

Does COVID-19 Pandemic Lead to Creativity?

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Abstract

Lockdown during covid-19 has been considered as global stressors having unprecedented impact on personal and professional life of the people. In order to reduce the spread of covid-19, social distancing (restrictions of mass gatherings, temporary closure of school, college and offices etc.) has been implemented all over the world. Due to lockdown, people are spending more time at home and engaged in creative activities such as painting, music, cooking, gardening and pursuing their hobbies, interests etc. The scientific evidence indicates that there is a positive relationship between creativity and crisis /uncertainty. The present paper examines the creative activities people pursue during Covid -19 in order to make them happy, relaxed both physically and mentally.

Keywords: Covid-19; Creativity; Wellbeing; Individual

Abbreviations: APA: American Psychological Association; NSS: National Service Scheme; NHM: National Health Mission; CSB: Covid Appropriate Behaviour.

Introduction

Corona Virus Disease (Covid -19) pandemic not only affects the global economy but also the personal and professional life of the people. People are being confined to their homes during lockdown. They are being confronted with challenges due to new, unknown and uncertain situations. The uncertainty and crisis during Covid -19 create both challenges and opportunities. Many studies examine the negative impact of Covid-19 during lockdown. Very few studies shed light on positive impact of it. Individuals and organizations adopted innovative and creative ways to cope with change in order to survive in crisis [1]. Research findings indicate there is a positive correlation between i) experience of crisis/ disaster with creativity, and ii) creativity and wellbeing.

Creativity: Concept

According to Edward De Bono, creativity is considered as one of the important human resource. There would be no growth without it, and one will be repeating the as usual/same pattern forever. Creativity refers to “the ability to produce or develop the original work, theories, techniques or thoughts” (American Psychological Association (APA)). It is the mental process of the individual with conscious or unconscious insights which generates novel ideas, concepts and associations. The creative thinking skills are as follows:

- Expertise: knowledge may be technical, procedural, and intellectual.
- Creative thinking skills: Flexibility as well as imagination of the individual in order to solve the problem.
- Motivation: Intrinsic motivation of the individual to solve the problem. The external reward such as money is not being included (Figure 1).

The figure below depicts creative thinking skills which are part of creativity.

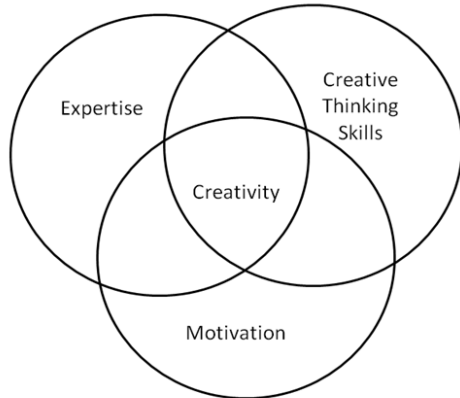


Figure 1: Harnessing Creativity and Innovation in the Workplace by Olivier Serrat, 2009.

The capacity/ability of the individual to produce products/service having two characteristics such as novel and relevant. Novel refers to originality and uniqueness of the creative work. Relevance refers to the i) Usefulness ii) Value, iii) Appropriateness, iv) Ability to solve specific problem.

Creativity of the individual varies with magnitude and scale. The 4C model of creativity is being conceptualised which describes the different categories of creativity, such as i) Big-C, ii) Pro-C, iii) Little-C, and iv) Mini-C. Big-C refers to the creative accomplishment by eminent persons (For example, Madam Curie work with radium). Pro-C refers to the professional accomplishments by domain practioner significantly contribute to the domain growth and solution of the problem (For example, Jazz pianist contribution to the Jazz music). Little-C is also known as everyday creativity. Everyone practiced it in their day-to-day activities and also take place in all spheres of life (For example, new dish or meal for a friends). Mini-C refers to the novel and personal meaningful interpretation of the experience, action and events. For example, Composition of poem for one's own, express one own 's emotions. It may not be meant for public but meaningful for the individual creator. It is the representation of the one's creation of new ideas as well as knowledge [2].

Review of Literature on Creativity

Crisis refers to the disruption which affect the system along with the value, assumptions, existence and sense of self. The individual and the organisation has to take different turn from their usual and familiar path/situation. It resulted a diversifying experiences which refers to highly unexpected and unusual events or situations. The

diversifying experience may be positive (Multicultural education, work life experiences) or negative (Financial loss, social exclusion, mental illness, early parental loss). But the diversifying experiences put the individual in the outside of the framework of normal, usual and routine life. As a result of which, the individual embrace new, unique ideas, cognitive flexibility, reappraise the core belief of the self and the world. They are willing to bring change in strength in interpersonal relations, recognition of personal strength, exploration of new possibilities, develop spiritualism and manifestation of creativity [3]. Research studies confirm that diversifying experience lead to creativity.

Though there is a debate on the relationship between positive mood and creativity but researchers found the positive mood is correlated with creative activity and negative affective states link with less creative. Research findings states that psychological pressure, stress, loneliness, mood, physical constraints related with creativity. The evidence of research findings confirm that one should feel good in order to be creative whereas other researchers contradict it. But it is not very clear in which direction this process takes place, whether i) One is creative because he/she is happy or ii) Does happiness/feel good factor make one's creative.

According to Dr. Alizee Lopez-Persem the creativity or creative experimentation enable the individual, to manage effectively the negative emotions arising out of confinement during lockdown, so that they feel better during the difficult or crisis situations. The free time during lockdown leads to creativity. The elimination of travel by the commuters to the workplace (office, school, college, etc.) leaving them more free time. The parents are not free as the kids are at home all the day during lockdown. The relationship between crisis, creativity and wellbeing has not been sufficiently examined across countries. Functional creativity refers to solve the everyday problems through creativity which is different from art relate suppressive creativity.

Creativity and Wellbeing

Nurturing employee's wellbeing is very crucial. There is a debate and discussion among social scientists regarding "what constitutes well-being". According to Pavot, the term wellbeing is a broad and multifaceted concept comprising of two elements such as, i) affective and ii) cognitive. Proposed a new wellbeing theory, and identified five elements of wellbeing: i) Positive emotions ii) Engagement, iii) Relationships, iv) Meaning, and v) Accomplishments, (acronym as PERMA). According to Diener, the term wellbeing composed of three elements such as: i) Satisfaction with life ii) Positive experience and iii) Negative experience. Research findings have shown that the individuals those

who experience positive feelings live longer and enjoy better health. They work more productively and having better relationships [4]. In contrast, negative feelings / emotions and lack of social relations strongly predict mortality and diseases.

Smith in order to improve the mental health, the art therapy has been considered as perceived relationship between connectivity and wellbeing. The difficult emotion has been expressed by the patient verbally. It provides distraction to positive emotions and create through creativity. Research studies also explored the creativity of the person and subjective well being. The study conducted on medical professionals and students in the undergraduate course. According to Cohen, et al. and Cera, et al. most of the work on creativity and wellbeing done on persons with disabilities, aging population and mental health issues. The creativity of the individual not limited to artistic work, it also exists in domain.

The transactional model of stress and coping developed by Lazarus. The model states that individual evaluate the stressful situations in both primary and secondary appraisal process and find the available resources for coping with stress. Creativity is considered as one of the resource for coping/solving the problems with the stressful situations. According to Canner et al. the individuals those who are engaged in creative activities, it enhances positive feelings which leads to increased wellbeing. Creative engagement is psychological in nature which is self-driven and intrinsically motivated. Most of the researchers consider creative activities as the intervention strategies for developing wellbeing and flourishing.

COVID-19 and Creativity

Times of uncertainty is considered as a catalyst for creativity. Creative actions is considered as coping strategies for dealing uncertainty and crisis. Uncertainty is considered as the opportunity for the organization and entrepreneur to engage in creative activities [5]. Lockdown during Covid -19 has two aspects: i) uncertainty and ii) solitude.

Solitude refers to one is lonely with certain objective which is different from loneliness. During covid-19, people are unable to rejoin with their family, friends and relatives etc. Solitude enhances creativity through self-contemplation, self-reflection and self-transformation. It also leads to boredom due to lack of social interaction which leads to social isolation. According to Mann et al. boredom is also associated with creativity. According to Gaylin as it alerts the person, "all is not well, something has to be done". The creativity can be viewed as to explore new avenues to reduce the boredom by doing the task in a more innovative way.

Feeney, et al. emphasised upon the social component of wellbeing whereas Ryan, et al. focusing on connectedness/ relatedness aspects of well-being. Lee, et al. emphasize upon social connectedness (SC) aspects of wellbeing. A study of 53,524 respondents of 26 countries evidenced that due to covid-19 pandemic those individuals who are not socially connected experience more stress compared to those who are married or cohabiting people. According to Carry, et al. individuals adopting transformative coping strategies like amplify positive feelings about themselves, engage in activities etc. On the basis of their own inherent capacities of creativity to cope with adversity [6].

The adversity in one's life motivate/ push them to engage in creative activity in order to overcome the constraints and obstacles caused by adverse events. According to Chinazzi, et al. social distancing (measures taken to reduce social distancing and maintain spatial distancing from strangers, family members etc.) has been adopted as a strategy to mitigate the spread of Covid -19. Till date research findings states the negative effects of covid-19 on mental health like pandemics such as Ebola, SARS, etc.

Research studies indicate an increase in the mental health problems like anxiety and depression during Covid-19 pandemic. So, people are being advised engage themselves to pursue passion, hobbies/ interests during leisure time as protective benefits for mental health by health organizations. According to Carry, et al. the benefits of engaging in physical activities such as walking/running, gardening and other outdoor activities during covid-19.

During pandemic, people also engage in home work out as evidenced from news and media. As the guidance of WHO (2020) for the health benefits, people engaged in physical activity. The psychosocial benefits of creative activity has been less studied during covid-19. The creative activities include painting, music (traditional artistic activities), programming, language learning and writing (mentally stimulating activities). Due to advancement of technology and social media, during pandemic people are engaged more in commentary articles on cooking, baking, jigsaw puzzles and range of artistic activities, but it lacks empirical evidence [7].

Research findings indicate that during pandemic, in Spain, people engage in telephone as well as video calls, watching TV, reading and physical exercises. In Ireland, people engage themselves in outdoor activities such as walking, gardening, exercise, pursue own hobbies, engage in child care activities which not only energize them but also make them happy and relaxed. Participation of creative activities leads to increased life span and positive correlation with mental health.

COVID 19 and Creativity: Indian Studies

The heroic acts of the young people of India during lockdown of Covid-19 pandemic is really praiseworthy. The relentless determination of young mass to extend their support during pandemic were as follows:

The Blue Brigade Making Lives Better

Nearly 25,000 youth volunteer enrolled themselves in Blue Brigade, an initiative of UNICEF India and NSS(National Service Scheme) extending their support to the people of Chhattisgarh [8]. They create awareness and support provided regarding i) immunization of the children below the age of 5yrs, ii) antenatal care and safe delivery of pregnant women in nearest health centers, iii) Inform the public about immunizations to the children, women and adolescent.

Awareness Campaign of COVID -19 Vaccination

In Madhya Pradesh, namely Divisha Parwar, Ritesh and Aarti Yadav create awareness in villages of Dhar district of MP, regarding vaccination [9]. People in rural areas and tribal dominated of MP reluctant to take the covid-19 vaccination. Their efforts found to be positive as more and more people are vaccinated.

Library on Wheels

As the school has been closed during lockdown, the initiative of library on wheel has been made by teacher-student duo Usha Dubey and Mahima Singh at Singrauli in MP. The basic objective was to access education and learning to the children [10]. As many children cannot access mobile phones or digital device so the library on wheel can reach to those students with book, to those who are interested to read and learn.

Gujju Student: An Online App

Hitarth Sheth, 17yrs old, social entrepreneur of Surat, Gujarat developed an online app named as "Gujju Student" in which students (medium to low income) can access the learning materials in local languages with the objective of equal learning opportunities for all children in an online mode.

Covid-19 : Awareness Campaign by Community Radio

In tribal Paniyar community of Kerala, majority of the tribal hamlets has expressed fear and hesitation for the covid-19 vaccination [11]. The community radio producer Ashwathy Murali has taken initiative to mitigate the fear, myth, anxiety for vaccination and built confidence among the tribal people. She was assigned the task by National Health Mission (NHM)

to plan for radio programme and jingles in Paniyar tribal dialect for better understanding of the Vaccination and Covid Appropriate Behaviour (CAB).

Fighter of Fake News

During Covid-19, a lot of incorrect information, fake news on Covid -19 has been spread through social media channels. A child rights activist of Tamilnadu, named Althaf, create a lots of awareness videos and short films on Covid -19 to spread awareness and tackle misinformation by providing verified information of WHO, MoHFW, UNICEF and Govt website of Tamilnadu.

Creating Art to Cope

An artist from Patna, Bihar named as Aditya, prepare poster, edited videos engage in social campaign for Bihar youth. He was also in touch virtually with friends and relatives who are tested covid positive and provide information to them [12].

Harnessing Technology

As the pandemic disrupt learning, Adito, young mind using digital technology educate, teach and create job opportunities for him as well as for others [13].

- **Awareness on Covid-19 Appropriate Behavior**

In Chennai, in support UNICEF and local volunteer, Ashok along with friends work relentlessly to create awareness among people to promote positive behaviors in order to prevent covid-19 by providing facts and information. The benefits of vaccination has been explained to the local people. The face mask and sanitizers was also distributed freely [14].

Conclusion

During Covid -19 people suffer from various types of mental health problems such as obsessive compulsive disorder, depression, anxiety, and post traumatic disorder. But the relationship between crisis and creativity has not been examined across countries. Research studies should focus more on how to mitigate the mental health problems during pandemic. As the people are engaged in creative activities, the positive feeling enhances their physical and mental wellbeing. According to Corry, et al. people use transformative coping strategies in order to deal with crisis/adversity. The hidden creativity of the individual can be effectively utilized for crisis management as well as personal development for the growth of the individual as well as society.

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