

Impact of COVID-19 on employees' emotional health: A conceptual model

Babbar M¹, Khanna I¹, Majid Baba M²

¹Shaheed Bhagat Singh College, University of Delhi, India ²University of Kashmir, India

ABSTRACT

The COVID-19 pandemic has wrecked havoc on the mankind and caused dramatic disruptions in personal and professional lives of the people. With economies at the verge of collapse, businesses pushed to a standstill, forced alterations in work environment, and uncertainty about the future, this global health crisis has severely impacted employees and organizations. The virus has not only impacted employees physically but also psychologically as they experienced plethora of intense emotional fluctuations. In this regard, the present study aims to synthesize and analyze the existing literature on the subject and present a conceptual framework to aid understanding of the emotional repercussions of pandemic for employees and organizations at large. The extensive review of literature suggests that the perilous crisis resulted in numerous negative emotional outcomes which majorly converge into three i.e. stress, burnout, and depression. This emotional turmoil gets further reflected in employees' performance at work and thus a conceptual model is developed to holistically capture and present such varied impacts of pandemic on employees. The study also posits that the deleterious emotional impacts can have grave ramifications for the organizations and thus, seek immediate attention of the organizational leaders, managers, and policy makers. Against this backdrop, the practical implications of the study are mentioned and recommendations are made, that may help employees and organizations to survive and sustain any such future crisis situations.

Key words: COVID-19, Crisis, Emotions, Employees, Mental health, Performance, Workplace

Introduction

The coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19) was declared a pandemic by the World Health Organization (WHO) on March 11, 2020. It is an infectious disease caused by novel Coronavirus (nCoV) which has not been previously recognized in humans. With very high transmission rate, it has swamped health-care systems, paralyzed economies, devastated communities and has confined millions of people to their homes. Consequently, the businesses

and industries were shut down to curb the spread of virus which brought about significant changes in the working lives of people. Also, the social distancing and quarantine norms reduced in-person communication and traditional social support from friends and family. These inexorable situations which are beyond normal experience have not only impacted the people physically but also psychologically. The uncertainty of future and threat of infection engulfed entire mankind with worry and tension which resulted in plethora of emotional experiences. Phrases such as public health emergency, deadly virus, and pandemic outbreak evoked fear and anxiety about COVID-19 among individuals. It was further witnessed that quarantine and confinement induced feelings of anger, loneliness, nervousness, sadness, helplessness, guilt, annoyance and frustration among people.¹ Additionally, disruptions in personal and professional life, extended working hours, job insecurity, financial losses, and widespread circulation of negative news via social media led to

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Corresponding Author

Mansi Babbar
Assistant Professor,
Shaheed Bhagat Singh College,
University of Delhi, India
Tel: +91 8587010054
E-mail: mansibabbar21@gmail.com
ORCID ID: <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-8839-7078>



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emotional fluctuations which mainly resulted in stress, burnout and depression.^{2,3,4}

Further, it has been observed that stress among employees due to excessive use of technology, lack of social support by associates, and work-family conflict, negatively affect employees' performance.^{5,6} Likewise, burnout among employees due to increased workload and extended working hours and experience of depression during the states of crisis also adversely affects performance.^{7,8} Thus, considering the economic, social, and professional disruption caused by COVID-19 pandemic, it is necessary to study its impact on employees' emotions and resultant outcomes such as stress, burnout, and depression and the consequent impact on job performance.

In the light of the foregoing, the present study attempts to highlight the predicaments and emotional experiences encountered by employees during the pandemic. The study also endeavors to explore the pandemic induced factors that resulted in severe emotional outcomes viz. stress, burnout, and depression which resultantly impacted employees' job performance. In this respect, the main objective of the paper is to extensively review the available literature and on that basis present a conceptual model of the plausible effects of COVID-19 pandemic on employees. It is observed that research on employees in the context of pandemic is at a very nascent stage and most research studies conducted only marginally dealt with the topic providing merely an overview of employees' emotions and associated outcomes during crisis. Therefore, the present study makes a significant contribution in synthesizing, analyzing, and presenting the extant literature on pandemic triggered major employee emotional outcomes and further linking the same to employees' job performance. The understanding of emotional impact of COVID-19 on human resources and the consequent reflections in their performance will enable management to accurately assess the composite impact of pandemic on their organizations and undertake preventive and corrective measures to reinstate employee emotional and psychological health which not only affect them personally, but also adversely impact organizations, societies, and economies at large.

Model Development

Although there is no systematic framework or standardized methodology for building a conceptual model, we followed Earp and Ennett's general approach

of model development which guided us throughout the conceptual model development process.⁹ Earp and Ennett's approach is widely appreciated and accepted method of conceptual model development among scholars.¹⁰ The comprehensive model building process entails assessing the model's scope, identifying and defining variables relevant to the study, and explaining possible interactions between the variables.^{9,10}

The scope of the conceptual model presented in this study includes employees' emotional experiences and resultant outcomes during the pandemic. The model is developed through an iterative process of extensive literature review, discussions among the researchers, and consultations with experts in the domain of emotions. The first version of the model was created by identifying potential emotional outcomes and reviewing the literature for studying the impact of pandemic on the identified outcomes in published literature databases such as Scopus, Web of Science, Jstor and Wiley. Apart from this, manual search for relevant peer-reviewed literature was done in reputed journals of Sage, Springer, Emerald, and Routledge. In these databases and journals, articles in English language were only considered. Lastly, Google Scholar was also used to include articles which remain outside the purview of databases. Considering the topical nature of the subject, few media reports were also considered to identify the concepts to be included in the model. The researchers discussed the identified concepts and relationships; revised their understanding, and presented a conceptual model based on the literature review.

The iterative process of review and discussions terminated when the researchers identified three major emotional outcomes viz. stress, burnout and depression. It was observed that all other emotional outcomes and experiences such as anxiety, frustration, loneliness and anger ultimately converge in the aforementioned three outcomes. This conceptual model was developed between January and July, 2021 and it may be considered as first refined version that can be further extended or revised as the pandemic and its consequences unfold, new outcomes emerge and scientific evidence becomes available.

Conceptual Model

The conceptual model (Figure 1) offers a visual representation of the impact of COVID-19 pandemic on employees' emotional outcomes – stress, burnout, and depression; and job performance.

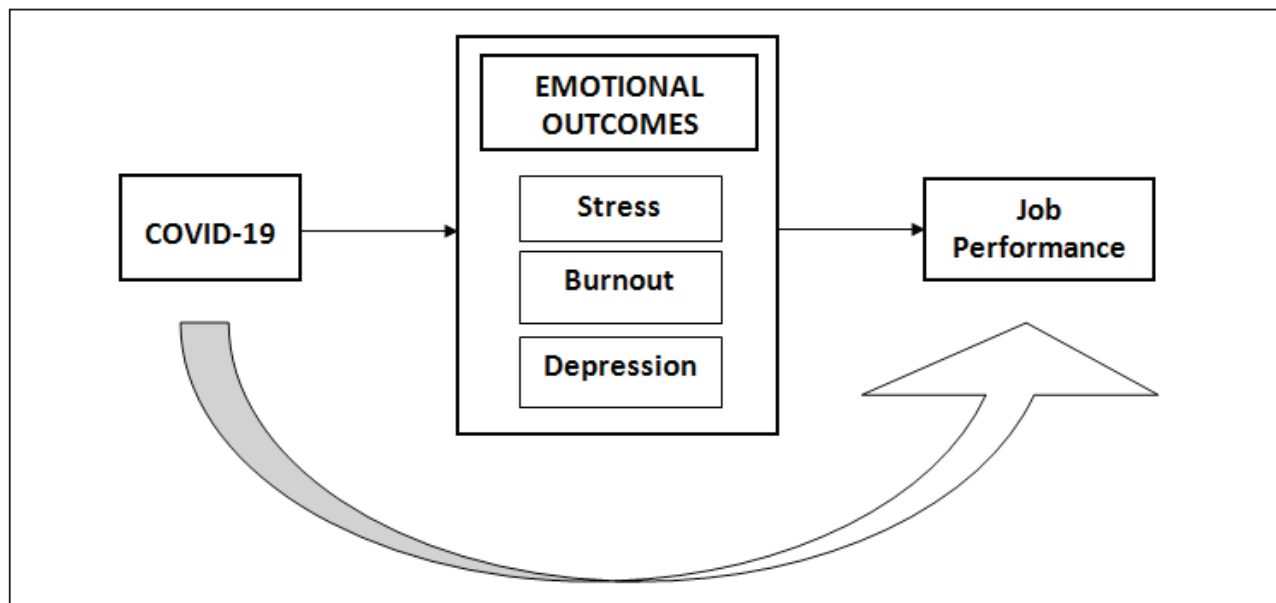


Figure 1: Conceptual model for impact of COVID-19 on employees' emotional outcomes and job performance

Earp & Ennett⁹ advocate that the best models present complicated information in a simplified form and allows the viewers to visualize and comprehend complex interactions easily. Thus, a model may be understood as comprehensive visualization of relationships among variables under study. Taking this into consideration, the above displayed conceptual model was developed after an extensive and meticulous review of literature which advocated the proposed relationships as discussed in succeeding sections.

COVID-19 and Stress

The COVID-19 pandemic has affected lives of millions of people in myriad of ways. Although much emphasis has been on physical health during crisis, mental health has been largely ignored. Numerous scholars have advocated that individuals encountered fluctuating emotions and underwent severe emotional states during crisis which resulted in increased levels of stress among masses.¹¹ Initially stress was interpreted as a pressure from external environment but later it was described as strain within the individual. Scholars have defined it as psychological and physical condition which occurs when resources of an individual are inadequate to cope up with demands of a situation and thus causes mental or bodily unrest.¹²

The unanticipated COVID-19 with very high infection rate followed by social restrictions caused emotional turmoil wherein people experienced fear, anxiety, tension, frustration, and hopelessness which largely caused stress.¹³ Further, the crisis mandated social

distancing and quarantine norms which adversely impacted mental health of individuals. The literature suggests that such social isolation and experiences of loneliness are strongly associated with emotional feelings of anxiety and stress.^{11,13} Similar outbreaks in the history of mankind such as Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome (SARS) in 2003, the Influenza A/H1N1 in 2009 and 2010, Ebola in 2014, also produced quarantines that sourced stress among the masses.¹¹ It is observed that stress is a direct consequence of abrupt lifestyle changes induced by crisis that instills a feeling of isolation and causes frustration and boredom due to loss of usual routine, distancing, confinement, altered work environment, and reduced physical and social contact.^{1,14}

Further, work and workspaces are dominant essentials in lives of individuals but COVID-19 pandemic caused disruption and proposed unprecedented challenges that affected professional work life of millions of people. The rampant spread of coronavirus necessitated social distancing due to which many organizations introduced work from home policies for their employees.¹⁵ Although initially appreciated, later it was realized that remote work policies made the much-needed boundaries between work and personal life porous. At the same time, closure of educational institutions forced many working parents to suddenly take on full-time home-schooling responsibilities while adapting and adjusting with their new work from home arrangements.¹⁵ The family commitments of employees interfered with their work and vice versa, which eventually blurred

the lines between employee's work and family roles. The literature highlights that such situations may cause individuals to underperform in both work and family domains and their persistent strenuous effort for maintaining work-life balance can further exacerbate stress.³

It is also interesting to note that stress has been found to be a major repercussion for various factors experienced by both coronavirus infected and non-infected individuals. The ones that were not infected experienced constant fear of infection and anxiety because of inadequate basic supplies in lockdowns and disruptions in everyday activities.¹ The infected persons on the other hand experienced stressors such as stigmatization and rejection from society, isolation, financial loss due to disruption in professional activities, and long durations of quarantine.¹ The literature further highlights that the stress was maximum for health care employees who were working at the borderline of infection.¹⁶ Apart from factors such as rapid spread of virus, and risky work conditions, the health care workers experienced intense stress because of irregularities and uncertainties in diagnosis and treatment procedures, conscientious and ethical dilemmas while selecting patients, and constant fear of contaminating their families.¹⁶

Further, various emotions such as sadness, fear, anger, and anxiety are socially contagious, wherein people tend to automatically mimic and synchronize their expressions and experiences with others.¹⁷ Recent studies in the literature reveal that individuals higher in emotion contagion are likely to get more attuned to the emotional experiences of others and thereby experience more stress responses to traumatic crisis events.¹⁸ Kramer et al. underscores that emotions can be transmitted to others not only physiologically but also digitally via social media which has now become an essential part of life.¹⁹ Especially during pandemic, people resorted to increased digital media usage to receive real-time updates but, repeated media exposure, inaccurate information from unreliable sources, and ineffective communication led to amplified stress levels.²⁰ Widespread media coverage of pandemic and consequent downturn of economy, recession, layoffs, and furloughs also increased stress among employees.^{2,20} Therefore, although inevitable, the role of media in causing stress cannot be undermined during the COVID-19 crisis time.

Thus, it is evident from the literature that the coronavirus pandemic caused tremendous stress and turmoil due to various factors such as increasing spread of virus, government mandated norms and policies, societal norms, and disrupted routines. Further, it is noteworthy that all above mentioned physical, mental and social conditions not only increased stress but also led to burnout which has been elaborated in next section.

Proposition 1: COVID-19 positively influences stress among employees.

COVID-19 and Burnout

The pandemic has led to severe psychological outcomes that are strongly associated with burnout among employees which has been defined as a psychological syndrome caused by a prolonged negative emotional response to persistent stressors.²¹ It has three dimensions viz. emotional exhaustion, depersonalization, and reduced personal accomplishment, all of which have been intensely experienced by mankind in the crisis time.²²

The increasing spread of coronavirus disease led to closure of organizations and non-essential businesses which disrupted normal routines of employees and challenged them to fulfill dual simultaneous responsibilities of working and parenting. The literature advocates that divided attention between work and family leads to stress and increased emotional exhaustion that results in both parental and employee burnout.^{3,23,24} While parental burnout is defined as a prolonged response to chronic parental stress, employee burnout refers to a series of emotional and attitudinal responses that an employee goes through because of personal and job-related experiences.^{23,24} Griffith advocates that parents who aim for higher levels of self-oriented and socially-prescribed perfectionism in parenting, place themselves at greater risk of parental burnout.²⁵ Thus, most working parents at home struggled to enact segmented roles which compete for priority, whereas others who were working outside home for essential services in grocery stores, clinics, pharmacies, and hospitals were exposed to constant risk of infection. Rather than appreciating services of employees in perilous times, the news media reported that employees were stigmatized as potential carriers of coronavirus by the public, which further accelerated burnout.²⁶ Numerous other factors such as loss of traditional social support from family and friends, job insecurity, and financial insecurity due to economic slowdown, also contributed to increased burnout.^{4,8,13}

Further, various studies have propounded a strong relationship between employee emotion work and burnout and suggest that emotional dissonance, an aspect of emotion work, may lead to emotional exhaustion and depersonalization which are dimensions of burnout.^{22,27} Emotional dissonance i.e. discrepancy between experienced and expressed emotions, is relevant in times of COVID-19 crisis as employees underwent plethora of emotions in their personal and professional lives due to loss of dear ones, disrupted routines, extended work hours, lack of precautionary measures at work, and unceasing fear of infection. However, despite fluctuating emotions, employees continued to work which resulted in emotional dissonance and therefore caused exhaustion and employee burnout. Furthermore, due to prolonged shutdown of economic activities, businesses encountered bulk layoffs that substantially led to unemployment and financial losses which immensely increased chances of burnout among employees.^{4,25} Thus, the literature provides evidence that employees who worked from home or worked outside home, and those who were laid off as result of economic downturn, experienced intense burnout in the precarious crisis times.

Proposition 2: COVID-19 positively influences burnout among employees.

COVID-19 and Depression

Multiple studies in literature have consistently investigated relationships between infectious disease outbreaks and a host of psychological ramifications that follow. The negative psychological ramifications that have been mostly experienced during the COVID-19 pandemic are anxiety, loneliness, and tension, all of which are highly correlated with depressive symptoms and therefore is a major cause of concern for policy makers and practitioners.¹³ Depression is defined as a psychiatric mood disorder which is indicated by persistent reduced mood and interest, persistent feelings of sadness, negative emotions and difficulty in managing daily responsibilities.²⁸

It is witnessed that due to the quarantine norms and stay-at-home orders of governments and international health organizations, the economic activity slowed down and eventually imploded to an extent that employers became incapable to bear the cost of their employees. This resulted in temporary (furloughs) or permanent loss of employment (layoffs) that substantially led to financial loss, which in turn caused

financial distress, emotional distress, and enhanced levels of depression.^{25,29} In addition, the employees who continued to work experienced a significant increase in their workload which exacerbated job stress and further intensified depression.³⁰ Numerous other studies in the literature also suggest that concerns about job insecurity, financial stability, and effort-reward imbalance, stemming from global crisis such as COVID-19 outbreak, may uniquely contribute to the soaring rates of depression.^{31,32}

The literature further highlights that pandemic results in social exclusion and stigmatization, which may be directed particularly towards those employees who were quarantined, laid-off, or were in direct contact with infected patients.^{33,34} Such targeted differential behavior and stigmatization may escalate levels of depression among already perturbed employees.³⁵ Furthermore, the Covid-19 crisis has also spotlighted cons of social media wherein it is observed that the excessive use of same is associated with depressive symptoms. A study by Shacham and et al. states that excessive continuous exposure to negative information regarding the pandemic, threatens employees' psychological resources such as psychological health by increasing the level of depression.³⁶ Thus, it is evident that COVID-19 restrictions and repercussions, along with various other aforementioned factors, amplified emotional strains and caused depression among individuals.

Proposition 3: COVID-19 positively influences depression among employees.

Emotional Outcomes (Stress, Burnout, and Depression) and Job Performance

Considering the deleterious impact of COVID-19 pandemic on individual emotions broadly causing stress, burnout, and depression, it is imperative to understand the impact of same on the organizations. The unprecedented crisis not only psychologically altered and physically affected the working lives of employees, but also paralyzed many organizations which disintegrated economy as a whole. Although the precarious times necessitated maintenance of performance in order to survive the changing market conditions, it was witnessed that performance declined due to surge in employee emotional fluctuations and syndromes.^{8,37} Researchers have defined performance as the accomplishment of specific tasks that are measured on the basis of predetermined standards of completeness, accuracy, financing, and speed.³⁸ Further, job performance, which is an individual

specific variable, may be defined as total organizational contribution of discrete individual behavioral episodes carried by individuals over a standard period of time.³⁹ Thus, it is combined individual employee performance which is reflected in the organization's overall performance and hence it is important to understand the significance and impact of individuals' emotions and resultant outcomes on their job performance.

The extant literature suggests that stress has two opposite effects on employees' performance wherein acceptable level of stress improves performance but extreme excessive stress lowers the performance.⁴⁰ It was observed that the pandemic induced furloughs and resultant work overload, along with dual family and professional roles led to exponential increase in stress levels which resultantly impacted performance.^{3,16} In this light, a study by Novitasari, Sasono & Asbari found that work-family conflict during COVID-19 pandemic, which is a major stress factor, has negative and significant impacts on employees' performance.⁶ Prasad, Vaidya & Kumar also advocate that factors such as work overload, time pressures, role ambiguity, role conflict, and role overload, all of which are experienced during COVID-19 pandemic, negatively impact employee's performance.⁴¹ Further, researchers Ongori & Agolla highlighted other factors, which are also quite relevant in times of crisis, such as keeping up with new ideas, technologies, innovations in organizations, lack of social support by colleagues, and attending continuous meetings as great contributors to occupational stress, which often results in poor work performance and dissatisfaction among employees.⁴² Additionally, techno stress i.e. stress caused by excessive use of technology, has also emerged as major factor influencing performance of employees during COVID-19 pandemic.⁵

Proposition 4: Stress among employees during COVID-19 negatively influences their job performance.

Apart from stress, burnout among employees during the pandemic has also impacted their job performance as numerous scholars in the past have asserted negative relationship between the two.^{7,43} Scholars have proposed that the constant risk of infection and deaths of close relatives during COVID-19 outbreak, along with increased workload and extended working hours, led to burnout syndrome among employees which greatly impacted their work performance.⁷ It is asserted that employee burnout leads to work

absenteeism, lowered effectiveness, and lack of interest in the organization, which causes performance to decline.⁴⁴ Other factors which are relevant during pandemic crisis, such as feelings of hopelessness, dismissal thoughts, and unwillingness to work, also cause burnout among employees where they tend to be pessimistic about their work and therefore result in their decreased performance.^{43,44}

Proposition 5: Burnout among employees during COVID-19, negatively influences their job performance.

Furthermore, the literature suggests that job performance is one of the primary organizational outcomes that is directly affected by depression.⁸ It is found that depressive symptoms among employees result in distraction and lack of motivation to work which consequently result in lowered job performance.⁴⁵ Aspects such as disturbed work schedule, lack of social support at work, job demands, job insecurity, and less job control, all of which are experienced by employees during pandemic crisis, are found to be associated with decreased levels of job performance because of their significant positive correlation with depression.⁸ Therefore, it is proposed that performance is negatively impacted when employees suffer from depression or experience depressive symptoms.

Proposition 6: Depression among employees during COVID-19 negatively influences their job performance.

The aforementioned six propositions, as supported by the literature, suggest that COVID-19 leads to stress, burnout, and depression among employees which in turn impact their performance. Thus, performance may not be directly impacted by COVID-19 but may be indirectly impacted due to factors such as stress, burnout, and depression which may be viewed as mediating variables in the relationship between COVID-19 and job performance.

Proposition 7: Stress, Burnout, and Depression mediate the relationship between COVID-19 and job performance.

The abovementioned proposed relations based on literature evidence highlight the macro adverse impacts of the crippling crisis. It is important to note that the pernicious repercussions do not remain limited to employees, but extends beyond to organizations, societies, and economies in numerous ways. The

psychological and emotional fluctuations which cause stress, burnout, and depression, not only affect employees' individual job performance but largely impact organizations which are significant subsets of society. This consequent slowdown in organizations results in diminished economic activity and hence deeply and profoundly impacts economy as a whole.

Discussion

The disruptions at workplaces due to COVID-19 pandemic not only caused widespread unemployment but also resulted in negative spillover effects for those who remained employed. Previous research studies indicate that reduction in staffing levels tend to lower the level of job involvement and organizational commitment, and increases stress level among existing workforce.⁴⁶ Thus, layoffs and furloughs act as a double edged sword, which on one hand is considered an easy cost cutting exit option by organizations, but on the other hand deeply affects the remaining employees. Further, a study reveals that individuals with negative emotions and depressive symptoms are less likely to support COVID-19 prevention measures such as quarantines, cancellation of mass gatherings, and business closures.⁴⁷ Such callousness and disobedience creates a vicious circle where government mandated physical premises closure norms and work from home policies result in stress, burnout, and depression, which in turn make people inconsiderate to prevention measures that ultimately escalates coronavirus spread.

In such adverse situation, the Social Support Theory may help in understanding the role of social support in combating the emotional strains in unprecedented times.⁴⁸ The theory emphasizes importance of social support and propagates that people can overcome negative repercussions of uncertainties and stressful events with the help of social support from peers and supervisors who can greatly influence the way of thinking and acting. To deeply understand the causes of emotional strains, the Job Demands-Resources model (JD-R model) developed by Bakker and Demerouti, which is often referred to as occupational stress model, holds relevance even in present times.⁴⁹ The model lists two types of workplace factors that cause emotional strains viz. job demands and job resources. Similar to challenges proposed by pandemic, job demands include time pressures, increased workload, role ambiguity, emotional labor and weak relationships, and job resources include all job positives such as

autonomy, coaching, mentoring, opportunities for growth and development, and strong work relationships. The model propagates that imbalance between the job demands and job resources causes strain which results in negative employee outcomes. Thus, to eliminate the pandemic induced strain, it is imperative to understand the importance of developing, coaching, mentoring, and socially supporting the employees.

Further, it is important to note that due to widespread economic slowdown, along with insufficient coaching, mentoring and development of employees, the problem of occupational divide may aggravate. In other words, the divide between primary and secondary jobs, and core and periphery jobs, may further increase owing to the constraints introduced by pandemic. The organizational investment in employees working in high-skilled occupations is expected to increase since these employees help organizations in maintaining their productive capacity even in adverse circumstances as proposed by pandemic.⁵⁰ Whereas other low-skilled occupations are likely to be ignored by management since they do not significantly contribute to organizational productivity and this result in layoffs and furloughs. Further, the employees involved in such low-skilled periphery jobs such as sanitation workers or critical jobs such as frontline workers in healthcare, pharmacy, etc. are subject to stigmatization and negative stereotypes which often result in emotional outbursts in them. In this context, the Stigma Theory underscores that few groups are at higher risk of bias and discrimination because they possess or deal with some characteristics that are devalued in the social context.⁵¹ For instance, because of the stigma attached with coronavirus patients, the doctors have reported various incidents of attack by the public.^{26,33} This breaks morale of the employees and impacts their performance. The Stereotype Threat Theory also suggests that employees who are linked with negative stereotypes are expected to perform less because they fear confirming the negative stereotype.⁵² Thus, such stigma and stereotype, along with increased occupational divide, significantly affects employees emotionally which resultantly impacts not only their individual performance, but also reflects in overall organization's growth and performance.

Practical implications for managers, leaders, and policymakers

The unprecedented crisis compelled humanity to embrace transition and has taught various valuable

lessons not only to the organizational heads but to the entire mankind. The review of literature suggests that coronavirus pandemic has resulted in negative emotional outcomes among employees which have greatly impacted their job performance. Thus, to prevent collapse of organizations and to sustain such adverse situations in future; leaders, managers, and policy makers should ensure proper preparedness and appropriate policies in place to emotionally support their employees. The devastation caused by pandemic highlights the importance of management and leadership effectiveness in sustaining performance and ensuring survival of the organization. In this context, the significance of transformational leadership and management style is reinforced as prior research advocates that transformational leaders and managers foster employees' commitment to the organization and motivate them to improve their performance.^{53,54} Thus, in pandemic stricken business with changing needs and declining performance, the transformational style may be considered most relevant where leaders encourage employees and guide them through the changes.

Further, the construct of emotional intelligence has recently gained limelight among the management scholars and has been recognized as a potential attribute of effective leadership. Defined as the ability to understand and manage emotions of self and others, emotional intelligence is necessary for managers to understand and manage the fluctuating emotions of employees.^{55,56} Equally important is emotion regulation which refers to the process where individuals influence their emotions and modify their emotional expressions.^{57,58} Although practicing emotion regulation is a debatable topic where researchers have expressed mixed views advocating both positives and negatives, it is vitally important in the context of crisis, since it is witnessed that employees experience huge influx of highly contagious negative emotions. Thus, to eliminate the adverse chain effects of extreme negative contagion, the leaders and managers may adopt emotion regulation which positively influences job performance.⁵⁸

Furthermore, the employee assistance policies and practices need to be in place to ensure good physical and mental health of employee. This includes regular counseling and therapy sessions, crisis awareness programs, and provision of psychological resources such as social support and feedback via regular virtual calls with employees. This helps employees

in maintaining their performance and coping up with stress in difficult times. Additionally, government should also step in to introduce financial security measures to reduce the incidence of employee psychological disorders during the pandemic. For example, governments in countries like Spain, France, and UK have introduced emergency packages which include extending loans and guarantees to companies to mitigate adverse economic impact of COVID-19 pandemic and direct payouts to employees to relieve them of financial insecurity.⁵⁹ Thus, to deal with ripple effect of pandemic crisis, all stakeholders such as leaders, managers, and governments, should join hands to introduce policies and practices at workplaces to minimize productivity losses and strengthen the employee psychological health.

Scope for Future Research

The precarious pandemic has uprooted big corporations and created economic deadlock with no visible end in near future. This stresses the need for rigorous research to explore the impending impacts and for devising solutions to sustain such tempestuous times in future. The conceptual model developed in the present study gives an opportunity to future researchers to empirically test it and present their own findings. The empirical results are considered reliable and can serve as foundation for developing organizational strategies to better deal with the crisis. Further, the conceptual model may be adapted or expanded to include other emotional outcomes that unfold as the experience with pandemic increases. The future research may also consider the impact of employees' emotional strain during crisis on their organizational commitment and job satisfaction which may be explored as mediating factors ultimately affecting job performance. The role of moderating factors such as age and work experience may also be investigated to categorically understand the complex emotional impacts of pandemic. Future research in this direction may help employees and organizations to proactively prepare for such unforeseen crisis.

Conclusion

The massive devastation caused by COVID-19 cataclysm has brought organizations to a standstill. It has encapsulated entire mankind and resultantly paralyzed economies. It is witnessed that the uncertainty and ambiguity associated with the coronavirus outbreak pushed employees into a tailspin

and deeply impacted their psychological health. In this light, the present study underscores the impact of pandemic crisis on employees' emotions and highlights the possible resultant consequences. The developed conceptual model foregrounds that the crisis caused stress, burnout, and depression among employees which consequently impacted their job performance. This does not remain limited only to employees, but has deleterious impacts for the organizations and

economies at large. Thus, such precarious times and challenges proposed by the pandemic call for emotionally intelligent managers and leaders to practice emotion regulation strategies that help employees and organizations endure the crippling crisis. Further, the lessons learnt from the experience with coronavirus outbreak may be used to develop interventions and implement strategies in the organizations to better sustain such crisis emergencies in the future.

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