thrives on challenge and sees failure not as evidence of unintelligence but as a heartening springboard for growth and for stretching our existing abilities. Out of these two mindsets, which we manifest from a very early age, springs a great deal of our behavior, our relationship with success and failure in both professional and personal contexts, and ultimately our capacity for happiness.

Simon (2009) conducted a study on ‘Expanding the moral circle: Inclusion and exclusion mindsets and the circle of moral regard’ found that the size of the moral circle is influenced by a decision framing effect: the inclusion–exclusion discrepancy. Participants who decided which entities to exclude from the circle (exclusion mindset) generated larger moral circles than those who decided which to include (inclusion mindset). Further, people in an exclusion mindset showed “spill-over” effects into subsequent moral judgments, rating various outgroups as more worthy of moral treatment. The size of the moral circle mediated the effects of mindset on subsequent moral judgment.

According to a study conducted by Vijayaraghavan P & Singhal. D (2020) on ‘A Descriptive Study of Indian General Public’s Psychological responses during COVID-19 Pandemic Lockdown Period in India’ found that there was a significant difference between various age groups and their Health Anxiety. ($F(8, 222)=2.772, p<.05$). Analysis of health related anxiety revealed that respondents are more worried over the health of their loved ones than theirs. With regard to coping mechanism, it was found that, during the Covid-19 outbreak period, respondents displayed high engagement with the social media and connect with their loved ones using technology. Respondents felt responsible towards disease control, prevention, spread and healthy protective behaviour.

Statement of the Problem

To study the mindset of women during the pandemic and how they deal with uncertainties

Aim of the study

The study aims at finding out the how individuals deal with uncertainties during pandemic

Objectives of the Study

1. To find out the mindset individuals tend to carry during the pandemic
2. To study the various strategies employed during pandemic

Hypothesis

There will be a significant difference in women taking care of their family and seeking help than men

Research Design

A simple Random Method is used.

Independent Variable – Pandemic

Dependent Variable – Dealing with Uncertainties

Apparatus

The mindset questionnaire was developed by Jennifer Shannon. It consists of eight items. Four items have two alternate options followed by the other two items which were unrestricted.

Sample

The sample is drawn from a simple random sampling method. It consisted of both male and female (74) men and women taken randomly from various undergraduate and postgraduate colleges in and around Hyderabad.

Table I showing the sample characteristics

Sl. No	Sample Size	Gender
1)	10	Male
2)	64	Female

Procedure

After a webinar on Effective Time Management During Lockdown, responses regarding the program was collected in both structured and unstructured way and in one’s mindset related to managing their time and resources productively during pandemic and lockdown. The questionnaire was shared through google form online. The following instructions were mentioned in the form . ‘This form contains items related to one’s Mindset. Please read it carefully and mark your response - Never/ Sometimes/Often/ Routinely for each of the questions’. The responses were collected through online mode.

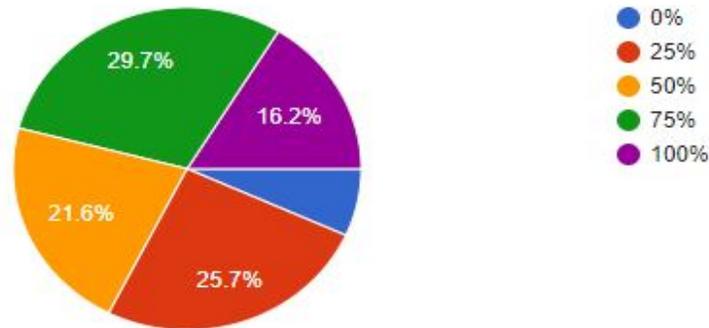
Results

Table II showing the Item No. (Statements in the questionnaire), responses given by the individuals and mean

Item No.	Total No. of Responses	Mean
1) What I don’t know could kill me.I must predict and plan for what might go wrong	74	1.00
2) I must be certain that I and others I care about are safe	74	1.00
3) If things don’t go as planned, my day is ruined	73	1.01
4) If I am not very careful, bad things might happen	73	1.01
5) It is more important to live life fully in the present moment than to spend time predicting what might go wrong in the future	73	1.01
6) I will assume safety unless there is clear evidence of danger	74	1.00
7) It is more important to practice flexibility and learn to cope when things do not go as planned	73	1.01
8) I can take reasonable precautions, knowing that I can influence but not control outcomes	73	1.01

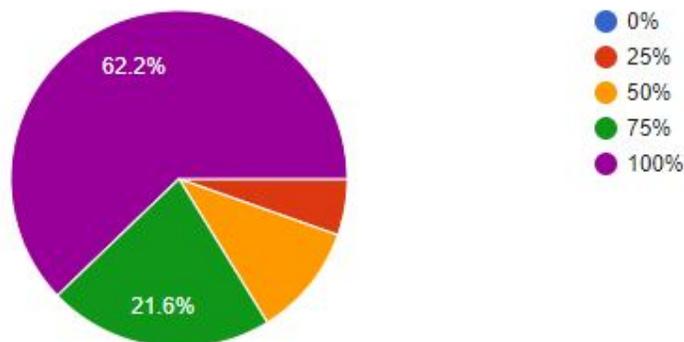
Results & Discussion

Item 1 - What I don't know could kill me. I must predict and plan for what might go wrong



The results for the item 1 shows that 16.2% strongly agree with the statement. 29.7% partly agree with the statement. 21.6% somewhat agree with the statement. 25.7% disagree with the statement. 20% strongly disagree with the statement. This shows one's need to be in control of the situation. When there is a perceived risk ranging from those who were completely indifferent to those who felt that the pandemic posed a more significant threat (S. Michelle Driedger, 2016). When individuals perceive any situation to be a threat they tend to seek to be in control.

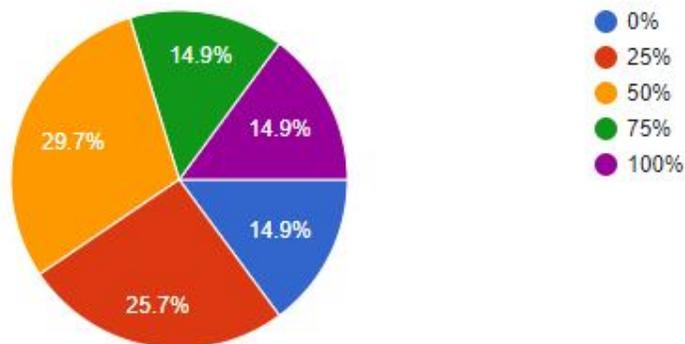
Item 2 - I must be certain that I and others I care about are safe



The results for the item 2 shows that 62.2% strongly agree with the statement. 21.6% partly agree with the statement. 18% somewhat agree with the statement. 9.7% disagree with the statement. According to Viktor E. Frankl (1945) the meaning of life is to help others find the meaning of theirs. Studies show harsh self-talk and self-criticism activates the sympathetic nervous system that stimulates the stress response, so is harmful to our

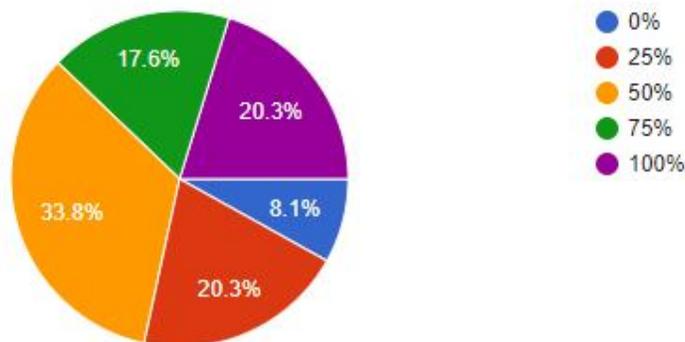
mental health and wellbeing (Singer and Klimecki, 2014). Practicing self-compassion and being aware of self needs, before helping others with theirs (Vachon, 2016) can help an individual. When one talks kindly to ourselves, it strengthens one’s pro-social behaviours (e.g., altruism, kindness, empathy) toward others (Singer and Klimecki, 2014).

Item 3 - If things don’t go as planned, my day is ruined



The results for the item 3 shows that 14.9% strongly agree with the statement. 14.9% partly agree with the statement. 29.7% somewhat agree with the statement. 25.7% disagree with the statement. 14.9% strongly disagree with the statement. Seeing the future as hopeless can lead to fixed or monkey mindset. This can lead to an individual being anxious, tensed and stressed out.

Item 4 - If I am not very careful, bad things might happen

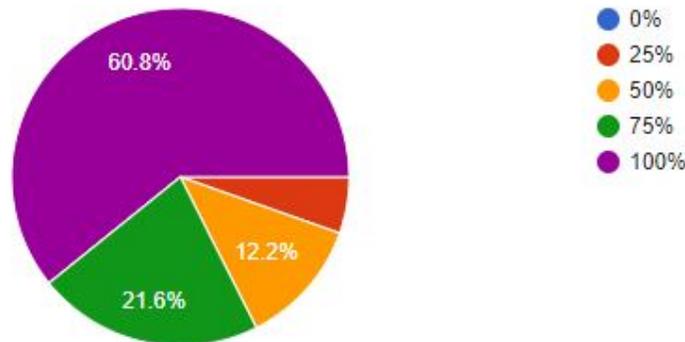


The results for the item 4 shows that 20.3% strongly agree with the statement. 17.6% partly agree with the statement. 33.8% somewhat agree with the statement.

20.3% disagree with the statement. 8.1% strongly disagree with the statement.

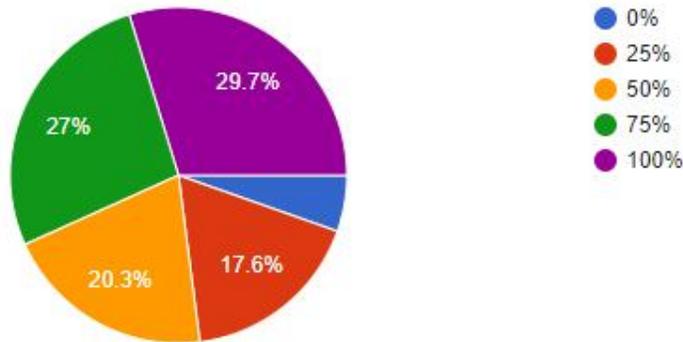
According to researchers repetitive negative thinking can increase one’s risk for developing dementia (Natalie L. Marchant, 2020)

Item 5 - It is more important to live life fully in the present moment than to spend time predicting what might go wrong in the future



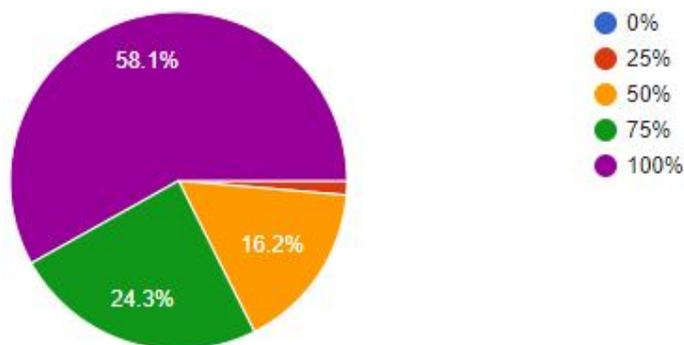
The results for the item 5 shows that 60.8% strongly agree with the statement. 21.6% partly agree with the statement. 12.2% somewhat agree with the statement. 10% disagree with the statement. If one wants to get through any tragedy stronger than ever, behavioural psychologist Szu-chi Huang and Jennifer Aaker (2019) from Stanford University argued that they need to switch their mindsets. One of the experiments based on a 14-day walking program in which steps were tracked to achieve an ultimate goal. After that goal had been reached, the subjects were given the opportunity to continue tracking their steps. The researchers found that those who thought about the program as a journey walked close to 55 percent more during the three additional days than those who simply had a destination (meeting the goal) in mind. Being in the present is very important to get through tough times. Having this mindset helps an individual to deal with situation with less stress.

Item 6 - I will assume safety unless there is clear evidence of danger



The results for the item 6 shows that 29.7% strongly agree with the statement. 27% partly agree with the statement. 20.3% somewhat agree with the statement. 17.6% disagree with the statement. 8% strongly disagree with the statement. Considering all the options from all angles in any given situation helps an individual to have a better perspective of life.

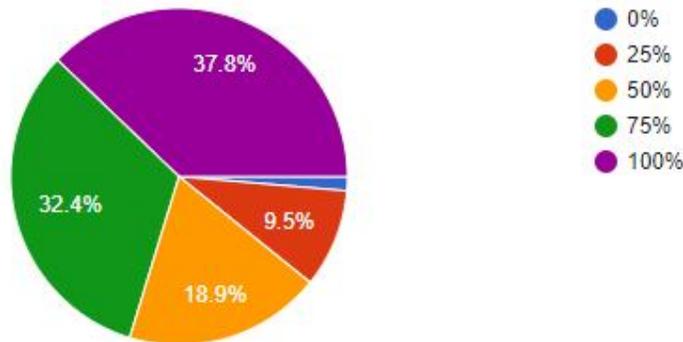
Item 7 - It is more important to practice flexibility and learn to cope when things do not go as planned



The results for the item 7 shows that 58.1% strongly agree with the statement. 24.3% partly agree with the statement. 16.2% somewhat agree with the statement. 2.5% disagree with the statement. To stay flexible in times of fear is difficult, and people often retreat into survival mode, rigidify, and fall back on tried-and-true behaviors in response to frightening situations. Many of these ritualistic actions can be seen in symptoms of anxiety and depressive disorders. The lack of flexibility is often seen as a shortfall in a key aspect of health, and evidence also shows that one’s mood is associated with one’s ability to be flexible. So, think of flexibility as a medicine against anxiety—a medicine which focuses your mind on possibilities rather than deficiencies

(such as losing the freedom of movement), Gil Noam (2020).

Item 8 - I can take reasonable precautions, knowing that I can influence but not control outcomes



The results for the item 8 shows that 37.8% strongly agree with the statement. 32.4% partly agree with the statement. 18.9% somewhat agree with the statement. 9.5% disagree with the statement. 2% strongly disagree with the statement. Meditating on the good and bad, or writing down one’s thoughts, goals and feelings in a journal on an daily, weekly or even annual basis can help one to achieve a journey mindset, Huang and Aaker (2019) suggested that autonomy restoration when activated during the pandemic worsened. Employees reported decreasing powerlessness and increasing authenticity during this period, despite their subjective stress-levels not improving. Further, the trajectories of recovery for both powerlessness and authenticity were steeper for employees higher (vs. lower) in neuroticism, a personality characteristic central to stress reactions. Regaining a sense of autonomy can help one to have a controlled outcome (Anicich, 2020).

Items 1-4 dealt with fixed mindset whereas the other 4 items dealt with growth mindset. Overall this study replicates the findings of the previous researches. Enhancing one’s growth mindset is essential. Hence the hypothesis that there will be significant difference in women taking care of their family and seeking help than men is proved. One major limitation of the study is that the sample size consisted more of women than men. Therefore, employing a growth mindset during tough situations like pandemic and lockdown would help deal with uncertainties in a better manner unlike a fixed mindset.

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