

EMOTIONAL INTELLIGENCE AND THE GLOBAL PANDEMIC

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Abstract

The global pandemic has changed the total normal situation of everyone. This has created a terrifying situation in Everyone's mind. "What is going to happen next?" What will be my fate? What will be my family's condition? What about my loved ones? What will be the status of our universe? These are few apprehensions continuously going on the minds of all. It's a frightening time. We all are facing a worldwide pandemic, with cities and even entire countries shutting down. Some of us are in red zones. Some fear to be in red zone any time. For months, almost every newspaper has stories about the coronavirus pandemic on its front page; radio and TV programmes have back-to-back coverage on the latest death tolls; social media platforms are filled with frightening statistics, practical advice and some rumours also. At this juncture it is normal for people to experience a wide range of thoughts, feelings and reactions including: Feeling stressed or overwhelmed, Anxiety, worry, or fear, Racing thoughts, Sadness, tearfulness, loss of interest in usual enjoyable activities, Physical symptoms, such as increased heart rate, stomach upset, fatigue, or other uncomfortable sensations, Frustration, irritability, or anger, Restlessness or agitation, Feeling helpless, Difficulty concentrating or sleeping, Feeling disconnected from others, Apprehension about going to public spaces, Trouble relaxing. It is the hardest situation to manage. It is very easy to catastrophize and spiral out into overwhelming dread and panic. But there are many solutions to overcome this catastrophic situation. The present paper discusses the role of emotional Intelligence to cope with this precarious situation.

Key Words: *Pandemic, Catastrophic, emotional intelligence, Coping*



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Life was going on as usual. Suddenly on 31 December 2019, the World Health Organization (WHO) detected reports of a cluster of viral pneumonia cases of unknown cause in Wuhan, Hubei, and an investigation was launched at the start of January 2020. On 30 January, the WHO declared the outbreak a Public Health Emergency of International Concern (PHEIC)—7,818 cases confirmed globally, affecting 19 countries in five WHO regions. On 13 March 2020, an unverified report from the *South China Morning Post* suggested a case traced back to 17 November 2019 (a 55-year-old from Hubei) may have been the first person infected. Then WHO recognised the spread of COVID-19 as

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a pandemic on 11th March 2020 as Italy, Iran, South Korea, and Japan reported surging numbers of cases. The world saw more than a half-million people infected and nearly 30,000 deaths by end of March 2020. The infection rate in the US and other nations was still spiking.

India has been witnessing continuing growth in the number of new infections, albeit at a moderate doubling time, despite the national lockdown. The current growth rate, coinciding with a graded exit from lockdown, means that the country is preparing itself for a new normal. Exactly the situation is going to be worst. During this pandemic precarious condition people across the globe are facing variety of challenges. Especially in India the challenges are every typical as the population is very dense, the people are not so disciplined, maximum population is below poverty line and the health care is not so strong. A galaxy of challenges varies from physical security, financial security, psychological security, moral security, religious security , spiritual security and particularly in Mass- communication and journalism sector. With this external challenges people suffer from various psychological challenges.

The main Psychological challenges faced by people due to this global pandemic are

- Feeling stressed or overwhelmed
- Anxiety, worry, or fear
- Racing thoughts
- Sadness, tearfulness, loss of interest in usual enjoyable activities
- Physical symptoms, such as increased heart rate, stomach upset, fatigue, or other uncomfortable sensations
- Frustration, irritability, or anger
- Restlessness or agitation
- Feeling helpless
- Difficulty concentrating or sleeping
- Feeling disconnected from others
- Apprehension about going to public spaces
- Trouble relaxing

These Abnormality can be partially nullified by practicing few strategies of emotional intelligence. There are few studies support this assumption about emotional intelligence and coping strategies.

As per **“Emotional Intelligence, Coping Responses, and Length of Stay as Correlates of Acculturative Stress Among International University Students in Thailand”**

Coping strategies are defined as constantly changing cognitive and behavioral efforts to manage specific external or internal demands that are far beyond the existing resources of the person (Lazarus & Folkman, 1984). In another words, coping includes those efforts to deal with the new occasions that are potentially threatening and challenging. The type of strategy adopted by each person to cope with stress is considered to be part of the vulnerable profile of that person. Studies conducted on stress, accentuate this point that quality of behavior is not only influenced by stress but also the only way to determine behavioral health is by appraisal methods of stress and methods adopted to cope with them (Toist, 1986). In another words, coping is “an individual variable” that is apparent in important occasions and is the medium of the previous stressful incidents and their consequences such as: anxiety, mental helplessness, and physical complaints (Moos & Billings, 1981; Pearlin & Schooler, 1987). On the other hand, Baron and Parleer (2000) believe that stress management and ability of adaptation are the major elements of emotional intelligence. In fact, emotional intelligence is the ability to create positive consequences in the relationships with oneself and others. According to Mayer and Salovey (1993), emotional intelligence is the ability to observe feelings and emotions, differentiate between feelings and emotions, and apply this information to conduct thoughts and activities. As a coping mechanism, emotional intelligence can facilitate the stress and can use an effective selfregulation system while encountering with stress (Salovey et al, 1999). in the study revealed that those individuals who have less ability in realizing their emotions, have lower level of social adaptation than those who can highly realize their emotions(Engleberg & Sjoberg, 2003). Similarly those persons who have lower ability in managing their emotions, are not able to acquire social support in stressful situations (Lopes et al. 2004). Consistent with these studies, another study showed that individuals with high emotional intelligence use more normal coping strategies and those with low emotional intelligence use more avoidance-oriented coping strategies (Furnham et al. 2002; Eskay, 2011).

Considering that emotional intelligence and coping strategies play crucial roles in mental health, the study of the relationship between these two variables as important factors influencing mental health can be of great help in achieving a broader models in order to explain them. So, effective models can be determined to prevent and treat behavioral and

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mental disorders by recognizing the relationship between coping strategies and emotional intelligence precisely. Hence, the present study aims at investigating the relationship between emotional intelligence and its elements, coping strategies and that to what extent emotional intelligence can predict the coping strategies used in stressful situations. In general, findings showed that emotional intelligence had positive relationship with problem-solving coping strategies, social support, cognitive appraisal, and emotional inhibition of positive relationship and has negative significant relationship with physical control coping strategies. The positive relationship of emotional intelligence elements such as problem-solving, cognitive appraisal, social support and the negative relationship of emotional intelligence with non-effective coping strategies of somatic inhibition are consistent with findings of some studies (Mohammadi et al., 2009; Engleberg & Sjoberg, 2003; Lopes et al., 2004; Furnham et al., 2002). Coping process includes those procedures that one can manage his emotions by applying them, think in an organized way, conduct and organize his behaviours, control his automatic arousals, and act in social and non-social environments towards changing or decreasing stressors (Folkman & Lazarus, 1980). On the other hand, Mayer and Sullivan (1997) believe that emotional intelligence and regulating skills or controlling emotions are related with high level of coping. So, these emotions organize processes that can facilitate effects in decreasing the frequency and intensity of stressors and even in enduring stressful situations. Riley and Schutte (2003), considered the emotional intelligence as a coping mechanism that leads to useful self-regulation in order to achieve the desired goals. As the findings of this study showed, there is a positive significant relationship between emotional intelligence and emotional inhibition (emotion-focused) coping strategies. However, this finding is in contrast with our expectations and is not consistent with findings of most of the studies conducted in the field of positive relationship between emotional intelligence and effective coping styles and negative relationship of emotional intelligence and non-effective coping styles but the study conducted by Mohammadi et al., (2008), showed that students with higher emotional intelligence use both effective and non-effective coping strategies while encountering with stressful situations though they use effective coping strategies more than non-effective ones. To explain this, we can say that some other factors besides emotional intelligence are involved in adopting coping strategies. These factors are as follows: demographic characteristics (gender and age), personality factors (self-efficacy, internal or external control resource, being introverted or extroverted, level of self-confidence, etc.), environmental factors (family resources such as social support), and

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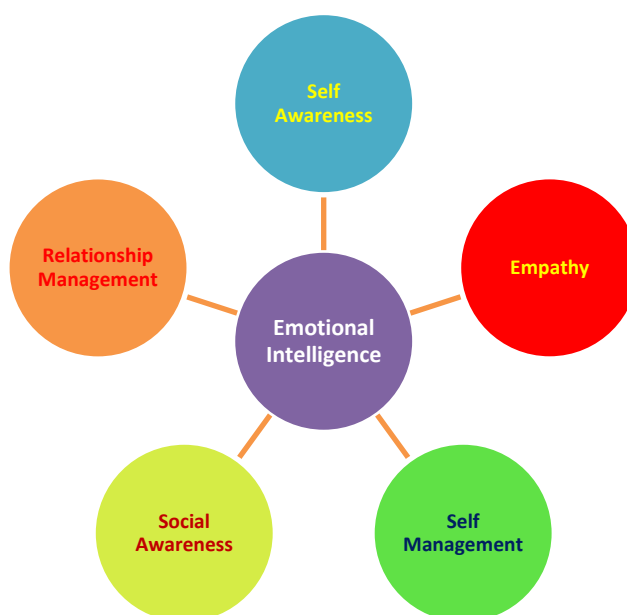
stressful situations' characteristics (type, intensity, and predictability of the situation). Thus , different studies reveal that emotional intelligence and coping strategies have positive relationship.

One must know the concept of Emotional intelligence and its factor and the ways to use in coping.

Emotional intelligence

Emotional intelligence (EI) refers to the ability to perceive, control and evaluate emotions. Some researchers suggest that emotional intelligence can be learned and strengthened, while others claim it is an inborn characteristic. In the article "Emotional Intelligence," Peter Salovey and John D. Mayer (1990) defined emotional intelligence as, "the subset of social intelligence that involves the ability to monitor one's own and others' feelings and emotions, to discriminate among them and to use this information to guide one's thinking and actions". In mid-1990s, Daniel Goleman revealed findings in neuroscience and psychology that stressed the importance of Emotional Quotient (EQ). This makes us aware of our feelings and that of others. It gives empathy, motivation, compassion and an ability to respond skillfully to pleasure and pain. Goleman argued that EQ was a basic requirement for the use of IQ. If the areas of our brain that feel are damaged, our ability to think effectively is diminished. Gradually it is now clear that emotional intelligence is an essential part of our thinking and coping strategy to make our life balanced and successful.

Components of EQ:



Self-awareness - People with high emotional intelligence are usually self-aware. They understand their emotions, and because of this, they don't let their feelings rule them. They're confident – because they trust their intuition and don't let their emotions get out of control. They're also willing to take an honest look at themselves. They know their strengths and weaknesses, and they work on these areas so they can perform better. Other people normally may see it as self-focused or a waste of time, but one can effectively work with others only if one gets *really good* at knowing own selves, own thoughts, own emotional reactions, and own tendencies.

During this time one must do few things to manage this dreadful condition.

- In the early morning and evenings one must sit quietly and think about oneself,
- Write down the thoughts and feelings
- Good(likeness, sympathy, happy relationship, happy memories) and Bad Feelings (Anger, Jealousy, Hatred, Competition, worries, fear, Insecurity etc)
- Giving positive affirmations to combat the negative feelings
- prepare a list of works to be done,
- Self reflection before going to bed

This will help one to know where one is. This is nothing but **Self Awareness**.

Self-management –

After knowing about one's strength, weakness, feelings, duties and responsibility one must know the technique to control impulsive feelings and behaviors, manage your emotions in healthy ways, take initiative, follow through on commitments, and adapt to changing circumstances.

Always one must remember **to remain calm** as we all know everything is passing cloud nothing (no situation) is permanent. One must take care of oneself by changing the thoughts. Our thoughts, feelings, and behaviors are intricately connected. Changing thoughts to be more helpful will have a huge impact on the intensity of your emotions and shift your behaviors to be much more productive. This sets off a chain of events leading to more positive thoughts and even changes in neurochemistry. During present scenario of pandemic one must manage the thoughts from fear to secured, insecurity to security, and from worry to balanced state. This is **Self-Management**.

Social awareness

After knowing oneself and knowing the technique to manage oneself one must learn the skill to understand the emotions, needs, and concerns of other people, pick up on emotional cues, feel comfortable socially, and recognize the power dynamics in a group or organization. During this severe condition of global pandemic one must speak to the friends and relatives regularly. Enquire about their condition, their emotions and needs sitting at home also.

So, with this physical distancing one can ease the mental worries of others by talking on phone also. This may improve the mental condition of both. In this way one can get knowledge about others around him/her. This is **Social Awareness**.

Relationship management

Each one wants one's success but the people who think about others' wellbeing with them are great. When we are staying in a social system we must inculcate to develop and maintain good relationships, communicate clearly, inspire and influence others, work well in a team, and manage conflict. It is usually easy to talk to and like people with good social skills. Those with strong social skills are typically team players. One must know to manage disputes and good at maintaining relationships. It is told, "**do not oblige always but speak obligingly always**".

At this juncture one must keep in touch with the near and dear ones and at the same time with the community. By adhering the Govt. Rules and regulation one must manage helping others online. There are various online platforms available to help people: one can provide the awareness in different groups. This is nothing but **Managing Relationship**.

Empathy

As we know man is a social animal. She/he must have the ability to identify with and understand the wants, needs, and viewpoints of those around you. The people having these characteristics are Empathetic People. People with empathy are good at recognizing the feelings of others, even when those feelings may not be obvious. As a result, empathetic people are usually excellent at managing relationships, listening, and relating to others. They avoid stereotyping and judging too quickly, and they live their lives in a very open, honest way.

During this pandemic one must think about others staying around him/her, understand their condition, talk to them, find out their problem and needs, manage to help them and help them personally. All these acts are the activities of an **empathetic person**.

Thus, it is observed that with these entire characteristics one can help himself and help others to manage the pandemic trauma. We all try to inculcate these qualities and make ourselves and others happy in these difficult times. This situation will not last but our qualities will last forever with us.

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