RESEARCH PAPER

Positive Psychology During a Pandemic: REFRAME for Well-Being

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Abstract

Background/Aims/Objectives: In this mixed-methods research, we examined several psychology practices for their importance, usefulness, and potential to impact overall well-being during a worldwide pandemic (COVID-19). The acronym REFRAME was employed to illustrate these positive psychology concepts: Resilience, Empathy, Flow, Relationships, Appreciation, Meaning, Embodiment.
Methods/Methodology: A survey method was utilized to collect quantitative and qualitative data on the perceived value of positive psychology concepts and practices in participants' lives during quarantine. The survey was distributed to students, staff, and faculty of a medium-sized university in the United States. 308 participants completed the survey.
Results: Surprisingly, nearly all participants endorsed these positive psychology practices as a valuable way to REFRAME their pandemic experience. Participants not only ranked positive psychology concepts as "very important," but also reported that these practices were a part of their daily routine. Using grounded theory methodology, researchers found themes of relationships, gratitude, empathy and service as highly important to participants during the pandemic. Many participants also discussed how technology added to their connections and coping during the period of quarantine and stay-at-home orders as COVID-19 spread.
Discussion: Participants indicated high levels of importance for engaging with all seven positive psychology constructs during the pandemic. While many participants struggled to find place, time, and opportunity to practice Embodiment and Flow during the stay-at-home orders, they still considered these activities valuable.
Conclusions: Using a psychological lens, this research shows that positive psychology encouraged participants in various ways during a worldwide pandemic.

Keywords: positive psychology, pandemic, resilience, coping, PERMA

Abstrait

Contexte / Buts / Objectifs: Dans cette recherche à méthodes mixtes, nous avons examiné plusieurs pratiques de psychologie pour leur importance, leur utilité et leur potentiel d'impact sur le bien-être général pendant une pandémie mondiale (COVID-19). L'acronyme REFRAME a été utilisé pour illustrer ces concepts de psychologie positive: Résilience, Empathie, Flux, Relations, Appréciation, Signification, Incarnation.
Méthodes / méthodologie: Une méthode d'enquête a été utilisée pour recueillir des données quantitatives et qualitatives sur la valeur perçue des concepts et pratiques de psychologie positive dans la vie des participants pendant la quarantaine. L'enquête a été distribuée aux étudiants, au personnel et aux professeurs d'une université de taille moyenne aux États-Unis. 308 participants ont répondu au sondage.
Résultats: Étonnamment, presque tous les participants ont approuvé ces pratiques de psychologie positive comme un moyen précieux de REFRAME leur expérience de la pandémie. Les participants ont non seulement classé les concepts de psychologie positive comme «très importants», mais ont également déclaré que ces pratiques faisaient partie de leur routine quotidienne. En utilisant une méthodologie fondée sur la théorie, les chercheurs ont trouvé que les thèmes des relations, de la gratitude, de l'empathie et du service étaient très importants pour les participants pendant la pandémie. De nombreux participants ont également discuté de la façon dont la technologie a ajouté à leurs connexions et à leur capacité d'adaptation pendant la période de quarantaine et les ordonnances de rester à la maison lorsque le COVID-19 s'est propagé.
Discussion: Les participants ont indiqué des niveaux élevés d'importance pour s'engager avec les sept concepts de psychologie positifs pendant la pandémie. Bien que de nombreux participants aient eu du mal à trouver le lieu, le temps et l'opportunité de pratiquer l'incarnation et le flux pendant les commandes au foyer, ils considéraient toujours ces activités comme utiles.
Conclusions: En utilisant une lentille psychologique, cette recherche montre que la psychologie positive a encouragé les participants de diverses manières pendant une pandémie mondiale.

Mots clés: psychologie positive, pandémie, résilience, adaptation, PERMA

Humanity is experiencing a surreal and challenging time in history. Everyone is living through a worldwide pandemic (COVID-19), with widespread quarantines, social isolation, legal restrictions on daily activities, and uncertainty about the future. Many have experienced significant difficulties, such as unemployment, stress, sickness, hospitalization, and the loss of loved ones. Psychologically, some are struggling to cope, while others have been able to adjust to the constantly changing circumstances.

Individuals may experience difficult emotions such as disorientation, fear, sadness, and frustration as a result of the pandemic (Pakpour & Griffiths, 2020). In such an uncertain time, positive psychology can be a powerful resource, providing perspectives and techniques that serve to REFRAME our current circumstances (through attending to Resilience, Empathy, Flow, Relationships, Appreciation, Meaning and Embodiment). To better understand the impact of these positive psychology concepts, a mixed-methods study was employed in the spring of 2020. The research aimed to discover how focusing on positive psychology might REFRAME well-being during the stay at home order period of the COVID-19 pandemic.

RATIONALE

Previous research on positive psychology practices reveals that thriving is cultivated through intentional positive focus and action, which can improve well-being, increase coping skills, and help individuals recover during stressful times. Positive psychology skills and interventions are found to increase well-being and decrease depression (Cohn & Fredrickson, 2010; Seligman et al., 2005). Some of these interventions were particularly effective, not only causing temporary mood changes and positive attitudes, but changing long-term behavior for the better (Cohn & Fredrickson, 2010). Yet, how does positive psychology hold up when the entire world is in a stressful, uncertain state? In 2020, the COVID-19 pandemic became a worldwide event, with the disease impacting every country and causing significant disruption to society, economies, travel, healthcare, and human interaction. With widespread stay-at-home orders, rising panic, and increasing unemployment, the spring of 2020 was a time when negative thinking and predictions were as contagious as the pandemic as many struggled to psychologically adjust. This study was implemented against this historical backdrop to examine whether and how positive psychology concepts had any effect on individual well-being during the pandemic.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Positive Psychology and PERMA Model

Even though many of the main components to positive psychology date back to the work of William James in the early 1900's, many scholars consider Martin Seligman's positive psychology APA Presidential Address in 1998 to be the starting point of the discipline (Froh, 2004). The field of positive psychology has drawn attention to major questions regarding life meaning and purpose. It has also introduced innovative research on topics that include strengths, virtues, talents, and flourishing.

Arguably, the most frequently endorsed guiding framework for psychological well-being is the PERMA Model of Well-being, introduced by Martin Seligman (2011). Seligman claimed that well-being is too complicated a construct to simplify into a single construct and therefore identified five, individual components of well-being: Positive emotions, Engagement, Relationships, Meaning, and Accomplishment (Seligman, 2011).

According to Seligman's PERMA model, positive emotions (P) refers to affective components of well-being, including happiness and life satisfaction. Engagement (E) is typically referred to as "flow," feeling absorbed in one's activities or work. Relationships (R) focuses on one's social well-being and experiencing authentic connections with others. Meaning (M) refers to one's sense of purpose and value. Last, accomplishment (A) focuses on one's sense of achievement and success in reaching one's goals. Previous research revealed that the construct of PERMA is highly correlated with measures of subjective well-being. In addition, the PERMA model provides a parsimonious picture of the overall construct of well-being (Seligman, 2018). However, some scholars have argued that PERMA is not a fully exhaustive picture of well-being, and therefore, may not be an appropriate exclusive measure of one's well-being (Park, 2015). In positive psychology, there are several other constructs related to well-being, including hope, gratitude, optimism, transcendence, and empathy (Park, 2015).

REFRAME for Well-Being

Well-being research has focused on various constructs while attempting to measure the full scope of potential for human thriving. Diener (1984) emphasized subjective well-being and Ryff (1984) focused on six components of psychological well-being: self-acceptance, positive relations with others, autonomy, environmental mastery, purpose in life, and personal growth.

While positive psychology research has evolved to comprise several proposed models of well-being, due to the unprecedented times surrounding the COVID-19 pandemic, it is uncertain as to which well-being constructs are the most important to emphasize during this time. However, previous research studies have demonstrated that reframing stressful and unprecedented events in one's life can lead to drawing meaning and purpose from one's experiences (Park et al., 2008).

Therefore, to promote the reframing of one's life experiences during a pandemic, the authors chose seven empirically-supported positive psychology constructs to focus on to encourage overall well-being. These seven constructs form an acrostic with the word REFRAME: Resilience, Empathy, Flow, Relationships, Appreciation, Meaning, and Embodiment. Each of these constructs is explored in the following sections.

Resilience

Resilience is the ability to bounce back from stress or to successfully adapt to difficult circumstances and thrive (Smith et al., 2010). Resilience is often defined by researchers as having two distinct dimensions; "significant adversity and positive adaptation" (Luthar, Lyman, & Crossman, 2014, p. 126). Since most will face difficult circumstances at some point in their lives, resilience is a beneficial measure of health and well-being and can help define successful adaptation to adversity (Zautra et al., 2010). Additionally, resilience can serve as a protective factor to reduce the potential of negative outcomes associated with various stressors, including psychological health outcomes (Gheshlagh et al., 2017). Resilience is considered dynamic, not fixed, and therefore susceptible to change over time and through the use of appropriate intervention strategies (Lee et al., 2013).

Empathy

Empathy is taking notice of suffering and responding with understanding and kindness (Neff, 2003). While empathy has traditionally been viewed as the concern for the suffering of others (Goetz et al., 2010), people who are high in empathy are more likely to treat themselves with kindness and concern when they experience negative events (Allen & Leary, 2010). Empathy, therefore, includes honoring and accepting one's own limitations, mistakes, and faults (Neff, 2003). Additionally, practicing empathy allows people to access positive emotions more easily while improving measures of life satisfaction, social connectedness, and well-being (Leary et al., 2007).

Flow

In Seligman's PERMA model of well-being, one aspect of the engagement component is a construct referred to as "flow." As previously explained, flow involves being so engrossed in an activity that there is a loss in sense of time. Flow is posited to occur when there is alignment between one's skills and the challenge presented by the task at hand (Csikszentmihalyi, 2013; Csikszentmihalyi et al., 2014; Jackson & Marsh, 1996). States of flow are related to higher levels of long-term happiness when compared to engaging in passive activities, however, passive activities may require less effort and be thought of as more relaxing and less daunting than flow activities (Schiffer & Roberts, 2018).

Relationships

Research suggests that relationships, or what is also referred to as social integration or social connection, are critical to feeling happy and satisfied with life (Waldinger & Shulz, 2010). Social integration includes the level of involvement an individual has with their relationships (Brissette et al., 2000). Studies have shown that people who are more socially engaged and have broader social networks are happier (Cacioppo et al., 2008), have lower levels of anxiety and depression, higher survival rates of heart attacks, and lower levels of cancer recurrence (Cohen et al., 2000). Berkman and Glass (2000) have also reported that people who are socially integrated are more likely to experience a longer lifespan.

Appreciation

Appreciation is the recognition and affirmation of the good in our lives. Similar to gratitude, it is an acknowledgement that we have received many gifts and benefits from other sources outside of ourselves (Emmons & Mishra, 2010). Evidence continues to reveal a strong connection between gratitude and psychological health and well-being (McCullough et al., 2001; Wood et al., 2010). More notably, gratitude has risen as one of the most effective psychological practices for enhancing overall well-being. Watkins et al. (2015) report that a gratitude intervention significantly outperformed the comparison treatments in enhancing well-being, which continued to climb even after the treatment phase. Emmons (2013) also affirms that gratitude has one of the strongest connections to well-being of any personality attribute, including optimism, hope, and compassion.

Meaning

Meaning is the extent to which people experience life as purposeful and directed by their values (George & Park, 2016). People feel a sense of meaning when they believe their existence is significant, important, and of value to the world (Gable & Haidt, 2005). Meaning in life has increasingly become a focus of theoretical and empirical interest. Martela and Steger (2016) suggest that "experiencing meaning in life is an important contributor to well-being and health" (p. 83). Higher levels of meaning in life have also been associated with increased levels of volunteerism and of entering into a marriage commitment as well as a decreased likelihood of marital separation (Stavrova & Luhmann, 2016).

Embodiment

Embodiment involves being aware of the needs of the body, responding to those needs, and having a mindful connection to one's body. Embodiment is important to positive psychology, as understanding one's own body directly correlates with higher levels of self-knowledge, which can be related to increased psychological well-being (Hefferon, 2015). Wiese et al.'s (2017) meta-analysis on physical activity during leisure time and worker subjective well-being found associations between engaging in more physical activity and positive affect and life satisfaction. Meanwhile, another study demonstrated that mindfulness, connecting one's body and mind, is important in positively predicting psychological well-being (Baer et al., 2012).

Purpose of the Research

Despite decades of research on the importance of positive psychology practices, including the individual components of REFRAME, none of it was conducted within the landscape of a global pandemic. To provide greater understanding to this gap in the existing literature, the purpose of this study was to evaluate the perceived importance and impact of positive psychology concepts and practices, including specific ways to enhance Resilience, Empathy, Flow, Relationships, Appreciation, Meaning and Embodiment (REFRAME) during a worldwide pandemic. Each of these concepts was examined as a potential source of well-being during the challenging circumstances in the spring of 2020.

With this purpose in mind, the authors of this study hoped for a twofold impact: First, that participants may experience gains in well-being and positive emotion by participating in this research study, as they were invited to evaluate the importance of positive psychology concepts in their own lives (such as resilience, relationships and appreciation). Second, that this research may add to the current level of knowledge about the perceived importance of the key positive psychology concepts discussed above in the literature (represented through the acronym REFRAME).

Methodology

In the spring of 2020, a mixed-methods research survey was distributed to students, staff, and faculty of a medium-sized, liberal arts university in the midwestern United States. The survey invitation was sent by email, after approval by the university's Institutional Review Board (IRB). The survey results were collected using Qualtrics, in order to compile quantitative and qualitative data pre- and post-survey. All survey responses were confidential, with no identifying information shared during the process of compiling and examining results. The data was examined using quantitative and qualitative methods, including statistical comparisons and participant feedback (qualitative questions). Qualitative data was examined using a grounded theory approach, to glean themes and construct an original framework from the words of participants experiencing a unique phenomenon (the COVID-19 pandemic).

Participant Demographics

308 participants completed the survey (83% female; 17% male). Participants identified as White (72%), Black or African American (20%), Hispanic or Central/South American (3%), Asian or Pacific Islander (2%), American Indian or Alaska Native (1%), and Other (2%). Of the 308 participants, 92% identified as Christian, 5% as Non-religious, 2% as Other, and <1% as Buddhist. 67 participants (21.8%) were between 18 and 28 years old, 82 participants (26.7%) were between 29 and 39 years old, 86 participants (27.9%) were between 40 and 49 years old, 57 participants (18.5%) were between 50 and 59 years old, 11 participants (3.6%) were between 60 and 69 years old, and 5 participants (1.6%) were 70 years old or older.

Instrument Details

For each of the seven positive psychology constructs, the authors created one quantitative question and one qualitative question. Brief descriptions of the construct were provided to participants prior to answering the questions for each of the constructs. For example, the description for the construct of Embodiment included: "Embodiment involves being aware of the needs of your body, responding to those needs, and having a mindful

connection to one's body. Activities that can involve Embodiment include physical activity, yoga, mindfulness, and nutrition." Another example, for the construct of Flow: "Flow is defined as being so involved in what you are doing that you lose yourself in the activity (you don't keep track of time or have awareness of things that might typically distract your attention). Flow often occurs when you are challenged by the task at hand, and have the skills to meet that challenge." These descriptions allowed the opportunity for participants to align their understanding of the constructs with the researchers.

The quantitative item for each construct was presented to participants first, with the qualitative item following. The quantitative items were answered on a seven-point Likert-type scale, ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 7 (strongly agree). Quantitative items included questions such as, "During this pandemic, I am able to find ways to adjust positively and bounce back even when things are tough" and "During the pandemic, I take notice of the good things I have received in life, and respond with appreciation when others are generous and kind."

The qualitative items had no limits on length or time, and were framed with the phrase "Optional Question for Further Reflection" to help counter participant fatigue. Qualitative items included questions such as, "During this pandemic, what do you feel, say and/or do in order to create and maintain empathy for yourself and others?" and "During times of embodiment during the pandemic, what activities are you doing?" Last, participants were prompted to respond to an item measuring the importance of each of these seven practices during the pandemic. This item was answered on a five-point Likert-type scale, ranging from 1 (Not important) to 5 (Very important).

QUANTITATIVE DATA ANALYSIS

Participants completed a single self-report item for each of the seven REFRAME variables: Resilience, Empathy, Flow, Relationships, Appreciation, Meaning, and Embodiment. Descriptive statistics for these variables, including means and standard deviations, are located in Table 1 (right).

Overall, participants self-reported high levels of agreement with these items assessing for presence of each of these variables during the pandemic. There was only a

Table 1: The seven REFRAME variables

Variable	Item	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	SD
Resilience R	"During this pandemic, I am able to find ways to adjust positively and bounce back even when things are tough."	1.00 or Strongly Disagree	7.00 or Strongly Agree	5.78	1.23
Empathy E	"During this pandemic, when I'm going through a difficult time, I give myself and others around me understanding, grace and tenderness."	1.00 or Strongly Disagree	7.00 or Strongly Agree	5.90	1.06
Flow F	"During this pandemic, I am often engaged in a state of flow as I face challenges and use my skills to move forward."	1.00 or Strongly Disagree	7.00 or Strongly Agree	5.22	1.45
Relationships R	"During the pandemic, I feel a sense of belonging and connection with other people. I am close to and can confide in at least one other person."	1.00 or Strongly Disagree	7.00 or Strongly Agree	5.82	1.46
Appreciation A	"During the pandemic, I take notice of the good things I have received in life, and respond with appreciation when others are generous and kind."	1.00 or Strongly Disagree	7.00 or Strongly Agree	6.24	0.98
Meaning M	"During this pandemic, I am living a purposeful and meaningful life that is valuable and worthwhile."	1.00 or Strongly Disagree	7.00 or Strongly Agree	5.84	1.30
Embodiment E	"During this pandemic, I am engaging regularly in activities that involve embodiment."	1.00 or Strongly Disagree	7.00 or Strongly Agree	5.08	1.71
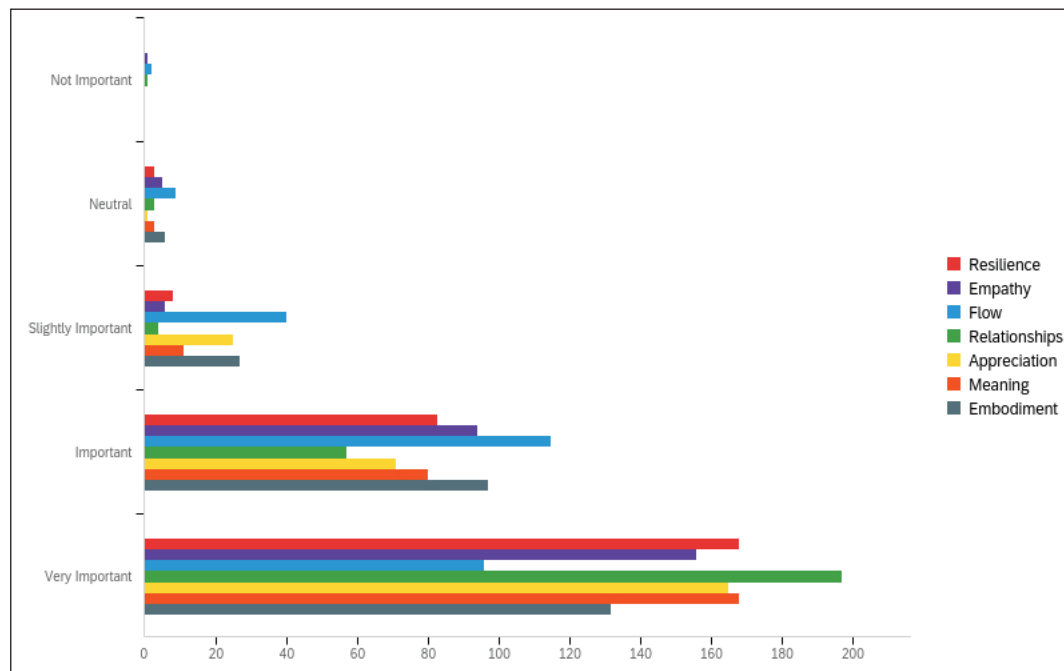
Figure 1: Rating of Importance of Practicing REFRAME Psychology Constructs: Number of Participants

slight variation of agreement for the seven constructs. Participants indicated the strongest mean agreement (M = 6.24, SD = 0.98) with the single item for Appreciation, signifying overall agreement with participants' ability to be aware of and express gratitude during the pandemic. Participants self-reported a mean agreement of 5.78 (M = 5.78, SD = 1.23) on the single item for Resilience: "During this pandemic, I am able to find ways to adjust positively and bounce back even when things are tough." Participants indicated a mean agreement of 5.90 (M = 5.90, SD = 1.06) on the single item measure for Empathy: "During this pandemic, when I'm going through a difficult time, I give myself and others around me understanding, grace and tenderness." On the single item for Flow, participants self-reported a mean agreement of 5.22 (M = 5.22, SD = 1.45) on the item: "During this pandemic, I am often engaged in a state of flow as I face challenges and use my skills to move forward." Participants self-reported a mean agreement of 5.82 (M = 5.82, SD = 1.46) on the single item measure for Relationships: "During the pandemic, I feel a sense of belonging and connection with other people. I am close to and can confide in at least one other person." On the single item measure for Meaning, participants self-reported a mean agreement of 5.84 (M = 5.84, SD = 1.30). This item read: "During this pandemic, I am living a purposeful and meaningful life that is valuable and worthwhile." Participants indicated a mean

level of agreement of 5.08 (M = 5.08, SD = 1.71) on the single-item measure for Embodiment: "During this pandemic, I am engaging regularly in activities that involve embodiment."

Generally, participants self-reported high levels of agreement for all seven positive psychology constructs, with a range of 5.08 to 6.24. Of note, Embodiment had the lowest level of mean agreement of 5.08 (Slightly Agree) and Appreciation the highest at 6.24 (Agree).

Participants also self-reported the importance of practicing these seven positive psychology variables of their well-being during the pandemic. Results are provided in Figure 1 (above).

Overall, the Relationships variable was indicated to have the highest mean importance (M = 4.70, SD = 0.60) to participants' well-being during the pandemic. However, all seven variables were indicated to have importance for participants' well-being during this pandemic: Resilience (M = 4.59, SD = 0.61), Empathy (M = 4.52, SD = 0.67), Flow (M = 4.12, SD = 0.84), Appreciation (M = 4.53, SD = 0.68), Meaning (M = 4.58, SD = 0.63), and Embodiment (M = 4.35, SD = 0.76). The range for mean levels of importance for the seven constructs was 4.12 to 4.70, indicating participant value for each variable.

Despite statistical significance and participant value for each construct, it is important to note that Flow and Embodiment were the least practiced and considered the least important (although

Table 2: Spring 2020 REFRAME Importance of Concept

Positive Psychology Concept	Perceived Importance
Resilience	4.59
Empathy	4.52
"Flow"	4.12
Relationships	4.70
Appreciation	4.53
Meaning	4.58
Embodiment	4.35
Questions about Importance on Likert Scale	
Very important	5
Important	4
Slightly Important	3
Neutral	2
Not Important	1

were typed into the survey and therefore transcribed verbatim, and data was analyzed using a constructivist approach. Open coding was used initially to identify each possible unique idea that was mentioned in the transcripts. The authors engaged in multiple line-by-line readings for the purpose of applying an initial open-coding strategy (Creswell, 2002). The goal was to identify as many unique themes as possible, and each one was given a brief name. Next, axial coding occurred by making a list of all the codes and then analyzing them for commonalities. Utilizing the constant comparative method of sorting and resorting, these categories were reduced and combined to identify key qualitative themes (Creswell, 2002). Ultimately, these themes were refined into summaries for each concept and further divided into the top five categories labelled with an identifying phrase for each REFRAME section.

Themes

The data included hundreds of quotes around the REFRAME concepts. Despite the richness of this qualitative data, only a few selected quotes are included in this final study. The top five categories, which represent many of these detailed quotes, found in each of the REFRAME concepts are included in the following sections. For greater specificity of textual analysis, a word cloud was created for each concept examined, and the top 35 words are displayed, with the size of each word indicating greater use by participants.

Resilience. When participants were asked, "Give an example of some of the stressors you are facing during this pandemic, and what coping skills and attitudes you are using to face these challenges," 58 stated that having to work from home was the

still rated from slightly to very important by the majority), as shown in Figure 1, Table 1, and Table 2 (above). Embodiment was the least practiced of the seven positive psychology variables (55 disagreed with the statement, "During this pandemic, I am engaging regularly in activities involving embodiment" and 25 neither agreed or disagreed – 80 total). Flow was also the least practiced (38 disagreed with the statement, "During this pandemic, I am often engaged in a state of flow as I face challenges and use my skills to move forward" and 41 neither agreed nor disagreed – 79 total). This variable was also considered the "least important" when evaluating what participants felt was "very important."

As shown, Appreciation was the most practiced (128 agreed with the statement, "During the pandemic, I take notice of the good things I have received in life and respond with appreciation when others are generous and kind" with only 30 disagreeing).

QUALITATIVE DATA ANALYSIS

To add richness and depth to this data, the qualitative portion of this mixed methods study provides words for deeper understanding participant experiences. All qualitative responses

top stressor. One person shared, "One of the biggest stressors for me is working from home. I am used to being in the community working with clients face to face and now I am home working with clients virtually which has been a challenge. I have had to reframe my mind and work on coming up with new ideas to assist clients while in quarantine. It's been tough." The details for the top five categories of Resilience included the following:

Number of Participants	Category
58	Having to work from home
51	Loss of job/hours/income
38	Taking care of family/homeschooling
31	Being isolated/away from loved ones
29	Health problems/weight gain

Empathy. When asked, "During this pandemic, what do you feel, say, and/or do in order to create and maintain empathy for yourself and others," 29 participants stated they connect with their spiritual practice. One person stated, "I listen to guided

meditations almost daily to help combat stress and promote self-compassion." Another participant shared, "I schedule times of prayer and fasting for me and my daughters. I've found it really helps." The top categories of Empathy included the following:

Number of Participants	Category
29	Rely on God/Read scripture/Pray/Meditate
17	Have grace for others
15	Seek to understand another's viewpoint
14	Put effort into listening more
11	Give more to others than self

Flow. When asked, "Reflecting on the states of flow that you are experiencing during the pandemic, what tasks are you engaging in? What helps you to know that you are in a state of flow," 24 participants stated their schoolwork or homework provided the greatest sense of flow. One person stated, "I just lose myself in

my homework. Right now, I am working ahead because when I have extra time, I study." Another participant shared, "For me, it has been so helpful to be attending online school. This has preoccupied my mind. All of us are now in the habit of sleeping late. Everyone has certain things we need to do daily but it has been the basics." The top categories of Flow included the following:

Number of Participants	Category
24	School/coursework
20	My job
17	My family
15	Hobbies (puzzles, cooking, reading, painting, etc.)
14	Staying busy/quantity of work

Relationships. When asked, "How are your relationships changing during this pandemic? What are some ways you are staying connected with others?" 81 participants discussed using technology and creative ways to stay connected. Examples included family and work Zoom calls, more frequent phone calls and texting, FaceTime, social media, and other media platforms.

One participant noted: "I honestly feel that even though we've been told to social distance ourselves, it's more like physical distance ourselves, because I've been more sociable than I have before this pandemic."

30 participants discussed developing closer and intentional relationships because of the pandemic, particularly with their spouse/partner and immediate family. However, 12 participants also expressed feeling disconnected due to lack of physical closeness and contact with others, and struggling with feelings of isolation.

The other top categories included appreciating the increased time available to invest in others, and the ability to strengthen and deepen relationships by being intentional (several participants mentioned that they were getting much closer to some people, and more distant from others). One participant responded as such: "People who never have time suddenly have more time for friendships. I have found that people are more intentional about reaching out and connecting than they were before. I have struggled with relationships for a long time, but this pandemic has been helpful in showing the friendships I do have."

Number of Participants	Category
81	Using technology and creative ways to stay connected
30	Developing a closer relationship with spouse/ partner/family
20	Relationships strengthened due to intentional contact
12	Feeling disconnected/isolated
12	More time available to invest in others

Appreciation. When asked, "During this pandemic, how are you expressing your appreciation? How are you experiencing appreciation right now?" 39 participants mentioned relational gratitude; being thankful for and expressing gratitude to those around them. One participant noted:

"I am able to appreciate the time I've been given back with my family. Our kids are active and smart and school/sports are a very steady part of our lives, which require a lot of driving and leaving home. Sometimes in the hustle and bustle I feel like I am missing them even though I am with them. I have appreciated the slow down and also the sudden disappearance of activities. I appreciate the family dinners and sleeping in with no alarm. All of these things have offered us better mental health and physical health as well."

Several participants also discussed the relationship of appreciation to the pandemic, with comments such as: "The pandemic has made even the smallest things seems great," and "If anything, this pandemic has made me more appreciative." 28 participants shared their gratefulness towards essential works, both health care workers

and those working in grocery stores and in vital occupations: "I find myself thanking people at the grocery store, night shifters, and people at work in general. Construction workers and the like. I find many people in my work who are cowering at home, not that I blame them, and so I thank the people brave enough to come outside and do what needs to be done."

A few of the participants were essential workers, and discussed their appreciation for others' verbal gratitude towards them: "As an ER nurse, I have greatly appreciated the community's response to give food, hold prayer vigils, and acts of appreciation. In a time where everything feels so unknown and scary, that presence has been so kind. I have also been very grateful for the people I live with. I have communicated this through service and verbal acknowledgement."

The other top categories included being thankful to God, being grateful for a source of income (including the ability to work from home), and expressing appreciation through sending cards and giving gifts to others. One participant shared a particular practice of appreciation: "Our community has done a simple expression and it is called 'flowering people'. We buy small pots of flowers and leave them on others' porches. I take my younger children, they have loved doing this. We just leave a small flower on someone's porch with a hand-written note with words of encouragement. It has been a full blessing."

Number of Participants	Category
43	Relational Gratitude
28	Appreciation given to/received for essential workers
21	Thankful to God
19	Grateful to have a job/paycheck/income, to work by remote
17	Sending cards/gifts

Meaning and Purpose. When asked, "Where or when are you expressing a sense of meaning and purpose during this pandemic?" 44 participants reported that they are finding meaning and purpose in their work. For instance, one participant shared: "I work with the substance abuse population, so I have been providing tele-health services throughout this pandemic. This gives me a sense of purpose as many clients are desperate for help and connection with others. It blesses me knowing I
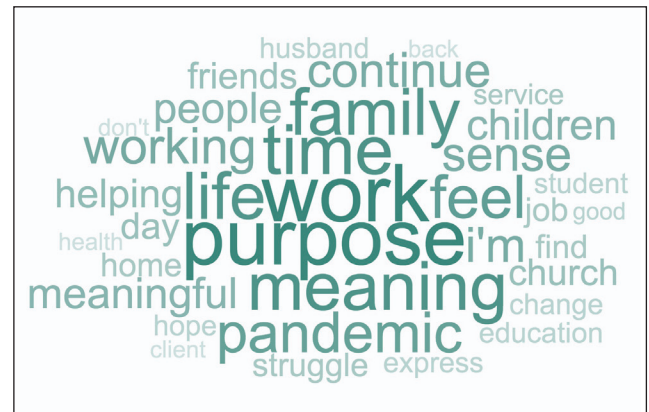
can provide help and hope to others." Another 38 participants discussed the meaningfulness of spending extra time with their families during the pandemic. One quote was, "Right now I am taking more time to find happiness and fulfillment in the simple blessings of my family in my home. I believe they are the greatest treasure I have and I have found more purpose in putting them first going forward."

Number of Participants	Category
44	My work
38	Time with my family
21	Service/Helping and encouraging others
20	God/Spiritual growth/Prayer
8	Struggling/Feeling "in limbo"

21 participants mentioned meaningful service and encouragement of others, and another 20 expressed how important spirituality and faith is for them to cultivate meaning and purpose in life. On a more difficult note, 8 participants shared their struggles with finding meaning and purpose during the pandemic; they voiced feeling "in limbo," "listless," and unsure if their work matters. Circumstances during coronavirus created difficult situations for these participants.

Embodiment. When asked, "During times of embodiment during the pandemic, what activities are you doing? How do you feel during these times of embodiment," 31 participants stated they were not participating in any activity or that their activity was significantly reduced.

The top categories of Embodiment included the following:

Number of Participants	Category
31	No/minimal activity
29	Walking (includes walking the dog)
18	General Exercise (push-ups, sit-ups, calisthenics, etc.)
14	Yoga/Meditation
10	Yardwork

One person stated, "Activity is hard. It is tough to take care of yourself when you are taking care of others 24/7. My lifestyle changed drastically as I had both kids in school for the first time since I quit my job to stay home with them when they were born. We are having to readjust and keep moving forward. However, this means that I do not get much time at all to myself for exercise." Another shared, "I have tried working out and keeping a regime, but it has fallen off completely in my daily routine."

DISCUSSION

This study examined the value and perceived importance of seven positive psychology constructs (Resilience, Empathy, Flow, Relationships, Appreciation, Meaning, and Embodiment) in the lives of adults living in the United States during the 2020 global pandemic. Both the quantitative and the qualitative results provide unique insights into the relative importance of these positive psychology components. The findings confirm the importance and relevance of positive psychology concepts during a uniquely stressful historical period.

Overall, despite slight variations, participants indicated high levels of importance for participating in these seven positive psychology constructs during the pandemic. While participants struggled the most with being able to participate in activities of Flow and Embodiment, they still appreciated the value of personal practice in these areas. All seven constructs (Resilience, Empathy, Flow, Relationships, Appreciation, Meaning, Embodiment) were self-reported as being important to well-being during the pandemic, with very few participants indicating any of the constructs as being Not Important or Neutral. The qualitative results allowed the researchers to explore themes surrounding the ways that each of these constructs were contributing to well-being in the lives of participants.

Previous research revealed that positive psychology enhances individuals' lives, especially during stressful events, and can lead to increased well-being (Gheshlagh et al., 2017; Park et al., 2008). The results from the current study provide unique insight into the presence and importance of several positive psychology in the lives of participants during a pandemic, where one's overall well-being may be challenged due to uncertainty, changes, and sickness. Of particular importance, this study also revealed which practices participants found especially challenging to practice during the pandemic (i.e., embodiment). In addition, this study exposed some of the ways individuals may be uniquely practicing positive psychology during a pandemic; i.e. continuing to focus on relationships using virtual means to communicate when in-person interactions are not possible and expressing appreciation for essential workers.

Limitations

Despite best efforts, there were limitations associated with this study. First, participants were majority racially and ethnically homogeneous (72% White). The study included a majority of participants attending a faith-based, liberal arts online campus in the Midwest of the United States. Although every effort was made toward inclusivity, the majority of participants were Caucasian and of Protestant background and practice (92% Christian/Protestant). Although there is practical significance in the common themes throughout the study, the results may not be broadly generalized. The sample could be improved by including a more diverse population, possibly by including participants from other areas of the country or world.

A second limitation includes a lack of defining demographic information. The authors failed to include questions regarding marital status or whether or not participants were living alone during quarantine. Throughout data analysis, it was evident participants were living in variously populated households. Living

alone compared with living among others might greatly impact a quarantined experience.

A final limitation includes the nuanced nature of the study. While conducting this research in the midst of an unprecedented global pandemic provides for a unique context, it also presents a limitation in that there are no matching previous studies with which to compare the results. Due to the lack of ability for exact replication, this study is a simple information gathering experiment with no control variable. A controlled experiment, with at least two groups for replication, would provide a greater reliability and validity to the study to determine cause and effect relationship and impact.

Implications and Recommendations

Due to the unique nature of the global pandemic, there are a number of implications and opportunities for further study. The researchers expected to discover a focus on negative emotions such as disorientation, anxiety, and frustration, resulting in an inability to focus on positive concepts as a result of the pandemic. Therefore, because of the increase in depression and anxiety during the pandemic as reported by the US Census Bureau (Twenge et al., 2020), it was somewhat unexpected that participants would not only rank positive psychology concepts as highly valued, but would also indicate these practices as a regular part of their daily routine. Additional research could investigate the differences in the importance and effectiveness of applying positive psychology practices during and after the pandemic.

The implications for posttraumatic growth, the phenomenon of positive change occurring as a result of the struggle with challenging circumstances (Tedeschi & Calhoun, 2004), could also be an area of further study. It appears that participants in this study valued and practiced positive psychology concepts as a part of their daily lives, even in the midst of a global crisis. What was not clear and what could be a focus of additional research is to what extent to which the unusual, prolonged, and complex circumstances of the pandemic contribute to or correlate with posttraumatic growth in participants. Next, it was striking that the use of technology and creative means to stay connected was reported more than twice as often as any other commonality by participants. When asked, "How are your relationships changing during this pandemic? What are some ways you are staying connected with others?" 111 participants discussed using technology and creative ways to stay connected, and indicated they had developed a closer relationship with family through intentional contact. It has been assumed that higher levels of technology usage contribute to decreased levels of happiness.

According to Twenge (2019), large sample studies find that more frequent users of digital media were lower in well-being than those who use it less often. But perhaps a deeper look into the implications of this finding may also reveal that during a pandemic, the use of technology may be a positive means of contributing to well-being.

Finally, ongoing research is also needed around the impact of specific positive psychology practices during the pandemic. This study asked participants to indicate which of the seven constructs they practiced and how they ranked these in importance. Future research is needed to focus on the impact of specific positive psychology interventions by inviting participants to practice one of these seven areas during the pandemic, and measure the results with pre- and post-assessment measures. A follow up to this REFRAME study is in process and will explore the impact of practicing the seven constructs on overall well-being as measured by the PERMA-Profiler (Butler & Kern, 2016).

CONCLUSION

The current study explores the value and importance of positive psychology concepts during a unique and particularly challenging point in history: the worldwide pandemic [COVID-19]. Surprisingly, out of more than 300 participants, nearly all endorsed attending to Resilience, Empathy, Flow, Relationships, Appreciation, Meaning and Embodiment as a valuable way to REFRAME their experience amidst difficult circumstances and major adjustments. Participants detailed specific ways of practicing these concepts, including staying in touch relationally through creative technology, expressing appreciation for family members and essential workers, and finding meaning and purpose in helping and supporting others. While participants struggled to find place, time, and opportunity to practice Embodiment and Flow during the stay at home order and quarantine, they nonetheless considered these activities to be important as well. This research adds to the body of literature exploring positive psychology concepts as contributing factors to coping and well-being specifically during the coronavirus pandemic. ■

Biographies

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