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COVID19, mental wellbeing and work engagement: The psychological resilience of senescent workforce

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ABSTRACT

The aim of this study is to explore how COVID-19 influences the mental health of old age employees by posing challenges to psychological resilience thus affecting their work engagement. The data was collected from three countries, China, Pakistan and the UK, through eighteen semi-structured interviews. Three sub-themes emerged under the core theme of "psychological challenges": "cognitive challenges", "physical challenges", and "behavioral challenges". Similarly, "individual resilience" and "group resilience" emerged under the core theme of "psychological resilience". The results showed that the mental health of old age employees without having any medical complications was also affected during the pandemic thus resulting in low work engagement. The data was collected from three countries namely China, Pakistan and the UK. Furthermore, data were collected through telephonic interviews so some aspects of the study might be left unexplored which can only be possible through face to face interaction. This study, in line with the previous literature, indicate that challenges explored related to COVID-19 can significantly influence the mental wellbeing of aging employees. The study also encourages employers to understand the limitations of aging employees and develop flexible policies that can have a positive impact on work engagement. The study presents a novel approach contributing to the knowledge gap of COVID-19 impact on wellbeing and work engagement of healthy but senescent employees.

Introduction

The outbreak of COVID-19 (Corona Virus 2019) as a pandemic has caused mental stress and public panic. The virus was first reported in the Chinese city of Wuhan in December 2019 and within a short period of the time it spread around the world, thus resulting in acute infectious pneumonia outbreak (Bao, Sun, Meng, Shi, & Lu, 2020). The alarming increase in the number of suspected cases and patients, and the increasing number of countries affected by the outbreak have elicited public worry about getting infected. As the magnitude of the disease, estimating the production number and transmission dynamics remains unclear, the epidemiological data (Livingston & Bucher, 2020; Ng et al., 2020) inform that it disproportionately impacts older adults(Applegate & Ouslander, 2020) especially immune-compromised having medical comorbidities(Shi et al., 2020; Yang et al., 2020). However, with such a short history and rapid spread over the entire human habitat, there is a dearth of information available about its broader mental health implications(Vahia et al., 2020).

The impact of COVID-19 on different aspect is yet to be estimated but it is quite obvious that it has struck more than 200 countries of the world (Organization, 2020). The World Health Organization (WHO), on 30th January 2020, declared a Public Health Emergency of International Concern as a result of the Chinese outbreak of COVID-19 thereby posing a high-level risk to states with the vulnerable healthcare system. Contrary to WHO expectations, COVID-19 has not only hit countries like Iran with obsolete healthcare system but countries with some of the best healthcare systems such as the UK, Italy, and USA are also devastated. To date, most of the people tested positive with COVID-19 has developed mild symptoms such as sore throat, dry cough, and fever. The majority of cases have spontaneously resolved. However, some have developed various fatal complications including pulmonary edema, septic shock, organ failure, severe pneumonia, and Acute Respiratory Distress Syndrome (Chen et al., 2020). Analysis of the

clinical data revealed that 54.3% of those infected with COVID-19 has an average age of 56 years. The majority of the patients who required intensive care support was old age with multiple diseases (Sohrabi et al., 2020).

As COVID-19 is a novel virus, therefore finding the antibodies for such a virus is one of the biggest challenge for virologists (Jiloha, 2020). An effective response to such pandemic requires contributions from across the sciences. The central contribution by medical and biological specialists can be significantly leveraged with the support from behavioral and social scientists(Shi et al., 2020) to address the mental wellbeing. Drawing upon Protection Motivation Theory (Rogers & Prentice-Dunn, 1997), the article argues that people tendency to protect themselves is based on severity of threat, vulnerability, the efficacy of recommended protective behavior and perceived self-efficacy. Protection motivation stem from threat appraisal and coping appraisal which shapes the individual behavior at work. Extant research revealed that the SARS (Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome) epidemic resulted in mental health complications (A. M. Lee et al., 2007). Depressive disorders and Post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) were the most rampant long-term psychological conditions(Mak, Chu, Pan, Yiu, & Chan, 2009). Similarly, studies on MERS (Middle East Respiratory Syndrome) have reported similar results (S. M. Lee, Kang, Cho, Kim, & Park, 2018). On the basis of the above research evidence, reasonable speculations can be made about the likely impact of COVID-19 on the psychological conditions of the public who are affected by the pandemic. We also antedate that there will be a series of long-lasting psychological complications to this pandemic. In this respect, the subject of geriatric psychiatry is in an unexplored avenue, given that the confluence of a global viral pandemic and increased life expectancy is a novel phenomenon and hence, little literature exists in this area(Vahia et al., 2020).

Notwithstanding the impressive amount of cross disciplinary research, one aspect of the COVID-19 coronavirus has been surprisingly overlooked. In many countries, the large population of aging workforce is not only suffering from the virus but the subsequent anxiety, isolation, stress, high uncertainty, and reduction resources and decline in performance. With the evolution of the macroscopic management of the pandemic, more microscopic elements also need a careful consideration (Horton, 2020). Based on research evidence, healthcare professional reiterates the significance of wellbeing of every aging individual whose life is exposed to the threat of this pandemic. But wellbeing is much more than a person's medical status about having a disease or not. While assessing the impact of COVID-19 on aging individuals, their response and preparedness investigation can provide us with some useful insights. The important social capital perspective and wisdom have been documented, through research, by these individuals in the form of pre-existing social network and experience (Howard, Blakemore, Bevis, & Society, 2017; Jeste, Lee, & Cacioppo, 2020). Organizations nowadays face the challenges associated with the wellbeing of the growing older population (Guglielmi et al., 2016). As there is no alternative to the experience of these aging employees, their commitment and engagement to organizations in such a pandemic situation can have a significant positive impact. Thus, an important lesson can be learned by COVID-19 pandemic affectees from aging employees belong to different professions of various age groups. Hence, for understanding the impact of pandemic on health and mental wellbeing, a newfangled knowledge space needs to be generated (Vahia et al., 2020).

Extant research provides a limited understanding of mental healthcare needs of the healthy older workforce in such pandemic situation. Filling this research gap, as a first step, this study attempts to explore the challenges they face in mental wellbeing that can affect their work engagement. The study further explores the psychological resilience displayed by such aging employees as a preventive and protective strategy (Vahia et al., 2020). This exploratory study has two main objectives: understand the challenges faced by older individuals in COVID-19 pandemic affecting work engagement through influencing the mental wellbeing; identify the architecture of psychological resilience manifested by these older individuals for enhancing wellbeing for effective work engagement. The useful insights gathered from this research can be used in designing the empirical model, development, and execution of mental health strategies of older individuals for playing a constructive role in their organizations through effective work engagement.

Research and Methodology

The study adopted qualitative research approach (Yin, 2017), thus taking the liberty to explore the insights concerning the factors affecting the mental wellbeing of aging individuals and its impact on their work engagement in COVID-19. These challenges loomed during our data gathering which was not expected during the research design and also not identified in the literature review(Bryman, 2016).

Research Deign

Literature review helps the research scholars in establishment of guidelines and directions for research design. The appropriateness of the research design to the research problem is very important as it helps in devising methodologies and paradigms that shapes the choice of the methods (Silverman, 2013). In qualitative research, the data collection through semi-structured interviews provides comprehensive and in-depth details. Such interviews with research participants give liberty to express their lived experiences without compromising on the reliability. Such interviews can help in the acquisition of diverse data leading to the exploration of the untapped field of research. The semi-structure interview is preferred over other modes of data collection for granting freedom of expression to the research participants. Thus adopting semi-structured interviews as a tool for data collection provides an opportunity of scholastic flexibility to a researcher by asking prompt questions where needed (Creswell, 2009).

Data Collection and Interviews

The research collected data through semi-structured interviews. Participants included individuals (≥50 years) who are part of any sort of employment. These individuals were not patients of COVID-19 but affected by the emergency situation hence facing mental stress. Interview questions gathered participants perspectives on (1) factors influencing the mental wellbeing of aging individuals under the COVID-19 pandemic; (2) the psychological resilience through tailored behavior that can support the wellbeing of those individuals, and (3) the extent to which the mental wellbeing state affects the work engagement of these aging employees. Furthermore, for validity, the interview questions were finalized with two experts from the field of qualitative research.

As participants hold an important part of the study, selection criteria and sample size are critical to exploratory research. The data was collected from three countries namely China, Pakistan and the UK with a specific purpose. As the countries under study have different political, social and healthcare systems, we expected to have diverse data giving some unique views of research participants. The selection of the participants for sampling was made based on a specific criterion. The criterion sampling is based on selecting respondents for narrative analysis having the exact life experiences of the pandemic situation (Creswell, 2009). The main criteria for the selection of research participants were, (a) they should be more than fifty years of age (b) they should be employees in the public or private sector (c) they should not be suffering from the COVID-19 during the pandemic. This selection helped the researcher in attaining a pool of respondents with a heterogeneous background but with the same life experience of the pandemic.

The demographic analysis of research participants (See Table 1), shows that most of the participants were between ages of 50 to 60. The sample size of eighteen participants were determined using thematic saturation technique, a process of deciding the stage where little new information is obtained (Weller et al., 2018).

Table 1: Demographic Analysis of Research Participants

Demographic Characteristic	Sub-Level	Count n=18	Percentage
Gender	Male	10	55
	Female	08	45
Age	50-55	10	56
	56-60	06	33
	61-65	02	11
Qualification	Bachelors	05	28
	Maters	11	68
	MS/MPhil	02	11
Industry	Services	13	72
	Manufacturing	05	28
Country	China	05	28
	Pakistan	07	39
	United Kingdom	06	33

Data Coding and Analysis

In order to get the initial codes, the interview transcripts were systematically and cautiously read many times. This approach helped in getting a holistic view of the participants. The research adopted manual coding by applying the color-coding technique(Creswell, 2009) which helps in capturing the insight from highlighted coded themes. This technique resulted in forty-four open codes. In between the open codes, the areas of overlapping and similarity were identified to synthesize unifying, repeated and coherent patterns (or sub-themes) in the context of aging individuals. On the basis of the relationship between sub-themes across and within the transcripts, themes were generated. The procedure involved reviewing potential themes multiple times and refinement based on its relevance.

Research Ethics

Since the study was conducted at the time of COVID-19 pandemic and research participants were not to be living a normal life, following the ethical guidelines of qualitative research was the top priority. Each research participant was provided with "Participant Information Sheet", giving a clear view of the aims and objectives of the interview (See Appendix 1). Furthermore, every respondent was requested to sign a consent form through e-mails (See Appendix 2), declaring his/her will to be a part of the research study as an interviewee. For maintaining privacy, the names of research participants and their companies were assigned special codes (L=Name, C=Country, G.Co=Compnay Name) that are used in the findings of the study.

Results

On the basis of findings of sub-themes and themes related to challenges, resilience strategies, and mental well-being affecting work engagement old age employees are presented below. The interview data confirm that during COVID-19 pandemic, aging employees with good health conditions face different kind of challenges which affect their work engagement. In order to cope with these challenges, they adopt several interventions strategies as counter-tactics to improve their well-being.

Challenges

The study found that the mental well-being of old age employees was affected by a combination of factors constituting various kinds of challenges during the COVID-19 pandemic. The study indicated that old age employees are most concerned about the loss of jobs due to being most vulnerable to the disease and fear of an increase in food prices. Some of the research participants considered overcoming fear of being asymptomatic as a major challenge to being focused on their job. A senior employee at an architecture firm shares his experience.

The nature of my job gives me liberty to work from my home but demands a lot if creativity. I heard that some people do have corona virus without showing any symptoms and that's really disturbing for me. I cannot fully focus on my work when I am always accompanied with the tension of be ill. (R.M, P, G.De)
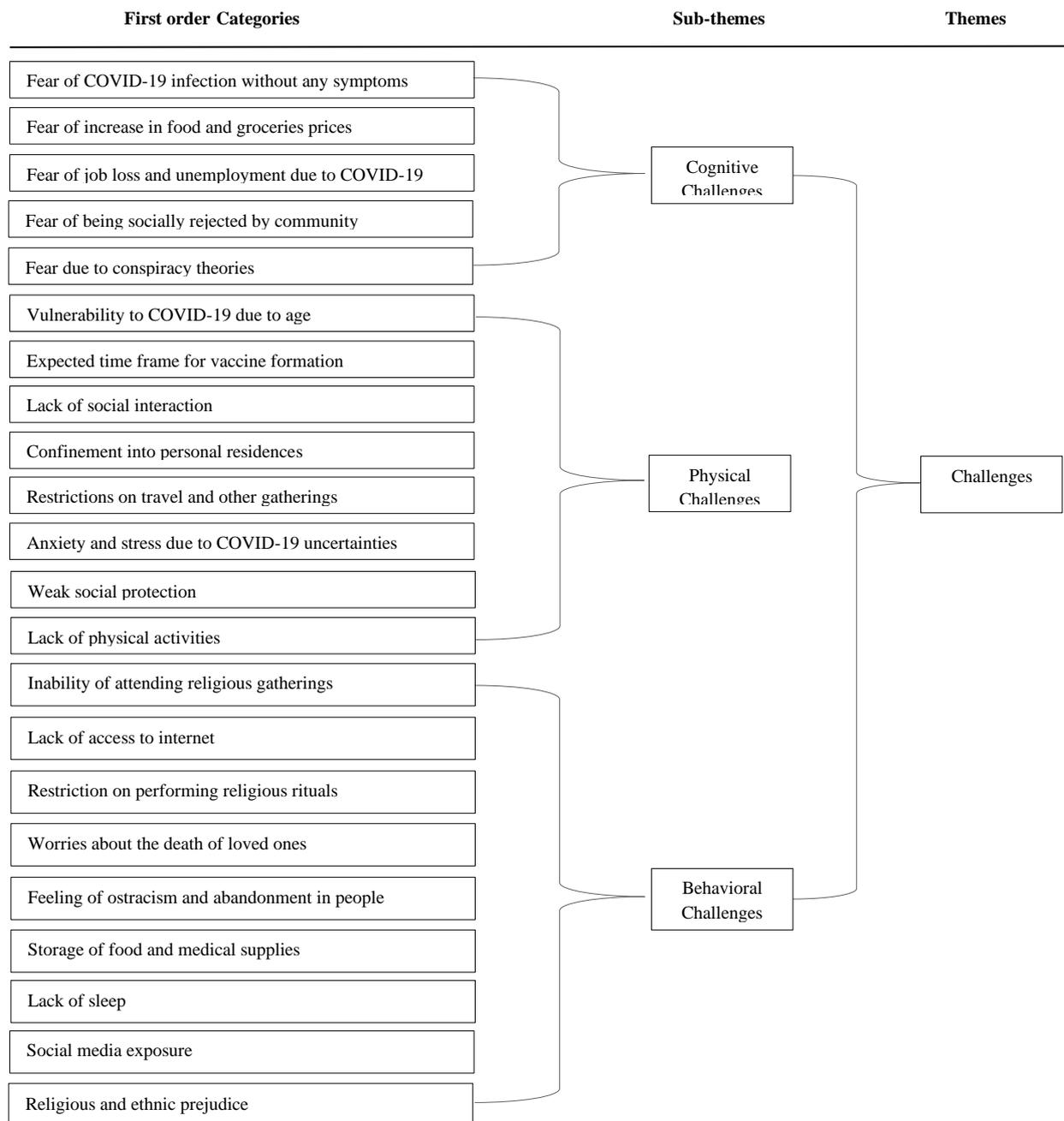
Interview data reveals the role of conspiracy theories such as this is the virus made in China or a biological weapon made by the US adds to the anxiety of the research participants. The bombardment of homemade remedies of COVID-19 subdues the importance of effective science communication. Participants find themselves stuck in the middle of the scientific and non-scientific approach to the management of such pandemic. The apprehension of being socially rejected by the community due to viral contamination has also found playing a significant role in constraining normal behavioral display. This consistent fear of being alienated, if diagnosed with corona, leads to mental stress diverting them from displaying routine performance.

As the statistics of COVID-19 show that the fatality rate among old age people is much higher as compared to the young and infants, the feeling of being more vulnerable negatively affects the mental health. In countries like the UK, Italy, and USA, the fatality rate among older people is much higher as compared to young ones. Moreover, there have been reports about expectedly longer time for clinical adoption of vaccine which further gives a feeling of health insecurity to interviewees. Most of the research participants have a very limited social circle limited to their own age group. Adopting social distancing, as a most effective preventive strategy so far, has also been a source of discomfort and loneliness for most of the participants. Participants express their feeling of being left to such pandemic on their own with no one being there for social support. They are forced to limit their activities such a traveling, attending any social gatherings which helped them to be aware of each other's health status. Interview data also indicate that due to high uncertainty, anxiety, and stress prevailing in society, most of the interviewees find difficulty in focusing on fulfilling their professional responsibilities. An employee working at a chartered accountant firm stated.

I don't know whats going on. There has been constant chaos ever since this epidemic started. Everyone is talking about corona and negativities are spreading everywhere. In such a situation, how can I work? (Da.C, US, K)

Most of the interviewees indicated that life in quarantine has significantly affected their work-life. Such mobility restrictions lead to high anxiety and low morale which negatively affect the intellectual abilities to perform. Empirical evidence also reveals that in countries with weak social protection, research participants faced constant stress. Such social insecurity is complemented by fear of job loss or business loss. Many companies fired their employees during COVID-19 due to stagnant or negative business growth. The study indicated that the feeling of being the next victim to the company's layoff policy in addition to extensive governmental measures of social distancing and quarantine has developed into a significant risk factor. Such circumstances make these individuals as the most vulnerable group of people when it comes to mental and financial health. Moreover, there has been no predictable timeframe provided by health experts regarding the ending of the pandemic. In such a situation, employees are worried about when to formally rejoin their organizations. The data reveals that in some counties, such as the UK and China, research participants were more concerned about the destruction of a meagre social network of already socially isolated aging employees. The interviewees also expected the consequences of long-term social distancing in the form of permanent isolation from their co-workers.

In countries where religion and spirualty are practiced such as Pakistan and some parts of the UK, interview data reveals that cancellation of any kind of religious gathering with the aim of implementing social distancing negatively impacts the mental health. As the tendency towards religion and spirituality is more in aging individuals, their banning affects their spiritual health as such gatherings contribute to the healthy sense of community, tradition, and nation cohesion. The interview data of respondents from technologically developing countries like Pakistan reveal that barriers to high-speed internet for remote working is likely to have slight mental unrest. Unfamiliar with cutting edge technology, the aging employees are not comfortable with work from home, attending zoom meetings and completing assignments while teleworking. Such working from home also limits the physical activity of aging employees for whom slight physical exertion has health impact of mental wellbeing.

First order Categories	Sub-themes	Themes

Fear of COVID-19 infection without any symptoms

Fear of increase in food and groceries prices

Fear of job loss and unemployment due to COVID-19

Fear of being socially rejected by community

Fear due to conspiracy theories

Cognitive Challenges

Vulnerability to COVID-19 due to age

Expected time frame for vaccine formation

Lack of social interaction

Confinement into personal residences

Restrictions on travel and other gatherings

Anxiety and stress due to COVID-19 uncertainties

Weak social protection

Lack of physical activities

Physical Challenges

Challenges

Inability of attending religious gatherings

Lack of access to internet

Restriction on performing religious rituals

Worries about the death of loved ones

Feeling of ostracism and abandonment in people

Storage of food and medical supplies

Lack of sleep

Social media exposure

Religious and ethnic prejudice

Behavioral Challenges

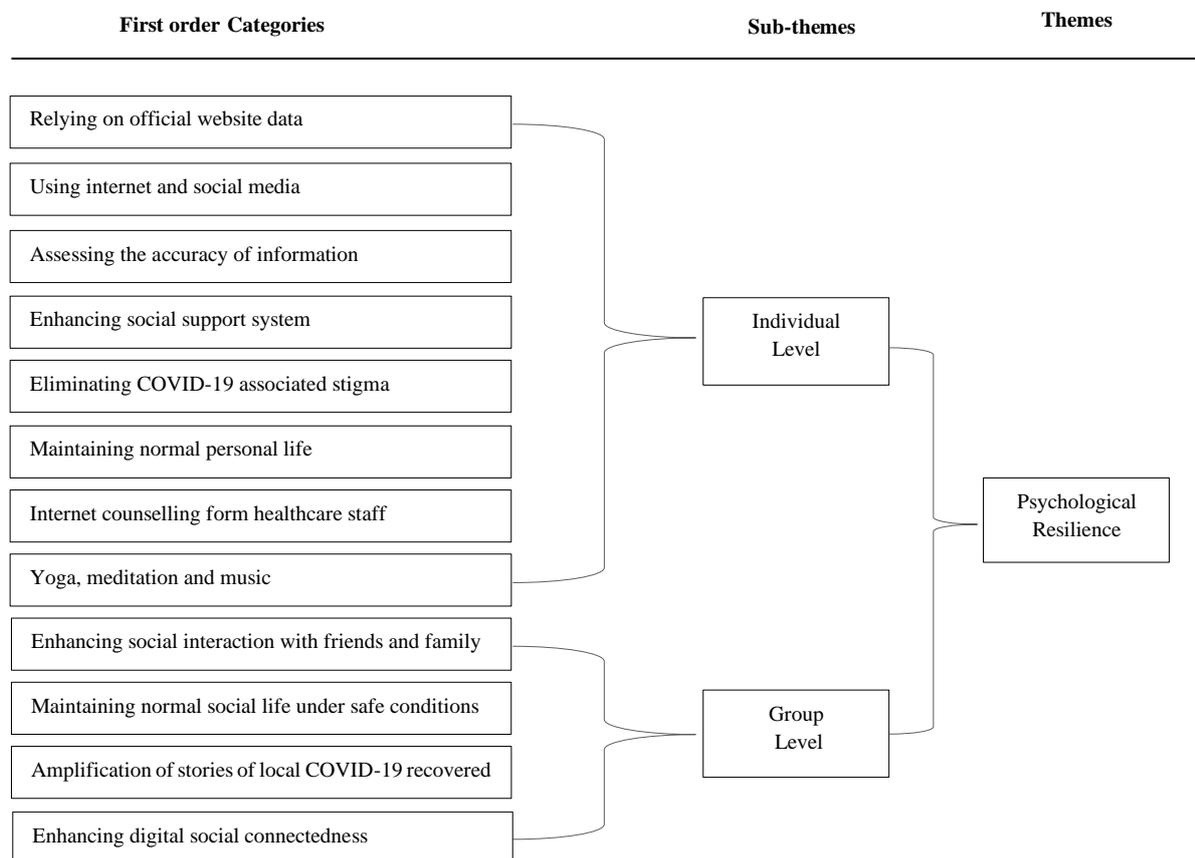**Figure 1:** Categorization of data in sub-themes and themes (Challenges)

The analysis of the data also reveals that aging individuals faced challenges in overcoming fear of losing loved ones, shortages of food and medical supplies due to the perceived threat of the growth of pandemic. Respondents confirmed that exposure to social media added to their fear and anxiety. Such a behavioral response, as some interviewee admitted, resulted in a lack of sleep and restlessness. Due to the lack of sleep and proper rest, the old age employees often displayed panic buying behavior thus disturbing the work-life balance. The interview data from the UK and China reveal that COVID-19 resulted in promoting cooperative behavior. However, the data from Pakistan gave presented opposite views. Some of the respondents are being marginalized due to their affiliation with a particular cast or sect resulting in the promotion of religious and ethnic prejudice in the society. Findings illustrated that such kind of bifurcation weakens the mental health of victims making a sound impact on their work-life.

Psychological Resilience

The study findings indicate that due to COVID-19, elderly employees face several challenges affecting their job motivation. Such challenges can have a deteriorating impact on their mental wellbeing if no proper strategies are adopted. Analysis of the data reveals that aging individual adopts effective mental health interventions, at individual and group levels, in order to overcome these challenges. Research participants indicated that they always tried their best to assess the accuracy of the information disclosed as during the COVID-19 pandemic there is a bombardment of fake information. Such accurate information was collected from official

websites such as WHO or concerned ministry in their country. Such constructive use of the internet and social media helped the aging individuals to deal with psychological stress. Social media tools were also utilized in the enhancement of social support systems such as group chat of group video calls with friends and families. The enhancement of digital social connectedness help to relieve the stress and the old age employees were able to focus on their work. One of the respondents working in a consultancy firm based in the UK expressed.

In such a situation of emergency, staying connected with close once can be really helpful. I am a frequent user of social media and it help me to stay connected with the outside world. I can talk to my relative on video call, order food and so on…I don't feel confined and it's just seems that my office has been changed. (J.A, UK, B)

Figure 2: Categorization of data in sub-themes and themes (Resilience Strategies)

Some of the research participants also reveal that behaving naturally as in normal life conditions also boosts their morale. Time utilization in yoga, meditation, art, and music therapy has also been found to have a positive impact on mental health. Such a positive impact has also been observed by some interviewees when they attempt to amplify survival stories of local people who revered form COVID-19. Interview data also illustrate that internet-based counseling form the health care staff is a useful strategy adopted by some individuals which significantly impacts the wellbeing of old age individuals. The counseling given by healthcare staff has been found to overcome the challenges of the feeling of asymptomatic.

Since the start of this pandemic, our country started telemedicine project. Doctors are available on phone call and you can talk to them and they will give you proper cancelling. When I first heard about it, I felt so relaxed. Now I don't need to go to hospital and take a risk of getting infect with corona. (Z.N, P, H)

Wellbeing

The interview data illustrated that majority of the respondents' good mental health had significantly supported them in overcoming the challenges associated with COVID-19. Such mental health is found to be considerably influenced by mental health interventions of research participants. Results highlighted that due to the COVID-19 pandemic, employees are required to adopt remote working practices. Such practices have deprived employees from peer and management support. The level of mental fitness can be a good predictor of not only the optimum arrangement of home and work activities but can resolve family-work conflict. There is been a dramatic increase in the rate of job loss and unemployment due to the slowdown of economic activities around the world. Interviewee showed great concerns over job insecurity and its potential impact of motivational level resulting in their job performance. Moreover, employees also express discomfort over the disturbance of their office architecture. Depriving of their natural work setting has forced them to leave the comfort zone thus affecting their psychological well-being. Interview data illustrates that some of the employee's

work motivation has a significant association with leader-member exchange (LMX). The participants with high LMX reported a high work attitude and well-being. Some of the participants, due to old age, expressed their feelings of being not fit for remote working jobs. Their perceived employability has been a source of isostrain, deteriorating their mental health and positive work attitude. A senior employee at a construction company shares his views:

> *Technology is changing rapidly and we at this age cannot keep pace with it. I use to take help from my co-workers but now this working from home is making thing difficult for me. I think I am not fit for this kind of job. It's very stressful to be technologically illustrate. (Z.I, C, C)*

The interview data reveal yet another interesting determinant of wellbeing that can significantly affect the engagement of employees. COVID-19 has been found to influence the relationship of the people living together. Such virus-related confinement in homes and spending time for an indefinite period of time with other members of the family has found to be one of the causes of aggression enhancement. It has been observed that aging employees in some houses free from COVID-29, still experience anxiety and economic effects of potential job loss.
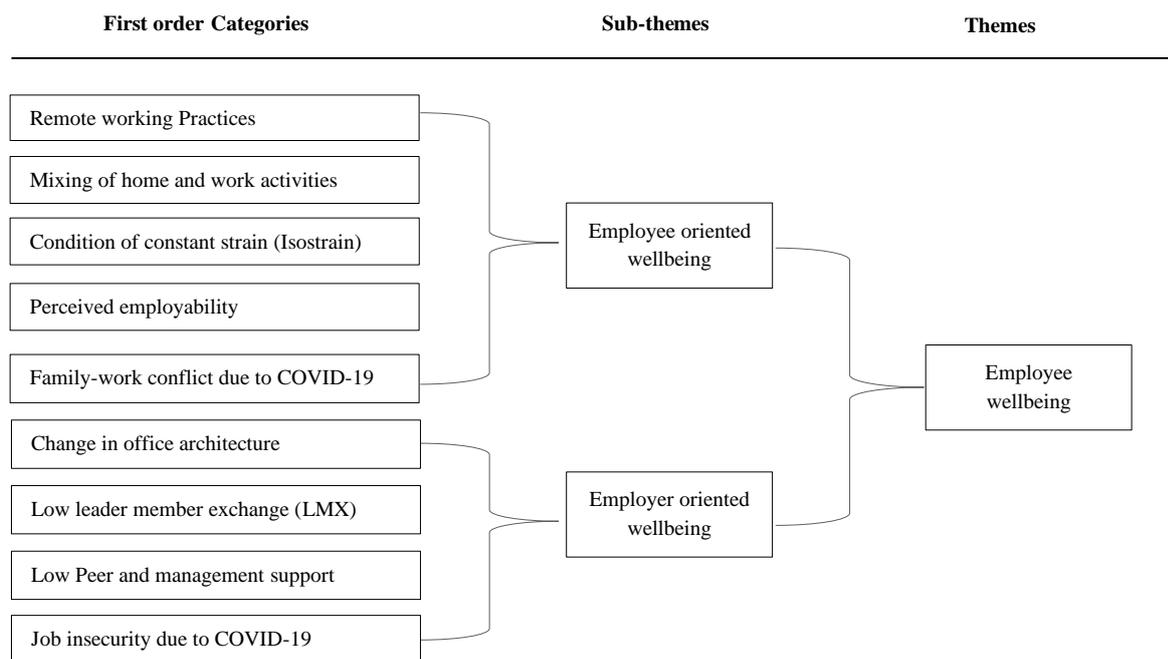

Figure 3: Categorization of data in sub-themes and themes (Wellbeing)

Discussion

Based on interview data, the study develops a conceptual model (Figure 4) explaining the study results. The study illustrates that COVID-19 has resulted in physical and mental challenges faced by aging employees. These challenges significantly influence the mental wellbeing (Epitropaki, Martin, & Psychology, 1999) of these employees thus affecting their job performance. Complementing the findings of the earlier research, this study found that the anxiety and mental health management in aging employees was significantly influenced by the combination of factors categorized into cognitive, physical and behavioral challenges. As COVID-19 can infect a person without showing any symptoms(Shimizu, 2020), the study finds the fear of being asymptomatic as one of the major challenges affecting the mental wellbeing of employees(Huang & Zhao, 2020). Social distancing has also been considered as one of the most effective prevention technique (Van Bavel et al., 2020). However, in the case of people with relatively higher ages who already have a limited social circle, such kind of social distancing may lead to psychological complications (Petric, 2020). The fears of social rejections as a consequence of viral contamination, restrictions on traveling and social gatherings and fear of being quarantined has been found potential factors of influencing the wellbeing of employees belonging to the high age group (Van Bavel et al., 2020). Furthermore, conspiracy theories also play a significant role as cognitive challenges adding to the anxiety of employees thus affecting their job performance.

Participants illustrated that weak social protection, job insecurity and access to the internet for remote working constitute major physical challenges to overcome, which affect participants' motivation for the job. Moreover, lack of exercise, social media exposure and lack of sleep are found to have a significant mental health impact. Empirical evidence also reveals that in countries with a high ratio of religious inclination, religious gatherings contribute to the healthy sense of community and tradition. The cancellation of religious congregations affected their spirituality thus leading to a feeling of being sinful, hence affecting wellbeing. Earlier studies' scholars (Pietraszewski, Cosmides, & Tooby, 2014) professed that pandemic like COVID-19 may provide an opportunity to diminish religious and ethnic prejudice (Dovidio, Gaertner, & Saguy, 2008). However, our study contending the existing research (Van Bavel

et al., 2020) presented different findings. In developing countries, empirical evidence of hate speech and marginalization of specific communities has been observed. The adoption of such a bifurcated approach has been found as a contributing factor to low employee morale affecting wellbeing. This study has also revealed some other social implications of COVID-19 as it influences the intimate relationship of the people living together. Living with each other in isolation, even with close relatives, during pandemic enhancing risk factors of relationship difficulties and dissolution. Such unwillingly time spend with each other can enhance aggression and domestic violence (Greenaway, Jetten, Ellemers, van Bunderen, & Relations, 2015).

To address these challenges, intervention strategies at the group and individual level can potentially relieve anxiety affecting psychological health in older adults. These supporting strategies can help the aging employees cope with challenges they face due to COVID-19 which has a significant impact on their mental wellbeing hence work engagement. Majority of the participants revealed that accessing accuracy of information via relying on data from official websites and using the internet and social media for relieving anxiety and counseling from health care staff are found to be very useful strategies to overcome the challenges associated with COVID-19. Some respondents also consider yoga, meditation, and music to be a very useful approach to overcome isostrain. Likewise, some interviewee used amplification of positive stories of local people recovered from COVID-19 as a useful approach to cope with challenges. Majority of the aging employees believe that enhancing digital social connectedness with friends and family can help to overcome isolation and social distancing thereby positively influence wellbeing through peer and management support (Newman & Zainal, 2020). Such online technologies are found effective to a sense of belonging and providing social support networks, though there might be disparities in respondents' literacy level and access to digital resources. The interaction could be regular telephonic contact with close friends and family, significant others, health-care professionals, voluntary organizations or community outreach projects provider with a peer support system during the enforced isolation.
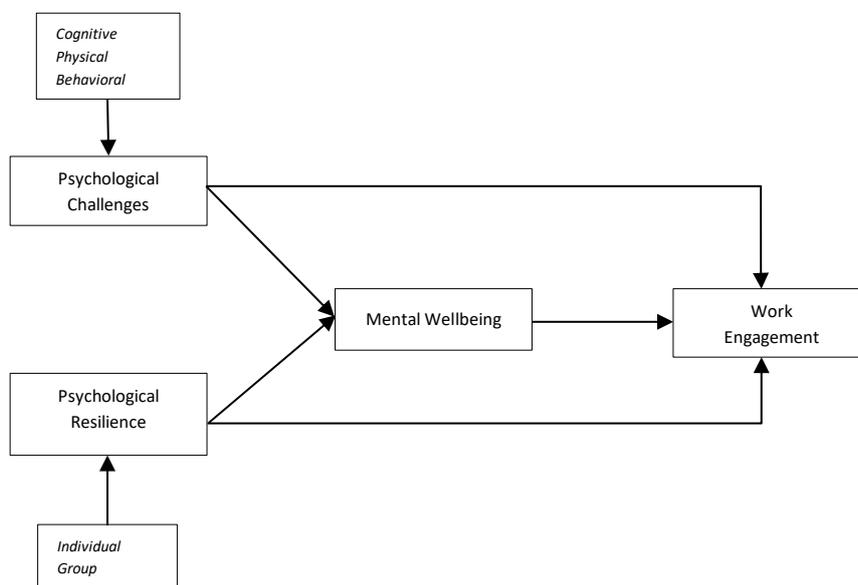
Figure 4: Proposed Conceptual model of the study

Implications

Theoretical Implications

Following calls for COVID19, mental welling and aging (Vahia et al., 2020) and attaining a balance between aging at workplace and work engagement (Guglielmi et al., 2016), this article explores the novel association between psychological challenges, mental health interventions, and work engagement. As limited literature is available on COVID-19, this article extends the research on social aspects by investigating challenges faced by an aging workforce. Furthermore, the findings of the study add to the existing theory of knowledge by indicating that COVID-19 can significantly influence the motivation level of the senescent workforce of the organization by affecting their mental wellbeing. Extant research on disaster management profess such pandemic to have a positive influence on national unity and cohesion (Dovidio et al., 2008). This study contending the earlier research illustrates that in countries with high religious sensitivity, COVID-19 resulted in the marginalization of the disadvantaged community thus resulted in a negative influence on mental wellbeing. Finally, this study also supplement the existing research on preventive measures of COVID-19 impact on mental health by exploring psychological resilience of aging employees that help in fostering work engagement.

Practical Implications

This study, in line with the previous literature, indicate that challenges explored related to COVID-19 can significantly influence the mental wellbeing of aging employees. Practitioners should be aware that the resulting wellbeing status has a proportionate impact on work engagement. The article suggests the clinical psychologists to device procedures in light of the challenging and resilience factors

to provide support to old age individuals in their professional life. The study also encourages employers to understand the limitations of aging employees and develop flexible policies that can have a positive impact on work engagement. This research also provides a practical guideline to aging employees to help themselves on the pandemic situation by adopting the mental health intervention strategies explored thus supporting their work engagement.

Conclusions

The study contributes to the existing body of knowledge by highlighting the challenges faced by old age employees, with a high risk of COVID-19 infection, affecting their work engagement. The study also attempts to find intervention strategies adopted by such individuals that significantly influence their mental wellbeing. Furthermore, this research proposed a conceptual model for testing in future studies analyzing the impact of COVID-19 associated challenges and intervention strategies on the work engagement of aging employees. It also professes the role of mental wellbeing as a potential mediator affecting work engagement.

This study, like every other research, has some limitations. The study was conducted at the time of the COVID-19 pandemic so direct access to the research participants was not possible. Data was collected through telephonic interviews so some aspects of the study might be left unexplored which can only be possible through face to face interaction. Findings of the study can be affected by recall bias as it was based on a single method of data collection i.e. semi-structured interviews. Future research can opt for a focus group in order to enhance the methodology. Furthermore, the data was collected from three countries namely China, Pakistan and the UK. Researchers can collect data from more countries in order to have more generalized findings. The study was based on a qualitative approach, the future researcher can attempt to apply the quantitative methodology in order to provide explanatory findings of the study. Finally, a longitudinal study over the period of pandemic and post pandemic stressors may provide some useful insight into the field of geriatric psychiatry at the workplace.

Acknowledgement

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