Chapter 12
Positive Technology:
A Growing Market With a Potential to Rebuild a Resilient Society During and After the COVID-19 Crisis

Anuragini Shirish
https://orcid.org/0000-0001-8199-2889
Université Paris-Saclay, France & Université d'Évry, France & LITEM, IMT-BS, France

ABSTRACT

Given the crucial need to bridge the mental health service divide, the author examines the emerging trends in digital well-being management by focusing on the mobile health market. Using a bottom-up perspective and leveraging literature from positive technology and generalized unsafety theory of stress, the author conceptualizes how positive technology as a mobile health solution can help end users to respond effectively to different kinds of stressors during a crisis. It is further argued that the use of positive technology can positively reverse the automatic route to mental ill health that is plausible in the absence of safety perceptions. The chapter offers a theory-driven conceptualization of digital coping through positive technology. By showing how a simple, scalable, and sustainable positive technology design can cater to different user segments, the author urges policymakers, entrepreneurs, and healthcare service providers to participate in the design, propagation, adoption, and diffusion of such holistic positive technologies for fostering societal resilience.

INTRODUCTION

The crisis and its associated management strategies that involve quarantines and

DOI: 10.4018/978-1-7998-7263-4.ch012

lockdowns has affected how individuals can cope with this pandemic at the physical, social, emotional and spiritual levels. Individuals find the need to preserve the old and they may need to adapt to the new normal (Lazarus & Folkman, 1984). In either way, individuals would resort to sense making mechanisms to cope with the imminent impact of the pandemic on their life and that of their loved ones (Christianson & Barton, 2020). The World Health Organization (WHO) defines health as a "State of complete physical, mental, and social well-being, and not merely the absence of disease or infirmity" (WHOa, 1948). The WHO expects elevated rates of stress or anxiety amongst the population: both the frontline workers, old people, people with prior health conditions and amongst public if there is a lack of access to basic services and if lock down measures continue (WHOb, 2020). Stress can be defined as the inability of a person to cope with internal or environmental demands. Stress is therefore not a stimulus or a reaction to a stimulus but it is a process of adaptation between a person and a specific environment (Lazarus & Folkman, 1984). Table 1 below depicts the current stress creating situation.

Table 1. Dynamic and ongoing events affecting well-being during the COVID-19 crisis

Preservation of Old	Adaptation to the New
Keep our usual routine going	Adjust to work-life conflict
Keep our activities going	Adjust to technology overload
Keep our livelihoods intact	Adjust to the unknown threat to life

Source: Author

Although coping is an essential element to handle adversities, there are differences between coping and resilience (Fletcher & Sarkar 2013). In this study, we follow the view that resilience relates to positive adaptation despite the presence of risk or adversity; it has both protective and promote factors encapsulated in the notion of a trait and a process (Fletcher & Sarkar 2013; Sarkar & Hilton, 2013). Recent study defines resilience as "the role of mental processes and behavior in promoting personal assets and protecting an individual from the potential negative effect of stressors" (Fletcher & Sarkar, 2013, p. 16). Further, individual and collective resilience can be built over time (Sarkar & Hilton, 2020).

As of January 2021, we note that several countries such as France, UK, Japan, Germany are thinking about imposing their third lock down measures to handle the pandemic situation. It is predicted that we will witness higher levels of loneliness, depression, harmful alcohol and drug use, and self-harm or suicidal behaviors. They estimated depression and anxiety to be 1 trillion in 2019 (Sime, 2019) and