**What predicts wellbeing amidst crisis? A study of promotive and protective psychological factors among Malaysians during the COVID-19 pandemic**

**Eugene Y.J. Tee1 · Raja Intan Arifah binti Raja Reza Shah2 · Karuna S. Thomas3 ·**

**Evone Y.M. Phoo4 · Siew Li Ng5**

1, 3, 4, 5 Department of Psychology, Faculty of Behavioural Sciences, HELP University, Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia

2 Department of Social, Health, and Organizational Psychology, Utrecht University, Netherlands

**Abstract:** Resilience promotes psychological growth and buffers against the effects of negative events, but the factors that promote optimal wellbeing beyond resilience remain poorly understood. The current study addresses this gap through a positive psychology perspective by examining how (i) promotive factors – optimism and hope, and (ii) protective factors – nostalgia and spirituality promote wellbeing. We hypothesized that both factors will be positively related to wellbeing above and beyond that predicted by resilience. A representative sample of six hundred and twenty-six (n = 626; M age = 32.66, SD = 10.11, 43.45% female) Malaysians responded to an online survey at the end of the country’s second wave of the COVID-19 pandemic (June-September 2020). We conducted a series of regression analyses, controlling for resilience, socio-economic status, age, and perceptions towards government crisis management efforts. Results indicate that optimism and hope positively predicted wellbeing above and beyond that predicted by resilience. Results also showed that the only significant protective factor contributing to wellbeing is spirituality. Nostalgia did not significantly predict wellbeing beyond resilience.

**Keywords:** resilience, wellbeing, hope, optimism, nostalgia, spirituality, COVID-19

**INTRODUCTION, CONTEXT AND RESEARCH OBJECTIVES**

**Resilience and its Effects on Wellbeing in Times of Crisis**

 Research has emphasized the importance of resilience in enhancing wellbeing in the face of adversity. Masten, Cutuli, Herbers and Reed (2009, p. 118) define resilience as, “a class of phenomena characterized by patterns of positive adaptation in the context of significant adversity or risk.” Fletcher and Sarkar (2013) highlight that resilience revolves around two central concepts – adversity and positive adaptation…

 As of 25th September 2021, and at the time of writing, Malaysia has loosened some government-imposed restrictions…

**LITERATURE REVIEW/THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK**

**Promotive and Protective Wellbeing Factors**

***Optimism***

 Scheier and Carver (1985, p. 219) define optimism as “the stable tendency to believe that good rather than bad things will happen.” Trait optimism should thus be positively associated with wellbeing.

*Hypothesis 1a: Controlling for resilience, optimism predicts wellbeing.*

**METHOD**

**Sample**

 A total of 952 Malaysians from across Peninsula and East Malaysia responded to the survey. A total of 626 complete responses was obtained, yielding a 65.75% completion rate…

**Measures**

**Control Variables**

**RESULTS**

**Descriptive Statistics, Scale Reliability and Pairwise Comparisons**

 Descriptive statistics, scale reliabilities and pairwise comparisons for all variables in the study are presented in Table 1.

-------------------------------

Insert Table 1 about here

-------------------------------

**Hypothesis Tests**

**DISCUSSION**

**Summary of Results/Key Findings/Main Themes**

**Limitations and Suggestions for Future Research**

**Theoretical Implications**

**PRACTICAL SUGGESTIONS**

 Findings from this study can contribute to the design of positive psychology interventions that encourage the cultivation of promotive and protective resources that increase wellbeing.

**ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS AND FUNDING**

The study was funded by the HELP University Internal Research Grant Scheme (IRGS), grant no. 20-05-020. The authors thank the anonymous reviewers for comments on the initial submission of this manuscript.

**STATEMENT OF ETHICAL CLEARANCE**

The study was cleared for data collection by the Ethics Review Board (ERB), Department of Psychology, HELP University. Ethical clearance granted 11th June 2020.

**DATA AVAILABILITY STATEMENT**

Data is publicly available in [URL] / Data is available upon request from the authors.

**DECLARATION OF ORIGINALITY**

I/We declare that the current submission is our work and is not being considered for publication elsewhere. I/We certify that referenced work used in this submission has been properly acknowledged in text and in the reference list.

**CONFLICT OF INTEREST STATEMENT**

The authors report no conflicts of interest.

**PUBLISHER'S NOTE**

The views and claims expressed in this article do not represent the Board of Editors and the Reviewers.

**REFERENCES**

Fletcher, D., & Sarkar, M. (2013). Psychological resilience: A review and critique of definitions, concepts, and theory. *European Psychologist*, *18*, 12-23. <https://www.doi.org/10.1027/1016-9040/a000124>

Masten, A. S., Cutuli, J. J., Herbers, J. E., & Reed, M.-G. J. (2009). *Resilience in development.* In S. J. Lopez & C. R. Snyder (Eds.), *Oxford library of psychology. Oxford handbook of positive psychology* (p. 117–131). Oxford University Press.

Scheier, M. F., & Carver, C. S. (1985). Optimism, coping, and health: assessment and implications of generalized outcome expectancies. *Health Psychology*, *4*(3), 219-247. <https://doi.org/10.1037/0278-6133.4.3.219>