

Role of Emotional Intelligence During a Pandemic

By

Tarun Panda

Dissertation submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements of the degree

MBA Hospital and Health Management

Academic year, 2018-2020



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June 17, 2020

EXPERIENCE CERTIFICATE

This is to certify that Tarun Panda (Employee ID – 23486) was interning in our organization from February 3, 2020 to May 29, 2020. At the time of leaving he was working in the capacity of Knowledge Management Associate – Intern based at the New Delhi office.

We wish you all the success in future endeavors.

For ZS Associates India Pvt Ltd

Mohit Sood
Office Managing Principal

THE IIHMR UNIVERSITY, JAIPUR

CERTIFICATE BY SCHOLAR

This is to certify that the dissertation titled “The Role of Emotional Intelligence during a Pandemic” and submitted by Tarun Panda, Enrollment No: 0853, under the supervision of Dr. Neetu Purohit for award of MBA in Hospital and Health Management of the University carried out during the period from 03/02/2020 to 29/05/2020 embodies my original work and has not formed the basis for the award of any degree, diploma associate ship, fellowship, titles in this or any other institute or other similar institution of higher learning.

Tarun Panda
Signature

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1. INTRODUCTION

Emotional Intelligence or Emotional Quotient is one's ability to understand and manage their emotions and of people around them effectively. It is "a type of intelligence that involves the ability to process emotional information and use it in reasoning and other cognitive activities" (Peter Salovey and John D. Mayer, 1990).

Goleman (1995) described 5 components of Emotional Intelligence in his book "Emotional Intelligence". They are self-awareness, self-regulation, internal motivation, empathy and social skills.

Emotional Intelligence has the tendency to affect various aspects of people's lives, including their physical, mental, personal and professional lives. EI plays an important role in almost all the sections of the society. It facilitates people's capacity for stress, motivation and resilience (Houston, E. 2020). In fact, EI has become a vital pre-requisite for certain areas with intense "emotional work" such as service industry, social work, nursing among others (Bar-On & Parker, 2000). Emotional Intelligence is a prized instrument in a time of a crisis or adversity (Houston, E. 2020).

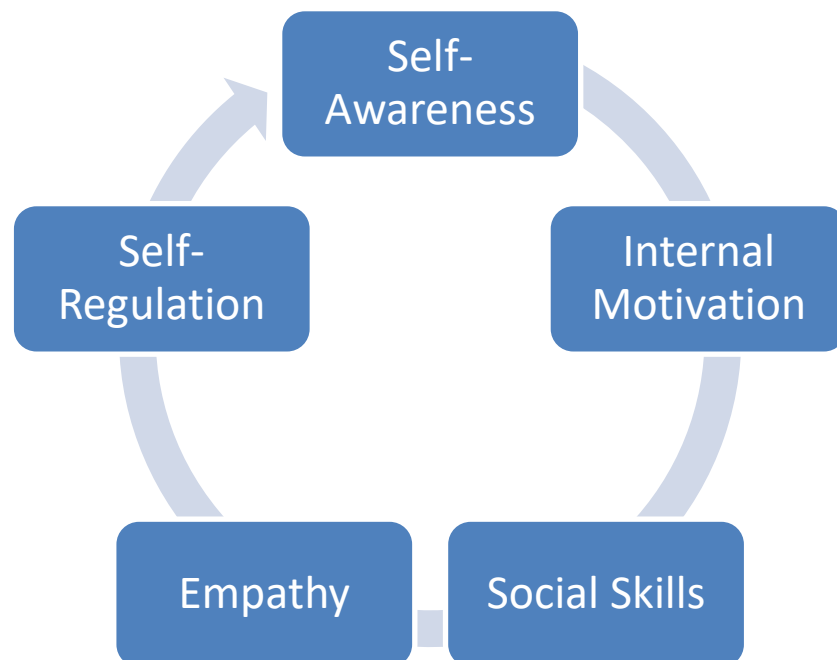


Figure 1: Components of Emotional Intelligence

Human beings are known to be social animals. In order to manage their emotions better, they need to interact with other people whether it be through phone calls, face to face

meets, e-mails, letters, or some other medium of communication. Moreover, with the advent of social media, many individuals have taken to platforms such as Instagram, Facebook, among others, to display their lives to other people, in order to communicate with them. Due to the current situation of the spread of Covid-19, people have been forced to practice social distancing. This has affected many lives in multiple ways – financially, physically, emotionally, and even mentally. According to Vladimir Takšić (2002), emotional intelligence is significantly important in maintaining various aspects of human life: emotional self-concept, stress management, maintaining positive mood, sensitivity for others as well as one's own emotions, among other things. The situation that people are coping with is extremely novel for them and it can produce stressful impacts on many, if not all. The stress can further impact their work, personal life, as well as their physical and mental health. Emotional intelligence thus plays an important role in managing their stress during these uncertain times. If individuals can manage their emotions and their body's emotional responses, they will be able to face this situation in a much better way than if they're not in control of their own emotions.

Emotional Intelligence, if not managed properly, can even result in burnout. Facing a pandemic, if the healthcare professionals face a burnout, that could be catastrophic for many people. Hence, it is important to study the impact of Covid-19 and such situations on emotional intelligence and to suggest ways to better cope with it. Emotional Intelligence affects the following areas of an individual's life (Fattah A., 2020):

- Decision-making
- Building resilience
- Communication

There are individuals who are managing several things at a time during the lockdown – working from home, taking care of their children and/or parents, taking care of themselves, managing their relationships and friendships, taking care of their spouses, pets, among others. This can also lead to an increase in stress or frustration if things don't work out the way they want to. Emotional intelligent people are more emotionally stable than people who are less or not emotionally intelligent (Fattah A., 2020).

Dr Marc Brackett, author of 'Permission to feel: Unlocking the power of emotions to help our kids, ourselves and our society thrive', defined feelings as: "a core experience, but the emotion is more granular, more specific." He talked about, in an interview, how

people are not in complete touch with their own emotions and as a result, they might not be as authentic with others as they might feel. He also talked about 5 reasons why it is important to understand emotions. It's because they affect certain key areas of our lives: ability to pay attention, decision making, relationships, physical and mental health, and our performance and creativity (Rim C., 2020).

Laura Murray (2020) said that emotional intelligence (EI) is at the center of helping us make some behavioral changes and ultimately allowing us to attain all the adjectives describing stellar leadership (Murray L., 2020). She also mentioned that EI accounts for almost 90% of the reasons that set high performers apart from others who have the same or similar levels of knowledge and skills.

“The coronavirus pandemic is proving to be the greatest test of emotional intelligence in a generation” (Clark T., 2020).

During an ongoing pandemic, emotions can be very vulnerable. This is especially true for those suffering from one or the other mood or anxiety disorders. According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), “the outbreak of coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19) may be stressful for people. Fear and anxiety about a disease can be overwhelming and cause strong emotions in adults and children. Coping with stress will make you, the people you care about, and your community stronger.

Stress during an infectious disease outbreak can include

- Fear and worry about your own health and the health of your loved ones
- Changes in sleep or eating patterns
- Difficulty sleeping or concentrating
- Worsening of chronic health problems
- Worsening of mental health conditions
- Increased use of alcohol, tobacco, or other drugs”

The spread of Coronavirus has impacted both personal and professional lives and because of the lockdown both these lives have intermingled. This can lead to even more stressful situations in the lives of individuals. For example, if people had stress at work, they could just leave it there and go back home to be with their families or friends. Now, because of them working from home, there is an added issue of not being able to

separate work life from home life. Some individuals might even have issues in being able to dedicate a specific place for their work and keeping it separate from the places where they rest. Such separate yet interdependent issues can create a labyrinth of stressors that people can face during this situation. In order to protect both their personal and professional relationships, it is of extreme importance that they're able to deal effectively with their emotions.

People who are on the frontline – healthcare professionals, police, NGOs – of all this are also in a dire need of managing their emotions in an efficient manner. Mostly because if they're not able to do so, there's a huge risk of them suffering from a burnout.

Pandemic:

According to the World Health Organization (2010), “a pandemic is the worldwide spread of a new disease”. An influenza pandemic happens when a novel flu infection develops and pans around the world, and most individuals don't have insusceptibility. Infections that have caused past pandemics usually began from animals. Some features of flu pandemics can be compared to regular flu whereas other features may be very distinctive. For instance, both regular and widespread flu can cause contaminations in all age groups, and most cases will result in self-limited sickness in which the individual recoups completely without treatment. Be that as it may, normal regular flu causes most of its deaths among the elderly whereas other serious cases happen most commonly in individuals with an assortment of restorative conditions.

Over the years, there have been multiple pandemics that have threatened the human civilization in one way or another. Most of the time, we focus on the pandemic's effects on economic and medical fronts. But we fail to pay attention to another important factor – mental health. Moreover, the emotional intelligence of the people.

There are instances where people rely upon substances such as tobacco and alcohol to make themselves feel at ease after a hard day at work or to calm themselves down, generally. If misused or abused, these substances could prove to be lethal for them and could create severe mental as well as physiological health issues.

The reasons why it is crucial to study emotional intelligence in times of a pandemic are as follows:

- As people are made to confine to their houses and communities, the usual process of socialization has taken a big hit which has led to many changes in people's lifestyles
- Due to such outbreaks, the economy suffers a lot and during Covid-19, millions of people around the world have been left unemployed – some even filed for bankruptcy, and a situation like that takes a heavy toll on a person's and his/her family's mental health
- There is an environment of ongoing anxiety about when all this will end; how our lives will be after it ends, among others; and that can be quite taxing on a human mind
- The frontline workers – doctors, nurses, policemen, firemen, delivery persons and many more are highly susceptible to emotional burnout and that poses a great threat to everyone in the world, not just them

Due to the reasons mentioned above, it is extremely important to observe how an individual holds on his/her own during these testing times. The level of an individual's emotional intelligence will govern how they react to so many stressors at once or even separately. Pandemics have happened since forever and give off an impression of being expanding in recurrence, especially as a result of the expanding rise of viral sickness from creatures. Pandemic risk is driven by the spread risk (that it is so prone to diffuse comprehensively through human populaces). Some geographic districts with high flash risk, including Central and West Africa, fall behind the remainder of the globe in pandemic readiness. Influenza is the most probable pathogen to cause an extreme pandemic. Further examination showed that at any year, a 1 percent likelihood exists of an influenza pandemic that causes almost 6 million pneumonia and influenza related deaths or all the more comprehensively. During the spread of Influenza A (H1N1) Pandemic, there was a widespread fear of vaccines, which made it more difficult for the authorities to bring it under control (Ormen, B et al., 2012).

According to Yang and Ma (2020), the impact of Covid-19 in China resulted in a drop of 74% in emotional well-being. They also found that the people who perceived themselves to be more knowledgeable than others about Covid-19 or coronavirus, experienced more happiness as compared to their counterparts during the outbreak.

Restubog et al. (2020) found that in certain studies, it was seen that most of the healthcare workforce are worried about issues, like, non-availability of Personal Protective Equipment (PPE), their own families, non-availability of a vaccine, and personal safety, among others. Maunder et al. (2013) found that there were instances of healthcare workers isolating themselves and the social distancing aspect of maintaining a non-physical working environment reduced the overall morale among the medical professionals and saw an increase in refusal to work on the part of the administrative work staff. According to a study conducted by Lu, W. et al. (2020), it was seen that the medical practitioners who were on the front line while fighting the virus in China, were more susceptible to suffer depression or anxiety as compared to the hospital administrative staff. Covid-19 has proven much more fatal in comparison to some other previous pandemics (Figure 2).

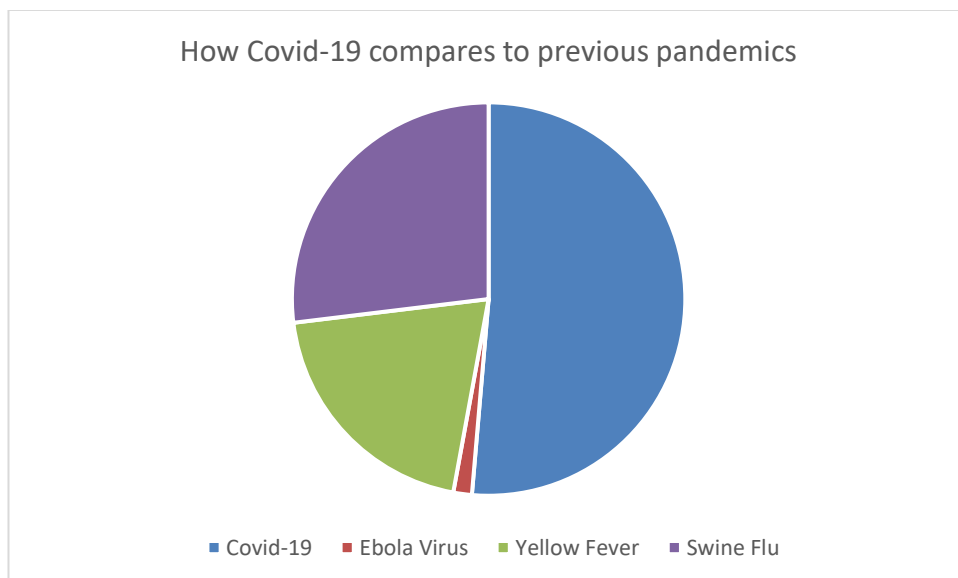


Figure 2: How Covid-19 compares to previous pandemics (Source of data: <https://www.visualcapitalist.com/history-of-pandemics-deadliest/>)

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

Authors (year)	Study location	Sample size	Sampling techniques	Salient features
Restubog, S. et al. (2020)	NA	NA	NA	The lockdowns being imposed around the world produce multiple challenges for individuals working from home while managing their families and household chores. Moreover, individuals have very less opportunities to refresh their cognitive and emotional resources which are getting depleted due to the constant fulfilling demands by family and work. This need of balancing challenging work and family demands doesn't only cause individuals to underperform at both – the work and family domains – but may also result in enhanced emotional exhaustion, stress and burnout.
Yang H., Ma J. (2020)	China	14,131	Simple Random Sampling	People who perceived themselves to be more knowledgeable than others about Covid-19 or coronavirus, experienced more happiness as compared to their counterparts during the outbreak. There was a 74% decline in individuals' emotional wellbeing from immediately before to during the coronavirus outbreak. The reduction was maximum among those who resided in the Hubei province of China, the epicenter of the outbreak; among the elderly; and individuals who were married.
Lu, W. et al. (2020)	China	2299	Clustered Sampling	The medical staff unfurled bigger fear, anxiety and depression than the managerial staff. In addition, the bleeding edge medical staff working in

				division of respiratory, crisis, ICU and infection, were twice bound to endure anxiety and depression than the non-clinical staff with barely plausibility to contact with coronavirus pneumonia patients. Powerful methodologies toward to improving the psychological well-being ought to be given to these people.
Lee, J. (2020)	UK	2111	Stratified Sampling	The closures of schools had a devastating effect, especially on children with mental health needs. For them, they were not able to access the resources that they used to get at their schools in order to manage their condition better. 83% of the participants in the study, who suffered from mental health issues, said that the Pandemic has made their conditions worse. 26% stated that they couldn't access any support to manage their mental health. For many young people, in order to maintain their emotional intelligence, a school routine is very important, and due to this situation, that has been taken away from them.
Wang, C. et al. (2020)	China	1210	Snowball Sampling	In the initial phases of the Covid-19 outbreak, more than 50% of the participants said that they were suffering from moderate to severe psychological impact either directly or indirectly due to the pandemic. Certain characteristics that were significantly related to the high psychological impact due to the outbreak were female gender, certain health symptoms and student status.
Mehrad, A.	Spain	NA	NA	Emotional intelligence is a positive

(2020)				motivator in an individual's life and should be considered as one of the most important factors amongst those who develop Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) due to Covid-19.
Hedderman, E. et al. (2020)	Dublin	NA	NA	During the outbreak of Covid-19, the healthcare workers, who are already at risk of high stress and burnout, are at an even greater risk of being vulnerable to burnout and high levels of stress. The practice of mindfulness is usually known to be effective in their resilience to stress and quality of life, as well. Self-compassion is associated with a range of psychological strengths such as resilience, happiness, optimism, wisdom, curiosity, courage, exploration and emotional intelligence.
Naik, K. (2020)	Mumbai	100	Convenience Sampling	A questionnaire was circulated among 100 healthcare professionals in Mumbai. Top 3 reasons that affect a health worker's mental as well as physical health are: less developed emotional intelligence, pressure and burnout. Usually, emotional intelligence is important among healthcare workers to manage their relationships with various stakeholders. But, during the Covid-19 outbreak, it's even more important as it just doesn't help in managing their relationships but also in handling various emotions of the stakeholders, for example, anger, depression, fear, among others. Hence, it is essential that the healthcare workers get emotional intelligence trainings at regular intervals during and after the outbreak.

Kant, R. (2020)	Bihar	243	Snowball Sampling	A survey was circulated among the students of a university in Bihar in order to judge their emotional states during the lockdown period, using snowball sampling. 49% of respondents felt emotionally unstable during the lockdown period. Those who are low on emotional intelligence are more susceptible to emotional instability. 88.88% of the population said that they felt uncomfortable when they came to know about increasing positive cases.
Roy, D. et al. (2020)	Lucknow	662	Snowball Sampling	More than 80% of the population felt that there was a need to seek for a professional help in order to deal with their emotional issues during the initial spread of Covid-19. Around 72% said that they were concerned about their loved ones and themselves contracting the virus. Mostly 12% of the population had difficulty sleeping due to constantly being worried about the pandemic.
Dilawar, S. et al. (2019)	China	268	NA	The purpose of the study was to see how emotional intelligence affects the relationship decision making and operational stress in extremely stressful situations. It was found that emotional intelligence played a significant role in moderating the relationship between rational decision making and work-related stress.
Kross, E. et al. (2017)	USA	1257	NA	Third-person self-talk has come to be known as a technique to better emotional regulation and it was found that among people who worried a lot about contracting Ebola third person self-talk led to reduce the level of worry related to the virus.

Codier, E. & Codier, D. (2015)	USA	NA	NA	EI has been found to be a required skill in order to maintain safety in a hospitable healthcare environment. It has been called as “one of the largest drivers of patient safety”.
Ormen, B et al. (2012)	Turkey	332	NA	During the spread of Influenza A (H1N1) Pandemic, there was a widespread fear of vaccines, which made it more difficult for the authorities to bring it under control.
Weng, H. et al. (2011)	Taiwan	2982	Convenience Sampling	It was found that a higher level of emotional intelligence was directly related to less burnout. EI was identified as a factor that helps in understanding medical practitioners’ issues related to work.
Shih, F. et al. (2009)	Taiwan	70	NA	During the SARS epidemic, it became evident that the need of increased emotional intelligence is quite high among the nursing personnel. It was necessary to face a crisis situation such as the SARS outbreak.
Beyers & Hay (2007)	South Africa	NA	NA	30% people who were HIV-positive reported that they started drinking since they got the news. Many of the people with HIV felt isolated and lonely which resulted in the behavior of withdrawal.
Chan, S. et al. (2007)	China	17	NA	During the SARS outbreak, some parents of children affected by the outbreak were identified and were surveyed regarding their emotional states. It turned out that parents’ psychological preparedness had to be kept in check especially in terms of their children’s immediate isolation.

The lockdowns being imposed around the world produce multiple challenges for individuals working from home while managing their families and household chores (Restubog, S. et al., 2020). Moreover, individuals have very less opportunities to refresh their cognitive and emotional resources which are getting depleted due to the constant fulfilling demands by family and work. This need of balancing challenging work and family demands doesn't only cause individuals to underperform at both – the work and family domains – but may also result in enhanced emotional exhaustion, stress and burnout. People who perceived themselves to be more knowledgeable than others about Covid-19 or coronavirus, experienced more happiness as compared to their counterparts during the outbreak. There was a 74% decline in individuals' emotional wellbeing from immediately before to during the coronavirus outbreak. The reduction was maximum among those who resided in the Hubei province of China, the epicenter of the outbreak; among the elderly; and individuals who were married (Yang H., Ma J., 2020). The medical staff unfurled bigger fear, anxiety and depression than the managerial staff. In addition, the bleeding edge medical staff working in division of respiratory, crisis, ICU and infection, were twice bound to endure anxiety and depression than the non-clinical staff with barely plausibility to contact with coronavirus pneumonia patients. Powerful methodologies toward to improving the psychological well-being ought to be given to these people (Lu, W. et al., 2020).

The closures of schools had a devastating effect, especially on children with mental health needs. For them, they were not able to access the resources that they used to get at their schools in order to manage their condition better. 83% of the participants in the study, who suffered from mental health issues, said that the Pandemic has made their conditions worse. 26% stated that they couldn't access any support to manage their mental health. For many young people, in order to maintain their emotional intelligence, a school routine is very important, and due to this situation, that has been taken away from them (Lee, J., 2020). In the initial phases of the Covid-19 outbreak, more than 50% of the participants said that they were suffering from moderate to severe psychological impact either directly or indirectly due to the pandemic. Certain characteristics that were significantly related to the high psychological impact due to the outbreak were female gender, certain health symptoms and student status (Wang, C. et al., 2020). Emotional intelligence is a positive motivator in an individual's life and should be considered as one of the most important factors amongst those who develop Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) due to Covid-19 (Mehrad, A., 2020). During the outbreak of Covid-19, the healthcare workers, who are already at risk of high stress

and burnout, are at an even greater risk of being vulnerable to burnout and high levels of stress. The practice of mindfulness is usually known to be effective in their resilience to stress and quality of life, as well (Hedderman, E. et al., 2020). Self-compassion is associated with a range of psychological strengths such as resilience, happiness, optimism, wisdom, curiosity, courage, exploration and emotional intelligence. A questionnaire was circulated among 100 healthcare professionals in Mumbai. Top 3 reasons that affect a health worker's mental as well as physical health are: less developed emotional intelligence, pressure and burnout. Usually, emotional intelligence is important among healthcare workers to manage their relationships with various stakeholders. But, during the Covid-19 outbreak, it's even more important as it just doesn't help in managing their relationships but also in handling various emotions of the stakeholders, for example, anger, depression, fear, among others. Hence, it is essential that the healthcare workers get emotional intelligence trainings at regular intervals during and after the outbreak (Naik, K., 2020). A survey was circulated among the students of a university in Bihar in order to judge their emotional states during the lockdown period, using snowball sampling. 49% of respondents felt emotionally unstable during the lockdown period. Those who are low on emotional intelligence are more susceptible to emotional instability. 88.88% of the population said that they felt uncomfortable when they came to know about increasing positive cases (Kant, R., 2020). More than 80% of the population, during the initial phase of the outbreak, felt that there was a need to seek for a professional help in order to deal with their emotional issues. Around 72% said that they were concerned about their loved ones and themselves contracting the virus. Mostly 12% of the population had difficulty sleeping due to constantly being worried about the pandemic (Roy, D. et al., 2020). It was found that emotional intelligence played a significant role in moderating the relationship between rational decision making and work-related stress (Dilawar, S. et al., 2019). EI has been found to be a required skill in order to maintain safety in a hospitable healthcare environment. It has been called as "one of the largest drivers of patient safety" (Codier, E. & Codier, D., 2015). It was found that a higher level of emotional intelligence was directly related to less burnout (Weng, H. et al., 2011). During the SARS epidemic, it became evident that the need of increased emotional intelligence is quite high among the nursing personnel. It was necessary to face a crisis situation such as the SARS outbreak (Shih, F. et al., 2009). 30% people who were HIV-positive reported that they started drinking since they got the news. Many of the people with HIV felt isolated and lonely which resulted in the behavior of withdrawal (Beyers & Hay, 2007). During the SARS outbreak, some

parents of children affected by the outbreak were identified and were surveyed regarding their emotional states. It turned out that parents' psychological preparedness had to be kept in check especially in terms of their children's immediate isolation (Chan, S. et al., 2007).

3. RESEARCH QUESTION: What is the status of Emotional Intelligence among people during an ongoing pandemic-like situation and how can it be improved?

4. AIM:

The aim of the research is to study the effects of a pandemic on the emotional intelligence of people and how it plays a part in their personal and professional lives.

5. OBJECTIVES:

- To collect, study and synthesize the information and data on the effects of a pandemic on emotional intelligence studied in the past 13 years
- To suggest some ways to improve emotional intelligence after Covid-19 by studying the suggestions for the same given after previous disease outbreaks

6. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY:

6.1. STUDY DESIGN: Integrative Literature Review

6.2. METHODOLOGICAL APPROACH: A review was conducted and researches spanning over a period of 13 years were studied. A total of 60 studies were studied, out of which 20 were considered, excluding the ones where there was either no connection between the effects of a pandemic on a person's emotional intelligence or the ones which talked about epidemics only.

6.3. SEARCH METHODS: Search terms identifying levels of emotional intelligence during a pandemic-like period were trialled and the accompanying inquiry terms were created: truncations "emotional" joined with "intelligence OR

regulation" (truncated) and "pandemic" (truncated), utilizing the Boolean administrator "AND".

7.

a. Effects of a Pandemic on Emotional Intelligence:

The lockdowns being forced far and wide produce different difficulties for people telecommuting while at the same time dealing with their families and family unit errands. Besides, people have less chances to invigorate their intellectual and emotional assets which are getting exhausted because of the consistent satisfying requests by family and work. This need of adjusting testing work and family requests doesn't just motivation people to fail to meet expectations at both – the work and family spaces – however may likewise bring about improved emotional depletion, stress and burnout (Restubog S. et al., 2020). Individuals who saw themselves to be more learned than others about Covid-19 or coronavirus, experienced more bliss when contrasted with their partners during the episode. There was a 74% decrease in people's emotional prosperity from preceding to during the coronavirus episode. The decrease was most extreme among the individuals who dwelled in the Hubei region of China, the focal point of the flare-up; among the older; and people who were hitched (Yang H. & Ma J., 2020). In previous researches, it was seen that pandemics and pandemic-like situations can have direct and indirect effects on a person's mental health, especially aspects of emotional intelligence. The control measures of pandemics, such as, country-wide lockdowns also have a great influence on people's emotional health. This includes people of all age groups – from children to elderly, and across all professions from students to medical practitioners. Also, people have extremely less chances to revive their intellectual and emotional assets which are getting drained because of the steady satisfying requests by family and work. The schools' shutting down had a staggering impact, particularly on kids with mental wellbeing needs. For them, they couldn't get to the assets that they used to get at their schools to deal with their condition better. Generally, emotional intelligence is significant among medicinal services laborers to deal with their associations with different partners. Yet, during the Covid-19 outbreak, it's considerably increasingly significant as it simply doesn't help in dealing with their connections yet in addition in taking care of different feelings of the partners, for instance, outrage, misery, dread, among others. What was interesting to see was how emotional intelligence can play a huge part in the lives of medical practitioners and how it can impact the lives of

their patients. It was found that a higher level of emotional intelligence was directly related to less burnout. EI was identified as a factor that helps in understanding medical practitioners' issues related to work (Weng, H. et al., 2011). With low emotional intelligence, medical practitioners can feel burnout which can lead to bad decision making on their part which, consequently, could prove devastating for their patients. This cycle could get worse during a pandemic-like situation.

b. Suggestions to improve Emotional Intelligence:

- As economy suffers, the leaders must take appropriate actions to keep everything in check and to maintain calm among their employees and clients
- Third-person self-talk has come to be known as a technique to better emotional regulation and it was found that among people who worried a lot about contracting Ebola third person self-talk led to reduce the level of worry related to the virus (Kross, E. et al., 2017)

8. CONCLUSION:

It can be stated that a situation of crisis at a national level can produce devastating effects on individuals' mental and emotional health. The side aspects of the situation such as lockdowns, protests, mass hysteria, can make things even worse. It is of extreme importance that people's emotional intelligence and mental health is paid heed to at an equal level as their physical health.

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