Examining Resource Utilization in Teleworking: A Conservation of Resources Perspective Across Successive COVID-19 Waves

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Abstract

The successive shock waves (waves I, II, III and so on) of COVID 19 caused significant disruption to employment. Using the Conservation of Resources theory, this study aims to understand how teleworkers coped up with and managed their stress during this period. A purposeful sampling of thirty teleworkers and their households, interacting through in-depth interviews, analyzing their social media accounts and audio/video clips, were the approaches used. Gioia methodology of qualitative data analysis was employed, and analysis was carried out using NVivo qualitative data analysis software. Teleworkers had to recalibrate many of their resources, in the context of stress management across the COVID-19 waves. This study will be useful for organizations to design work-from-home policies such as infrastructure, job skill definition and cyber security. This is the first study to examine the resource utilization across the two waves of COVID-19 through the conservation of resources perspective.

Keywords: COVID-19, Wave 1 And Wave 2, Stress Management, Disaster Event, Conservation of Resources Theory, Lockdown, Work from Home, India

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1. Introduction

COVID-19 is a disaster event that has disrupted resource utilization significantly and unlocked a new reality. It has caused an unprecedented worldwide catastrophe and as a result necessitated significant changes in individual lifestyles and societal structures (Shevlin et al., 2020; Ramya et al., 2023).

COVID-19 has posed significant health, life and economic hazards worldwide (Umucu & Lee, 2020). Drastic changes have been made in the way people work and interact which can alter many aspects of our daily existence for the foreseeable future. As a result of the COVID-19 pandemic, many organizations have had to make substantial changes in the way they operate. Normal and established ways of working have been disrupted and some rendered obsolete overnight (Collings et al., 2021). The pandemic has led to the emergence of the next great disruption – remote work – that organizations will have to cope with in a post-pandemic world. Remote work is, perhaps, the most significant organizational design shock of our lifetimes (George et al., 2020) and while work from home (or anywhere) was a possibility for many before COVID-19, it has become a reality with which we will have to live for a long time to come.

With work-from-home arrangements for both spouses, work and family experiences crossover from one domain to the other and are interdependent (Bakker et al., 2005; Collings et al., 2021; Wayne et al., 2013; Westman, 2001). With organizations such as LinkedIn, Google, Tata Consultancy Services and many others announcing that work from home is going to continue for at least this year and the next, organizations will have to brace themselves to rethink how they will engage and motivate their workforce in a hybrid work environment where only a few people will come to work and the rest (a large proportion) will work from home (Kirchner et al., 2021).

Furthermore, while restrictions on movement and social isolation have played a significant role in controlling the spread of COVID-19, the consequences of social isolation have led to a grave concern in terms of mental well-being of individuals. Stress is the result of the person's assessment of a stressor as threatening or unsafe vis-a-vis their ability to manage it (Liu et al., 2020). While understanding how stress is managed, especially during a pandemic, is crucial (Liu et al., 2020), not many studies have examined how stress coping resources are managed during disaster events (Crawford et al., 2019), especially when the stress-causing shock happens in succession. The present study is the first of its kind which attempts to answer the following research questions:

1. What is the impact of successive disaster events such as 'COVID-19 waves' on stress-coping resources of working professionals (teleworkers)?

2. How did teleworkers and their households respond and cope with the stress during the two waves of a disaster event?

We have examined the above research questions to provide an understanding of how COVID-triggered lockdowns made the teleworkers and their households to utilize and reprioritize their resources. This study makes multiple contributions to literature. First, a study highlighting the variation in terms of impact of a disaster event and coping between two waves is predominantly missing to the best of our knowledge. Second, while various studies have been previously conducted on the stress management in the wake of disaster events like COVID-19 (such as (Khademian et al., 2020; Liao et al., 2021; Mattioli et al., 2021) however qualitative studies specific to teleworkers is still rare. Last, although this study draws on a specific disaster event i.e., COVID-19, however, the findings can be generalized to any other disaster events such as a war, a catastrophe or a disaster.

2. Literature Review

2.1 COVID-19 Pandemic: A Disaster event

A disaster event is defined as a novel, critical and disruptive event that demands additional resource investment in the domain from which the shock initiated (Crawford et al., 2019; Morgeson et al., 2015). It can be positive such as a childbirth, a promotion into a totally new role or negative such as a life-threatening illness or relocation. The pandemic emerged as a seismic social shock in which many individuals lost their sole means of livelihood (Kalil et al., 2020) leading to be a major contributor of stress for various households. Many parts of society have been infected by the virus that governments around the world have had to impose protracted periods of lockdown on their citizens, leading to the temporary suspension of nearly all human contact (Dwivedi et al., 2020).

The pandemic occurred in two dominant and clearly visible waves in India. A clear distinction between the first and second COVID-19 wave can be drawn. The second wave developed at a much greater speed compared to the first wave (Jain et al., 2021) and the repercussions were devastating. It was observed that during the second wave, the virus had started mutating itself such as the delta variant. The transmission capacity of the mutant virus was very high, and its incubation period was relatively low. Jain et al. (2021) highlighted that the magnitude of second wave (of the delta variant) was much more profound in India (and in many parts across the globe) as compared to the first wave because of younger population getting infected by this virus and the much faster rate of spread of the variants, creating a situation where resources and personnel were exhausted.

According to experts, the actual number of deaths might be far higher than reported (Pandey and Nazmi, 2021). Moreover, the chronic shortage of oxygen cylinders and ICU beds was a major cause for worry among the masses during the second wave. The pictures of suffering patients were horrifying. Further, although people had a better knowledge about COVID-19 as compared to the first wave, still the positivity rate was much higher due to the virus mutations. Despite the differences between the two waves, they also shared a lot in common. COVID-19 disrupted every business, had been novel in terms of its spread, strain and damage to humans, and of course proved life-threatening. The social and economic impacts of the waves were without parallel, leading to tremendous stress on

health care systems, government machinery and public infrastructure in many countries around the world.

2.2 The Conservation of Resources (COR) theory

The Conservation of Resources (COR) theory (Hobfoll 1989, 2011) offers a useful theoretical foundation and describes how people react to the stressors they encounter in their environment (Mary Celin, Bhanot & Kalsi, 2022) and how those encounters influence their well-being. It argues that people attempt to obtain, retain, and protect resources and that stress occurs when they risk losing, or actually lose, such resources (Hobfoll, 2001). Resources are defined by those objects (e.g., house), personal characteristics (e.g., optimism), conditions (e.g., marriage), or energies (e.g., time, money, or physical energy) that are valued by the individual or serve as a means for the attainment of these objects. The various categories of resources are shown below in Figure 1.

 Macroresources Culture Social equality Wealth public policies 	Objects/Conditions Marriage Employment Home Social network	Constructive resources Skills Knowledge Experience Mental resilience Health	 Key resources Self efficacy Self esteem Optimism Social power
	Social support	Energies]
	Love	Mood	
	Affect	Physical energy	
	Advice	Cognitive energy	
	Respect	Attention	
	Help from others	Time	

Figure 1. Conservation of Resources Framework

COVID- 19 is one such event that threw up a mandatory work-from-home situation and hence we believe COR is a good theoretical fit to our study. The various principles of COR theory underscore the importance of resources in different settings (Quick and Gavin, 2001). The first one talks about how resource loss is disproportionately more salient than resource gain. The second principle of COR theory states that people must invest resources in order to protect against resource loss. The third principle of COR theory says that the resource gained during crises acquires more salience. The fourth principle of COR theory talks about how resource crunch may drive people to become irrational, aggressive or exhausted.

In a COVID scenario, resources losses are likely to take place, and it is important to study how such successive disaster events were handled by teleworkers and their family members. Not many studies have examined how stress coping resources are managed during disaster event (Crawford et al., 2019). Thus, the focus of the present study is on examining teleworkers and their households'

coping mechanisms to overcome the stress caused during the successive disaster events such as COVID-19 waves.

3. Research Method

3.1 Data Collection

To address the research questions, 30 teleworkers and their households were recruited and interviewed in the first wave through purposive sampling. The same respondents were contacted during the second wave of COVID-19 to compare and contrast between the two waves. All households included husband and wife having full-time jobs and who had now shifted to 'both working from home' arrangement. Many of them also had children, yet this was not the criteria for sample selection. A total of around thirty-five respondents from a mix of career background were contacted and thirty were successful conversions.

Semi-structured WhatsApp audio and video calls were also conducted by the researchers using the discussion guide (and notes taking), thus exploring 'stress management' during the crisis of COVID-19 among teleworking households/households. There were three parts to the descriptive study: in-depth interviews, social media accounts, visuals/video of home/work areas. Additionally, respondents' data from their social media accounts were sought. The social media accounts considered were Facebook (rebranded as Meta), Twitter (Now "X") and WhatsApp.

3.2 Data Analysis

Given the need to understand in detail a phenomenon such as stress management during the pandemic (two waves), a descriptive qualitative research methodology was chosen by authors.

The interviews were summarized and then each respondent's answers were subjected to content analysis using the COR framework as the referent framework (Figure 1).

NVivo qualitative data analysis (QDA) v12 software was the text analysis tool used to identify the themes and sub themes from the in-depth interviews. Gioia methodology of qualitative data analysis was employed which helped us segregate the responses into first order concepts, second order themes and aggregate dimensions (Gioia, 2021).

We triangulated the responses and the participants' respective social media accounts with their permission to ensure validity. We looked into the participants' Facebook and Twitter accounts for the same. In addition, the respondents shared videos and pictures through WhatsApp. For example, the photos indicate how the working woman maybe juggling her physical space resources – she had shared her office room with her son (Figure 2) and the other was working out of the kitchen (Figure 3).



Figure 2. Kid's study area alongside the mother's work area facilitates supervision



Figure 3. A lady doing office work in the kitchen, alongside doing her kitchen chores

A structured and fine-tuned structure of codes was built up through multiple iterations of the coding process. The findings captured across the various themes and sub-themes as per COR framework using Gioia methodology is provided in Table 1.

First Order Codes	Second Order Codes	Aggregate Dimension
 Shift towards digital work and persistence of Technological support during the 2nd wave Consequences thought to be short lived in Ist wave Economic breakdown in Ist wave followed by excess shortage of vaccine and health equipment's in the second Imposition of lockdown in Ist wave followed by politicization of vaccines in the 2nd 	Culture Social Equality Wealth Public Policy	Macro Resources
 Health infrastructure failure Negative impact on optimism prevalent in wave 1 but collapse Vicarious social media exposure with gloomy pictures Rampant loss of jobs 	Self-efficacy Self esteem Optimism Social Power Health insecurities	Key Resources
 Close knit family bonding during wave 1 More family interaction but within restricted space evident in both waves Non availability of domestic helpers Ban on domestic and international travel Imposition of COVID curfew 	Marriage Employment Home Social network Burden of household chores Social alienation	Contextual Resources
 Major mood fluctuations in wave 1 followed by predominant depressed mood in wave 2 Low physical energies due to long screen time in wave 1 followed by physical energy loss Excessive burnout followed by excessive despondency Distorted mental state 	Skills Knowledge Experience Mental Resilience Health	Constructive Resources
 Domestic workload shared during the Ist wave. Increase in the social ties evident both the waves, more so in 2nd wave. Redefining of medical infrastructure during the 2nd wave Rise in social media fund raising, arrangement of oxygen cylinders and tele- consulting More discussions on Health safety advices in households Increased focus on temporary nature of life 	Love Affection Advice Help from others	Social Support
 1.Enthusiasm to pick up new skills 2.Up-skilling by news exposure, certification course, Online yoga and dance classes 3.More focus on vaccination in second wave to develop immunity as compared to COVID appropriate behavior 	Mood Physical Cognitive Attention Time	Energies

Table 1. Concepts, themes and dimensions using Gioia methodology

4. Analysis of Results

The study analyzed the impact on various resources and the management of stress by teleworkers during the two waves of COVID-19. The impact of COVID pandemic on the respondents' resource dimensions are discussed in detail next.

4.1 Aggregate Dimension: Objects and Conditions

Given below is the impact of COVID-10 on teleworkers' contextual and personal resources.

Marriage. Ferguson et al. (2016) argued that supportive spouse contributes to work-life balance. An example of exemplary quote from one of the respondents was:

"No issues here...husband fortunately at home during lockdown...goes to office thrice a week now...shares in household chores". (Respondent 6, teleworker's spouse in Mysore)

Moreover, lockdown had given an opportunity for the spouses to spend time together and with the family which had enhanced their mutual understanding and thus helped them cope with the stress (Waddell et al., 2021). This phenomenon was common during both the waves. One of the respondents observed:

"Lockdown has given us a chance to understand ourselves better. Also, good family time." (Respondent 12, IT employee, Bangalore)

Employment. While some of the respondents highlighted their financial insecurities, job loss threats, a few others reported no pay cuts or job losses. Employment losses were found to be more rampant during the first wave of COVID-19. Also, the pattern was not similar across industries. While factory workers suffered profoundly during first wave, IT companies and online teaching emerged out to be much stronger. One respondent mentioned:

[I am] very secure in good position, company is in good shape...they have enough orders...so no threat at all financially. (Respondent 8, working in an e-commerce company, Hyderabad)

The respondents highlighted that the pay cuts were necessary to maintain the jobs without layoffs. During the lockdown, employment was considered as a stressor. Respondents observed:

No threat as of now.... but I'm not sure how things will be if things continue like this. (Respondent 15, working in an IT firm, Chennai)

No problem as such, and we are not aware of the layoff. But increments won't happen this time. (Respondent 18, working in private bank, Hyderabad)

However, during the COVID wave 2, teleworkers and organizations had adapted, and situations were improving for better. One of the respondents during the second wave observed:

The frenzy associated with wave 1 was very profound, however, the job conditions at least recuperated. (Respondent 25, an IT professional working in Bangalore)

Home. Most of the respondents during wave 1 reported that they got face-to-face time and get to interact with their children and extended family. However, absence of house help (maids) increased the domestic workload. Respondents during wave 1 observed:

Lockdown has impacted communication profoundly, but I talk to my family and relatives using zoom and Skype. For now, this is ok, I cannot continue like this for much longer than two more months (Respondent 2, Business analyst, Hyderabad).

The physical workspace was a constraint for many. In many cases, they had to adjust to sharing the table or the room with their spouse and children, leading to privacy and confidentiality issues.

Socializing/social network. Socializing is the act of meeting people for social interactions (Hobfoll, 2011) and social network is about connecting people using online platforms.

One respondent also mentioned:

Not much change here. Even otherwise, I was not into socializing and partying, have friends with whom we occasionally catch up over a drink or a meal, but now through phone / video call. Miss client physical meetings. (Respondent 25, an IT professional working in Bangalore)

One respondent during wave 2 further mentioned:

It was depressing at first because we thought after vaccine COVID will vanish but unfortunately COVID seems to have no end. Wave after wave but now I have got used to it and don't feel so hopeless. (Respondent 19, IT employee from Delhi).

Interestingly, some respondents highlighted the pitfalls of constantly being together:

Too much time together with loved ones can cause strains. (Respondent 9, College professor from Delhi).

4.2 Aggregate dimension: Constructive resources

Constructive resources comprise skills, knowledge, experience, mental resilience and health which were utilized or developed to effectiveness manage the stress during two COVID-19 waves.

Skills, knowledge and experience. Respondents acknowledged the need of the hour to upskill themselves. They involved themselves in more skill development activities during wave 1. A respondent from wave 1 interviews mentioned:

[I] learnt to cook new dishes, attending online classes to understand and develop leadership skills, how to manage people and get deliverables from them (Respondent 16, works in e commerce sector from Pune).

Other respondents observed:

I have been learning analysis tools like multivariate analysis. Earlier [I] did not get the time to do this. I am doing a course on coursera on positive psychology. Planning to attend a course for teaching online. (Respondent 17, a doctoral researcher from Chennai).

I feel my enthusiasm to develop new skills has gone down. (Respondent 21, IT professional in Chennai)

Psychological resilience and health. Mental resilience is mentioned in COR theory as a constructive resource. Based on our analysis, we renamed it as psychological resilience and defined it as the ability of the individuals to cope with a crisis situation mentally or emotionally and return to the normal status quickly. Overall health was another resource which was talked about repeatedly by the individuals.

Some teleworkers had taken up health initiatives:

[I am] more into healthy lifestyle, limited eating and fewer dishes.... easy to cook plus healthy food. Doing exercise and all... so good, at least in the beginning. Doing exercise at home itself since could not go to gym. (Respondent 22, Sales personnel from Mangalore)

A few others had really no time to take care of themselves in the midst of work and family routines (Hobfoll, 2011).

Health, general Routine – [has] gone out of the window. Stopped walking, jogging, no exercises, no proper diet, and no proper sleep. Time has become premium. When you wake up for the next day there is no energy. I fell sick for 2 days because of this (burnout) (Respondent 27, teleworker's spouse from Delhi)

4.3 Aggregate Dimension: Social support

The third quadrant in the COR framework (Hobfoll, 2001) represents social support. It includes love, affection, advice, respect, and help from others.

Love and affection. Traumatic stress (such as COVID-19), according to COR theory, results in a rapid depletion of resources. According to resource theory, love represents one of the major class of resource that is valued (Gorgievski, 2010). A respondent mentioned:

I think it's the love of my family that keeps me going, these are the little joys that keep me going (Respondent 8, working in an e-commerce company, Hyderabad)

Advice and help from others. Family members shared the housework as well talked on important topics, indicating respect and advice giving. Both advice seeking and receiving was recognized as an active coping strategy. One respondent mentioned:

The pandemic has been a roller coaster; I have had an amalgam of emotions but I feel good advice always came in handy (laughs) (Respondent 15, working in an IT firm, Chennai)

Help from others in terms of sharing domestic chores significantly reduced the burden which otherwise was on one individual (especially women). The work burden was shared among family members during the first wave.

He does the dishes sometimes. In some places [times] when I was on a call, he stepped in for feeding the children. Sons are really helpful during this time. They took responsibilities of doing dishes, making coffee, mopping, laundry, garbage, etc.) (Respondent 28, a HR professional from Delhi)

4.4 Aggregate Dimension: Energies

Energies include resources like mood, time, cognitive energy, physical energy, attention. These are personal volatile resources that are valued by the individuals to attain other resources (Ten Brummelhuis & Bakker, 2012).

Mood. Respondents reported experiencing mood swings, frustrations, irritations because of lockdown induced difficulties (Westman, 2001). More mood swings were witnessed in the first wave because the disaster event was unprecedented, and the adaptation took time. A respondent observed:

I had issues in the first few days / weeks...felt overloaded and stressed. But settled down gradually. Lack of social life and entertainment (going out) affected my mood initially, now no choice, relaxing myself watching movies at home. (Respondent 9, College professor from Delhi)

Cognitive and physical energies. Some respondents felt a decline due to the long and erratic work hours while some others reported that they could concentrate better now and their productivity increased. One respondent observed:

Very productive because of work from home. No time wasted in every day socializing – chai breaks, going for a smoke, etc. (Respondent 3, working for investment banking, Chennai).

Few of the respondents said that they made use of the time to build their physical energy through exercise, yoga, walking and jogging, as reported below:

Lockdown has helped in physical exercise since no commute. I make sure to spend 45 minutes in the morning to keep me fit (Respondent 28, a HR professional from Delhi)

Time and attention. Most of the respondents did not have any major impact on attention due to lockdown. However, for working women attention was a resource that was in demand as all in the household seemed to want her attention.

My office hours used to be my productive hours. But now my productive hours have got shifted. The whole timeline has shifted. Now evenings are more productive because kids will be settled by then, all chores will be finished. (Respondent 28, a HR professional from Delhi)

While many felt convenience at work from home, some felt it was not an ideal future option.

I ended up working more hours than before. Boundary between home and work has gone up. No weekends. (Respondent 3, working for investment banking, Chennai).

The uncertainty of lockdown has also led to frequent mood swings. Coping with family members' needs through the day as well as being 'available' for the organization, took its toll. Hence working women had been particularly under a lot more stress during lockdown.

4.5 Aggregate Dimension: Macro resources

Macro resources (culture, social equality, wealth, public policies) are characteristics of larger social, cultural and economic system in which an individual is entrenched (Powell et al., 2018).

Culture. Any disaster event has manifold repercussions. COVID-19, for example, took a major toll on various cultural aspects. Few of them believed that a cultural shift was going to happen. Things that were not valued much due to fast-paced world started getting attention.

Trust and human interaction are going to go away.... will take time to come back. Food, money and all natural resources will be valued more. (Respondent 30, a banker from Chandigarh)

Wealth and social equality. Respondents seemed more worried about the condition of the economy in the first wave. Due to the closure of business establishments, economy was worst affected. The GDP figures were disturbing. A few highlighted the fact that India was facing an economic downturn. Some respondent observed:

Surely Indian economy has been badly impacted due to lockdown restrictions. (Respondent 30, a banker from Chandigarh)

Disparities in the society and disaster events go hand in hand. A similar trend was quite visible during the pandemic. Many were laid off from their jobs, salary cuts were common and migrant workers in India were worst affected which attracted a lot of hue and cry also. One respondent mentioned:

Economy will be badly impacted.... daily wage workers are suffering (Respondent 11, a factory supervisor from Chennai)

4.6 Aggregate Dimension: Other Key Resources

The final theme of key resources includes self-efficacy, self-esteem, optimism and social power. These represented the traits of the individuals which help them to select, alter, and implement other resources (Hobfoll, 2001). Unfortunately, COVID-19 led lockdown had severely tested the positive traits of an individual. Few respondents observed:

I don't feel optimistic...mentally down thanks to social isolation and business and cash flow pressure.

I find it hard to be optimistic now...under stress

I am really anxious about the future of business, and also worried about the illness (Respondent 3, working for investment banking, Chennai).

Other traits like self-efficacy and self-esteem had been affected because of the fear of coronavirus and quarantine. However, a few respondents tried to uplift their moods by focusing on entertainment, spiritualism and yoga to build their efficacy, esteem, optimism and thereby social power. For example, one respondent mentioned:

I don't feel stressed personally but some friends are... I avoid COVID news...maybe that helps... Plus I engage myself in meditation, which is useful.... (Respondent 24, freelance writer, Bangalore)

4.7 Stress Management during Disaster events

The data and analysis demonstrated the presence of certain resources associated with the management of stress among teleworkers and their households during two shock waves of COVID-19. We identified 6 themes in the Gioia methodology based on COR theory. The key themes relating to stress management that emerged from our analysis are presented below in Figure 4 and are discussed next.

4.8 Hopelessness and Successive Disaster events

The first principle of COR theory explains that resource loss is disproportionately more salient than resource gain. The findings of our study extend COR theory by demonstrating that successive disaster events lead to a state of learned helplessness. Individuals experienced temporary loss of hope during the first disaster event. But the second successive disaster event made individuals completely hopeless and experience depression. One respondent stated:

I thought the vaccines will be out and it's the end of pandemic. Second wave made me more fearful as people were dying. It went from shortage of PPE kits in the first wave to shortage of IC beds and oxygen cylinders which was graver. I turned completed hopeless (Respondent 7, NGO worker in Mysore).



Figure 4. Stress Management During Successive Disaster events

During the first wave, people believed that the crisis would end soon. Vaccines had been announced in India by December 2020. But the second wave caught people by surprise due to its suddenness and rapidity of spread. This created despair in people. One of the respondents said:

Second wave made us realize that nothing is in our control. I thought vaccine will bring some respite but we were wrong. (Respondent 12, IT employee, Bangalore)

Even key resources such as self-efficacy, optimism took a beating as they could not feel that hope was arriving especially since vaccines were in shortage, and no solution was in sight for a widespread crisis such as the pandemic. According to theory of learned helplessness (Abramson et al. 1989), people who are exposed to uncontrollable events (like COVID-19 pandemic) learn that their responses and outcomes are not dependent on each other. Based on the findings of the study and the reviewed literature, we posit:

Proposition 1: Successive disaster events develop a feeling of hopelessness. Key dispositional resources such as self-efficacy, self-esteem and optimism along with physical, cognitive abilities, mood and attention take a bigger hit during the successive (second wave onwards) of the disaster event.

The second principle of COR theory states that to overcome the resource losses people must invest in resources. As discussed above major cultural changes emerged during the COVID-19 second wave and technology aided in the paradigm cultural shift be it in the work culture or general interactions among friends and households. Technology provided a platform to socialize. Moreover, need for instant messaging on COVID matters/urgent needs broke down socio-cultural barriers.

However, old people faced problems due to their inability to access as well as use technology. Watching entertainment using the 'over the top' (OTT) platforms united households. Technology was also used in every aspect of the new work from home scenario. All employees were forced to increase their level of digitization – where they had to interact and take decisions online, instead of physical meetings. Based on the above findings, we posit:

Proposition 2: Newer ways of connecting and doing work emerge during disaster events in order to maintain the structure and continuity of the society.

4.9 Social Equality and Empathy

COVID-19 deaths occurred equally across strata, rendering useless whatever power and wealth one may have. Instant communication on media about hopelessness of the situation increased empathy. In the first wave people were concerned about the country's economy but soon realized that their own jobs etc. were in danger, as businesses shut down. It became a question of survival.

Pandemic in India (as in many countries around the world) was a major disaster, especially during the second wave. Many things went out of control – medical infrastructure, doctors' availability, oxygen, COVID Testing, vaccine availability, effective vaccine communication to the public. Insecurities increased as access to health care was not assured – for both the rich and the poor.

Friends, more than relatives, became a part of this social support. Exchanges of food items, homemade remedies, contacts of medical personnel took place without any boundaries. Those who were unable to form social networks suffered during the pandemic and felt more hopeless and depressed. For those who had deeper social connections and strong family support, the stress handling ability was better. Emotional stability was key in handling stress. For those who were living alone, COVID situation was unbearable, as they did not have anyone close to turn to. Thus, we posit:

Proposition 3: Successive disaster events are a rare occurrence. People look for emotional support and social networks much more during successive disaster events.

Gain paradox principle, also the third principle of COR theory, states that people who have resources are less vulnerable as compared to people who experience resource loss at greater momentum. Resource dependency changed between the first and the second waves. We found that different people reacted differently to successive disaster events based on their life endowments. Those who had been exposed to prior stress events started somewhat better. But as time passed by and when the second wave hit, even their defenses were down.

The COVID pandemic also highlighted the importance of just living with basic needs. Simple helping others in dire need- became' spirituality' too, for many people. This pattern was prevalent in both the waves. People picked up new hobbies, many became more spiritual since pandemic made them realize life is transitory. These lead us to posit:

Proposition 4: The other life endowment that was helpful was some kind of spiritual faith. Those who had this seemed to sail through the disaster event better than those who did not.

Proposition 5: Those who had previous stress experiences such as death in the family, calamity, natural disasters, or a medical emergency seemed to have some familiarity in coping with the shock. Those with prior stress experiences were better prepared for the disaster event.

Those individuals who had tapped into their internal resources in the first event, coped better during the second. Those who were 'internally' dependent on stress coping, did better with the pandemic. Internal mechanisms included meditation, yoga, or some other religious or spiritual practice. As a couple of respondents explained:

I used to yoga regularly even before the pandemic. When I came to know that lungs were getting affected severely, I went back to yoga more aggressively, especially focusing on breathing exercises. This gave a sense of calmness. (Respondent 12, IT employee, Bangalore)

When a crisis hits, people who reach inward do better. It is a counter intuitive finding that the 'wealthy' ones looked to external resource for coping in the first wave, but gave up fast during the second as the external help was not coming and they were not trained to use their 'internal' resources. One respondent observed:

We saw our rich friends with contacts in high level places, not being able to get a bed during covid emergency. In fact, we found that they were more stressed than us (middle class people) as they did not know how to face the situation. They were very anxious and broke down often. (Respondent 11, a factory supervisor from Chennai)

Those who were used to utilizing power or wealth were particularly affected in a shocked manner as all these were useless in handling the second wave. They tended to give up mentally also faster as they were not used to any other coping mechanisms. They did not know how to tap into their internal resources – this left them with a sense of unexpected shock. Thus, we posit:

Proposition 6: Internal resources for coping with stress work better than external resources. More external the dependencies for stress coping the more likely that it would lead to helplessness among people.

5. Discussion and Conclusion

5.1 Implications for Theory and Practice

Successive disaster events have not been studied before and this is an important contribution from this study. When the first COVID-19 wave hit, though there was disruption among teleworkers and organizations, there was still an optimism of 'things will get back to normalcy soon'. This turned out to be a case of misplaced complacency as was revealed through the second wave, that proved to be disastrous for teleworkers as well as for businesses.

During the first wave, people did not think much about macro resources, as they were hoping that they would be able to deal with the pandemic at an individual level, without any institutional help. But as the second wave hit, they realized that neither the macro resources nor their own individual resources were of any use. Even organizations that started the 'work from home' arrangement in the first wave, soon realized that it is going to be more than a temporary phenomenon.

Physical space became a constraint in the work from home arrangement and working couples had to share their office with spouses/children, leading to privacy and confidentiality issues. This aspect requires serious attention from organizations. Our study also shows that organizations may need to take note of the increased workload for women during disaster events and will need to come up with different reward and retention measures for their women employees. Though flexibility in timing was greatly appreciated by teleworkers, the downside of that was the expectation of being constantly available for work. This was especially difficult for women during the pandemic.

Organizations will have to strike a balance and reframe the policies for work from home. The organizations began to realize that dependency on the public health care will only take you so far; hence they intervened and provided welfare schemes to employees. This is a trend that maybe here to stay, as a minimum medical infra would become a part of the package expectations by employees.

Our study found that in case of disaster events, personal resources such as energy and socializing/social networks take a significant beating. In the first wave of COVID-19, respondents were very concerned about the job losses and economic breakdowns. However, some of the respondents highlighted their financial insecurities, job loss threats, a few others reported no pay cuts or job losses.

During the first wave, teleworkers were enthusiastic to learn new skills, but this went missing in the second. The first wave of the pandemic saw an increase in the skills and knowledge of the respondents by way of attending webinars, enrollment in online classes, picking up hobbies (e.g., cooking). Employees tended to choose to learn those areas that have the potential to augment their work performance. Even a personal skill development helped employees feel fulfilled and creative, discovering a new dimension of themselves, thereby making them more motivated at work. However, a feeling of getting stifled had set in by the second wave and robbed people of their enjoyment.

The perspective towards job also shifted. While in the first wave, there was no threat of losing one's employment, the second wave showed that it could be a reality. Many faced a pay cut, lack of incentives and lived off their savings. The employers also were dealing with business uncertainty. Many organizations had announced 'salary cut' and diminished incentives' leading to the resource of employment to suffer. For some, even the prospect of retaining their jobs post the pandemic looked difficult. All these worsened key resources like self-esteem and optimism and people look to in home entertainment (such as web streaming) and spiritual options such as yoga, to cope in this scenario.

Social support was a game changer in the second wave, enabled by technology through exchange of information and help. Love, affection, respect and advice were all such important parameters in coping with COVID. As people witnessed deaths around them during the second wave, a feeling of insecurity crept in. Correspondingly, organizations should facilitate mental wellness programs and counseling at their premises. Depression and a feeling of hopelessness need formal sources of help and this is a realization that has taken place on a big scale during the second wave of COVID.

While face-to-face communication was restricted during both the waves, technology emerged as the stronger medium of communication. However, respondents had concerns that they will now be able to connect with their loved ones only through technological platforms. Socializing had especially got hit for the older people. If not tech savvy, they were unable to connect with their friends and family. Occasionally, socializing within close groups (apartment residents) had actually increased.

This study is important for several reasons. It offers insights on how to manage various resources during a lockdown situation (physical, mental psychological, financial, social, emotional, intellectual). From an organizational perspective, many aspects need to be re-evaluated (Wickramasinghe & Mallawaarachchi 2023). Work from home is likely to be embraced by certain type of organizations. Even in the pre-COVID era, the option to work at home was more likely to be available in the public sector, large establishments and work environments in which individuals are responsible for the quality of their own output (Felstead et al., 2002). But now, with technology having invaded our lives exponentially, many more organizations may enter this arrangement. They would do well to take care of the various aspects outlined in this study.

Right from physical office space, to the kind of infrastructure (work station, technology), to the gender ratio (working women have been more stressed in this lockdown period) to the kind of activities that can be made work from home (supervised versus non supervised; creative versus routine), working hours' duration and relevant incentives (entertainment, inspirational speakers, regular communication meeting) – all need to be recalibrated. From an employee perspective, they may need newer benchmarks to check if the organization that they plan to join satisfies a certain set of criteria that will allow them to manage their resources more optimally. While researchers should take a holistic approach to understand how companies and teleworkers should manage resources, it is also important to recognize that most millennials who enter the workforce are likely to be dual working couples who seek work life enrichment (Powell et al., 2018). So, the work from home arrangement will increasingly become a reality for this generation, as they try to balance all aspects of their lives.

From an individual (teleworker) perspective, the study highlights the need for developing positive psychological capacities such as hope, self-efficacy (self-esteem), resilience and optimism, together called as psychological capital in the research literature (Gupta and Singh, 2014). Our findings show that individuals' internal resources are extremely important (more than the external resources of power or wealth) when it comes to successive disaster events. It is advisable for

individuals and organizations to measure, develop, deploy and practice interventions that can help them raise their psychological capital. During crises, it is these qualities that will be closely related to the coping and response mechanisms of the individuals.

5.2 Limitations and Future Research

Successive disaster events have never been studied and hence this study stands out in its unique contribution. However, this study has some limitations that can be improved in future works. The study was limited to South India. More geographies could have been explored, though it is doubtful if the findings would have been significantly different. This study is also confined to metro cities where technology can enable work from home arrangement easily. The same phenomenon can be examined in other geographical locations where technology maybe inadequate, to see how work and stress coping is affected in such areas. A detailed perspective on which kinds of organizations will be suited to this work from home arrangement is another interesting area to shed light on. Those organizations that may be adept at coping with crisis typically have lesser lay-offs during disaster events and this is another useful area of study.

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