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Mapping of Psychosocial and Spiritual Practices During Pandemic: A Bibliometric Review

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Mapping of Psychosocial and Spiritual Practices During Pandemic: A Bibliometric Review

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Abstract

The COVID-19 outbreak significantly impacted every aspect of life. It disrupted day-to-day activities, including social interactions, education, health, employment, safety, nutrition, politics, and economic activities. This disruption had a severe impact on individuals' well-being. This study examined how people used different coping strategies to enhance their well-being. Bibliometric mapping was carried out for this investigation, and the data was retrieved from the SCOPUS database. This database was chosen due to its wide use in social sciences and humanities. We searched the Scopus electronic database for literature published until December 2022 to find relevant studies. A total of 5767 documents were found to be relevant to the theme undertaken for the study. Different coping strategies, such as being grateful to others and God, cultivating spiritual values (i.e., compassion, honesty), maintaining calmness and self-control through equanimity, preparing a gratitude journal, having hope and existential thinking, finding inspiration from cetaceans, managing stress through breathing, strength, and serenity, practising walking meditation, and fostering global togetherness, played a buffering role against stressors and stressful reactions during the COVID-19 pandemic. By practising these psychosocial and spiritual strategies, individuals improved their well-being even during the challenging period of the pandemic, lockdowns, and economic crisis.

Keywords: COVID-19 Pandemic, Coping Strategies, Managing Stress, Traumatic Events

1. Introduction

During the coronavirus pandemic, people became panicky, fearful, distressed, experiencing loneliness or relationship problems due to social distancing, worried about work or unemployment, social isolation, homelessness, a long-term physical health condition, poverty or debt, had a significant impact on their mental well-being and consequently find it difficult to cope with it ¹. As a consequence of the coronavirus epidemic, the globe took a wrong turn in 2020, with levels of stress, fear, grief, and suffering happening everywhere.

¹ Ana Luisa Pedrosa et al., "Emotional, Behavioral, and Psychological Impact of the COVID-19 Pandemic," *Frontiers in Psychology* 11 (October 2, 2020), 566212, <https://doi.org/10.3389/fpsyg.2020.566212>.

Spirituality can offer a path of purity, truth, perfection, and unity in such challenging times. It is based on universal brotherhood and sisterhood, where peace, goodwill and harmony prevail. Through spirituality, individuals can find solace and strength, potentially developing a peaceful world despite the chaos. By following certain spiritual principles, values, and practices, people can cultivate resilience and hope, helping mitigate the pandemic's mental health impacts and fostering a sense of one world and humanity.

Psychosocial and spiritual strategies such as being grateful to others and God, cultivating spiritual values (i.e., compassion, honesty), maintaining calmness and self-control through equanimity, preparing a gratitude journal, having hope and existential thinking, inspiration from cetaceans, managing stress through breathing, strength, and serenity, walking meditation and global togetherness can help you to function optimally and stay healthy during the pandemic ².

This study comprehensively reviews psychosocial and spiritual practices during COVID-19. The study's objective, which is the first to carry out a bibliometric analysis of the area, is to examine the different psychosocial and spiritual practices people practised during COVID-19 and should practice during any other difficult times.

2. Methods

An examination of bibliometric mapping was carried out for this investigation. Recently, bibliometric mapping has become more renowned across various academic fields ³. This section outlines the process for conducting bibliometric mapping analysis, including data collection, screening, extraction, and synthesis.

3. Literature Search and Data Collection

TITLE-ABS-KEY ("psychosocial" OR "psychological" OR "social" OR "spiritual practices" AND "Covid-19") AND (LIMIT-TO (AFFILCOUNTRY, "India") AND (LIMIT-TO (LANGUAGE, "English").

The authors do not assert that a complete data collection was acquired because the database incorporated articles only from Scopus (Figure 1). If a corresponding formatting standard permits the integration of data collected from various sources, the likelihood of missing out on data from other databases, such as Web of Science, PubMed, etc., could be insignificant. However, the number of publications covered by Scopus is far more extensive, and its citation records are higher ⁴.

² Thomas G. Plante, "What Do the Spiritual and Religious Traditions Offer the Practicing Psychologist?," *Pastoral Psychology* 56, no. 4 (March 1, 2008): 429–44, <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11089-008-0119-0>.

³ Massimo Aria and Corrado Cuccurullo, "Bibliometrix: An R-Tool for Comprehensive Science Mapping Analysis," *Journal of Informetrics* 11, no. 4 (2017): 959–75, <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.joi.2017.08.007>; Faruk Arici et al., "Research Trends in the Use of Augmented Reality in Science Education: Content and Bibliometric Mapping Analysis," *Computers & Education* 142 (December 1, 2019): 103647, <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.compedu.2019.103647>; Yu Song et al., "Exploring Two Decades of Research on Classroom Dialogue by Using Bibliometric Analysis," *Computers & Education* 137, no. C (2019): 12–31, <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.compedu.2019.04.002>.

⁴ Ruben Heradio et al., "Virtual and Remote Labs in Education: A Bibliometric Analysis," *Computers & Education* 98, no. 1 (July 2016): 14–38; Chien-wen Shen and Jung-tsung Ho, "Technology-Enhanced Learning in Higher Education: A Bibliometric Analysis with Latent Semantic Approach," *Computers in Human Behavior* 104 (March 1, 2020): 106177, <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.chb.2019.106177>.

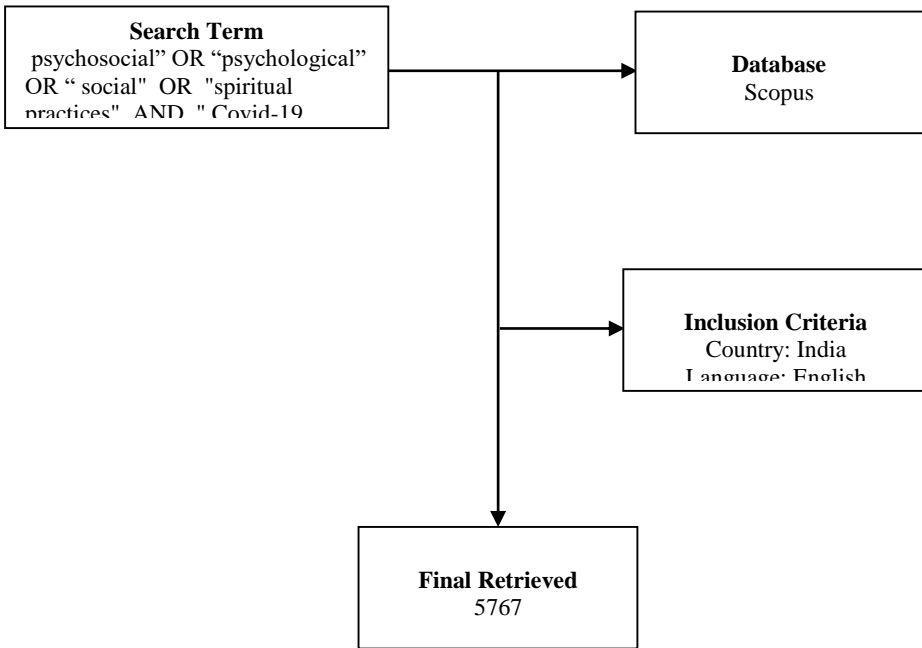


Figure 1 Outlines the methodological approach.

Source: Compiled by the authors

4. Results and Discussion

A review of the literature was the study's primary goal on psychosocial and spiritual practices during COVID-19 through the bibliometric method. From the Scopus database, 5767 documents in total were downloaded. The eight clusters and their relationships are described in the cluster analysis. The main keywords were related to anxiety, depression, environmental issues, challenges, practices, solutions, spread, recommendations, etc.

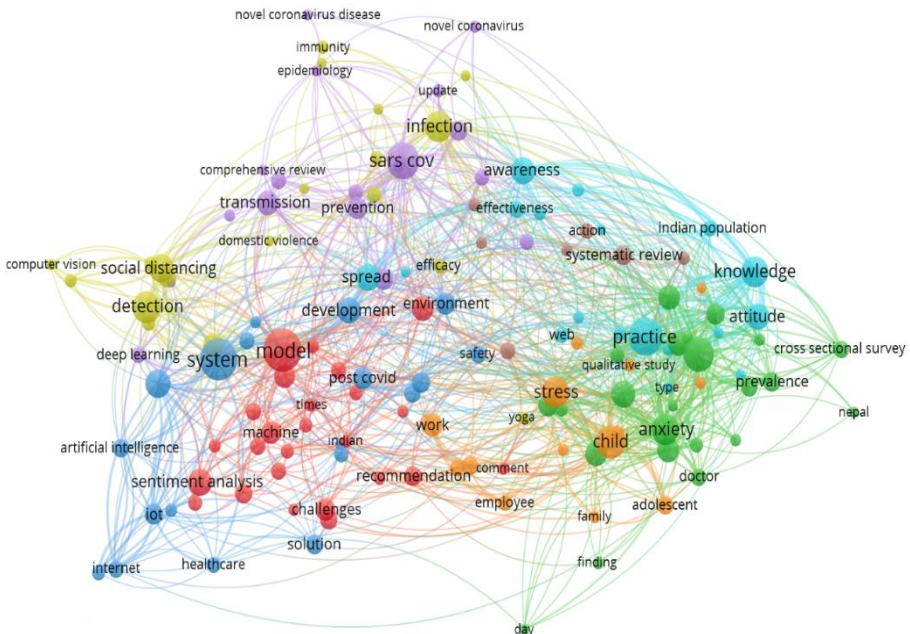


Figure 2: Keyword co-occurrence network

Source: Compiled by the authors

Based on this bibliometric search (Figure, 2) the authors have revealed the following psychosocial and spiritual strategies, which have helped and can help the person to function optimally and stay healthy during the pandemic.

4.1 Being Grateful: "It is just that we should be grateful, not only to those with whose views we may agree but also to those who have expressed more superficial views, for these also contributed something by developing before us the power of thought."⁵

"If you are grateful, I will surely increase you in favour" (Quran 14:7)

"Be grateful to Allah for whoso is grateful is grateful for the good of his own soul." (Quran 31:12)

Messenger of Allah (SAW) said: "Whoever is not grateful to the people, he is not grateful to Allah." [Tirmidhi]

When you practice gratefulness, there is a sense of respect toward others. -Dalai Lama

Be grateful for all your blessings. Let us be grateful to God and others not being afflicted with coronavirus. It would be wise to feel grateful that our hearts are filled with godly love and that our minds are to preserve harmony. Experiences and acts of gratitude have been seen throughout history and across cultures as indispensable and desirable ingredients of social interaction and personality. For instance, Jewish, Christian, Muslim, Buddhist, and Hindu thinking all highly value the human trait of thankfulness ⁶.

Individuals who were heartened to cogitate positively also expressed being more likely to have assisted a companion or an acquaintance with difficulty or provided emotional support, demonstrating that the gratitude induction worked in prosocial motivation ⁷. An indispensable method by which individuals view their everyday experience in a positive light may be to express gratitude in response to their circumstances. It has long been believed that a fundamental ingredient in determining happiness is one's capacity to see, value, and savour the aspects of one's existence ⁸. In addition, the American Heart Association says, "Clinical trials indicate that the practice of gratitude can have dramatic and lasting effects on a person's life. It can lower blood pressure and improve immune function... grateful people engage in more exercise, have better dietary behaviours, are less likely to smoke and abuse alcohol, and have higher rates of medication adherence."⁹

Similarly, according to the National Alliance on Mental Illness, research has demonstrated a much lower incidence of major depression, generalised anxiety disorder, substance addiction, as well as dependence in those who often communicate thankfulness ¹⁰. A grateful mindset is a prerequisite to maintaining our positive attitudes during times of crisis, such as the COVID-19 epidemic. It may energise, heal, and inspire,

⁵ Anagnostopoulos, Georgios, ed. *A Companion to Aristotle*. John Wiley & Sons, 2013, 117.

⁶ J. Carman and Frederick J. Streng, "Spoken and Unspoken Thanks : Some Comparative Soundings" (*NTU Digital Library of Buddhist Studies*, 1989), <https://www.semanticscholar.org/paper/Spoken-and-unspoken-thanks-%3A-some-comparative-Carman-Streng/eceadf2f98fde25a702a56bbebd0929dabf072e5>.

⁷ Robert A. Emmons and Michael E. McCullough, "Counting Blessings versus Burdens: An Experimental Investigation of Gratitude and Subjective Well-Being in Daily Life.," *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology* 84, no. 2 (2003): 377–89, <https://doi.org/10.1037/0022-3514.84.2.377>.

⁸ Ronnie Janoff-Bulman and Andrea R. Berger, "The Other Side of Trauma: Towards a Psychology of Appreciation," In *Loss and Trauma: General and Close Relationship Perspectives*, ed. J H Harvey and E D Miller (New York, NY, US: Brunner-Routledge, 2000), 29–44.

⁹ American Heart Association. "Here's a simple way to get started", 2016.

¹⁰ Luna Greenstein, "When Looking for Happiness, Find Gratitude," *National Alliance on Mental Illness*, 2016, <https://www.nami.org/blogs/nami-blog/september-2016?categoryname=StressManagement>.

and it can also provide hope. According to research in positive psychology, good emotions, such as gratitude, are synergistic with health and wellness. Therefore, they boost happiness and flourish, generating an upward spiral. Negative emotions, on the other hand, serve as an indispensable reminder of risks or unmet demands ¹¹. By emphasising what we value, what is under our power, and what we can give back, being grateful is an accessible mindfulness practice that could aid us in handling worry and unpredictability. ¹²

4.2 Cultivation of Spiritual Values: Spiritual values must be cultivated from childhood to lead a healthy and happy life. Cultivation of values was at the root of all spiritual traditions of ancient India. The ancient education system in India emphasised the building of good character: Rabindranath Tagore said, "Education without good character is a body without a head." So, a spiritually disciplined life is the essential quality that our educational system should maintain. By cultivating spiritual values, educational institutions will develop the child's personality and face the prevailing evils or vices (e.g., lust, anger, avarice, greed, calumny, jealousy and hatred) in our society. Cultivation of spiritual values like love, humility, benevolence, honesty, truthfulness, peace, etc., will bring people closure to you. Adopt these values because these are the path to transforming your behaviour, developing your health, and bringing happiness into your life.

4.3 Compassion: Being compassionate "is a multidimensional process comprised of four key components: (1) an awareness of suffering (cognitive/empathic awareness), (2) sympathetic concern related to being emotionally moved by suffering (affective component), (3) a wish to see the relief of that suffering (intention), and (4) a responsiveness or readiness to help relieve that suffering (motivational)" ¹³. Compassion is often considered an essential human strength, requiring a sense of caring, empathy, and sympathy, enabling one to connect with and care for another. Of notable relevance to mental health, compassion is not only a process that builds positive relationships with others; it is also a vital path to releasing the human mind from the effects of harmful negative emotions" ¹⁴.

Feldman and Kuyken ¹⁵ wrote: One is to think of compassion as the fruit of a road which could be developed and nurtured. Compassion cannot be evolved; however, you may develop the traits that make your heart disposed to compassion through research. You can develop the skill of being aware of when you contract and close off in the presence of pain, rage, fear or estrangement. You are encouraged to consider the difference compassion, mercy, tolerance, and perseverance would make in those circumstances. You cultivate the resolve to change the direction of your dislike, rage or intolerance. You

¹¹ June Gruber, Iris B. Mauss, and Maya Tamir, "A Dark Side of Happiness? How, When, and Why Happiness Is Not Always Good," *Perspectives on Psychological Science* 6, no. 3 (May 1, 2011): 222-33, <https://doi.org/10.1177/1745691611406927>.

¹² Robert Emmons, "How Gratitude Can Help You Through Hard Times," *Greater Good*, 2013, https://greatergood.berkeley.edu/article/item/how_gratitude_can_help_you_through_hard_times.

¹³ Hooria Jazaieri et al., "Enhancing Compassion: A Randomized Controlled Trial of a Compassion Cultivation Training Program," *Journal of Happiness Studies* 14, no. 4 (August 2012): 1113-26, <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10902-012-9373-z>.

¹⁴ Myriam Mongrain, Jacqueline M. Chin, and Leah B. Shapira, "Practicing Compassion Increases Happiness and Self-Esteem," *Journal of Happiness Studies* 12, no. 6 (December 1, 2011): 963-81, <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10902-010-9239-1>.

¹⁵ Christina Feldman and Willem Kuyken, "Compassion in the Landscape of Suffering," *Contemporary Buddhism* 12, no. 1 (2011): 143-55, <https://doi.org/10.1080/14639947.2011.564831>.

discover in your heart the generosity and understanding which let you open rather than close with awareness and inquiry.¹⁶ It is a multifaceted reaction to suffering and agony. Kindness, empathy, charity and acceptance are all components of it. Compassion is woven into a fabric long with courage, tolerance and equanimity. Above all, being compassionate is having the ability to be open to the reality of suffering and to wish for its alleviation. “If you want to know what compassion is, look into the eyes of the mother as she cradles his sick and fevered kid”, the Dalai Lama famously stated¹⁷. Buddhism views charitable giving as a choice, not a “necessity,” driven by the comprehension that all beings are mutually dependent. Compassion is sparked by awareness of the helplessness of those who are less fortunate and the interdependence of all things. By revealing selflessness in this way, one is said to raise their merit and combat greed and a grasping attitude toward their assets or other resources. The act of giving is a manifestation of the inherent goodness and compassion. Buddhist laypeople have long engaged in the practice of giving food, clothing, medicine, and alms to monks and monasteries in exchange for teachings and merit. In this relationship, merit is shared on both sides for the good of everyone. It is viewed as a holy mutual dependency.

4.4 Integrity: Speaking the truth is a sign of integrity. Overall, you come across as genuine, without pretence, and accept accountability for your cognition, affect, and behaviour. In order to effectively depict your internal states, objectives, and commitments in both public and private settings, you must possess the strength of honesty. The strength of honesty is often linked to self-concordance- the extent to which your goals accurately portray your implicit interests and values (VIA). Tara Smith says, “An honest person refuses to pretend that facts are other than they are, whether to himself or others”¹⁸. Smith further says that to develop sound self-beliefs, we require the direction of others through the honest communication of knowledge.¹⁹

Consequently, being untruthful to others-whether by withholding information, falsifying information, or misrepresenting the truth, is dishonesty²⁰-can be held jointly accountable for others’ shortcomings “to see facts related to the self as they are” (self-integrity). Without knowing the truth, the person behaves, feels and thinks based on misapprehension. Delusional personal happiness and well-being could be upshot if these impressions turn out to be positive. More seriously, lying can cause the owner to undergo unpleasant feelings, including guilt, dread of discovery, and misery²¹. Therefore, integrity encourages genuine self-appraisal and reflection in both givers and recipients, a skill essential for development²². It also serves as a foundation for the changing

¹⁶ Stefan G. Hofmann, Paul Grossman, and Devon E. Hinton, “Loving-Kindness and Compassion Meditation: Potential for Psychological Interventions,” *Clinical Psychology Review* 31, no. 7 (November 2011): 1126-32, <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.cpr.2011.07.003>.

¹⁷ Christina Feldman and Willem Kuyken, “Compassion in the Landscape of Suffering,” *Contemporary Buddhism* 12, no. 1 (2011): 143-55, <https://doi.org/10.1080/14639947.2011.564831>.

¹⁸ Tara Smith, “The Metaphysical Case for Honesty,” *The Journal of Value Inquiry* 37, no. 4 (December 1, 2003): 517-531, <https://doi.org/10.1023/B:INQU.0000019033.95049.1e>.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*

²⁰ Dorothea D. Braginsky, “Machiavellianism and Manipulative Interpersonal Behavior in Children,” *Journal of Experimental Social Psychology* 6, no. 1 (January 1970): 77-99, [https://doi.org/10.1016/0022-1031\(70\)90077-6](https://doi.org/10.1016/0022-1031(70)90077-6).

²¹ Leanne ten Brinke and Stephen Porter, “Cry Me a River: Identifying the Behavioral Consequences of Extremely High-Stakes Interpersonal Deception,” *Law and Human Behavior* 36 (2012): 469-77, <https://doi.org/10.1037/h0093929>.

²² John Dewey, *How We Think: A Restatement of the Relation of Reflective Thinking to the Educative Process*, New Edition (D.C. Heath and company, 1933).

negative attitudes, beliefs, and behaviours that prohibit individuals from experiencing true happiness²³.

Explore for yourself: What do these spiritual values mean to you personally, and how do you currently express each in your work and daily life? Compassion and honesty establish human consciousness regarding caring for others and maintaining integrity.

4.5 Equanimity: Practice equanimity, even in times of praise or blame, is an attribute of intrinsic steadiness as well as balance, which is infused with attention, concern, and compassion. It is neither idealised nor distant to be equanimous. As the epidemic progressed, we instead engaged authentically with the challenges we faced, but in a way that allowed us to comprehend how our cognitions are changing and how the globe is changing dynamically. Understanding those challenging thoughts, fears, and sensations change and pass when we acknowledge them and give them space rather than overidentifying with or clinging to them assists us in maintaining equanimity. We learn that resisting painful emotions and thoughts or over-identifying with them makes them last longer. It is not about ingenious language or concepts but has to do with a psychological attitude, a precise, attainable and cultivated psychological attitude.

We can all possess equanimity outside of our inner lives. Particularly during difficult times, such as COVID-19, the outward characteristics of our existence offer substantial food for thought. We want to know what will happen next week, next month, or next year; however, nobody knows because the news cycle is not developing the way we want it to, people are not acting the way we believe ought to, and each day demands more change than we feel we can manage. The ability to handle our composure in the face of life's unpredictability and uncertainty is a skill which can prohibit us from falling off course or getting lost. Instead of giving up on creativity or action, equanimity is a wholehearted responsiveness that cherishes beings' health and wellness. We can stand and face our challenges on this more stable ground²⁴.

Every generation faces serious challenges, facing them together and growing wiser and stronger from them. This is referred to as "post-traumatic growth", and it turns out humans have a knack for it. Coronavirus seemed to be one of our biggest challenges so far, and we have overcome it and grown, too, no matter how difficult it was.²⁵

Our suffering and pure joy must be accepted as one by equanimity's inclusion, which also entails recognising setbacks and successes. Hafiz, a famous Persian poet, wrote: Fear is the cheapest room in the house. I would like to see you living in better conditions." He explains that dread is like a room with a blank wall facing the windows at the opulent hotel of life. The enormous globe outside our window would be a more fitting vista for us. We can promote trust, which is the antithesis of dread, to claim it. We can weather

²³ Nicole Torke, "Honesty and Genuine Happiness," *British Journal of Guidance & Counselling* 47, no. 2 (March 4, 2019): 200-209, <https://doi.org/10.1080/03069885.2018.1453600>.

²⁴ Willem Kuyken, "Keeping a Cool Head and Warm Heart in Challenging Times," *Mindful, Healthy Mind, Healthy Life*, March 25, 2020, <https://www.mindful.org/keeping-a-cool-head-and-warm-heart-in-challenging-times/>.

²⁵ Jason N. Linder, "Mindfulness & Equanimity in the Panic of Coronavirus," *Psychology Today*, 2020, <https://www.psychologytoday.com/us/blog/mindfulness-insights/202003/mindfulness-equanimity-in-the-panic-coronavirus>.

this storm if we have faith in our innate fortitude, the goodness of others around us, and our fundamental goodness. We can renew our vision and feed our courage at this well of trust.

4.6 Global cooperation: One of the most serious threats the globe has ever encountered was COVID-19, which is beyond dispute. Despite the uncertainty and fear, there were growing indications of hope, unity, and a sense of a yearning for cohesion. We had hope because of the spirit of international cooperation. In those trying times, we were all each other's neighbours, and we would not have succeeded unless every person in every nation was secure ²⁶. By looking at the positive cases of COVID-19, individuals, society, and nations should discover the essentiality and priorities towards attaining the goal of life. Global togetherness could be achieved through our collective consciousness.

4.7 Hope and Existential Thinking: According to German philosopher Friedrich Nietzsche, self-thinking is the secret to creating a mature man. The truth is that hope develops existential thinking. COVID-19 patients' hope influenced their existential thinking. Patients' thinking is conditioned by hope. Most patients encounter circumstances that make them recognise that they have made a wrong decision in their lives. Positive hope stops their negative thinking. The process of establishing a person's personality involves hope and existential thought. This procedure continues until the existence of life in this world. In this respect, hope and existential thinking can be linked with each other.

Everyone fears end, and existential therapy assumes that if they are not consciously aware of it, they are in denial of it. Denying demise is unhealthy. Otto Rank declared, "Some refuse the loan of life to avoid the debt of death" ²⁷. The underlying meaning is that one must accept their inevitable demise, the transience of their existence, and the reality that they and the people and things they cherish and care about will one day cease to exist. This sounds like common sense. Everybody "knows" they will pass away. Few men feel it, embrace it, or take it with them. Critchley gives Michel de Montaigne credit for bringing death with him when he "developed the habit of having death not just in his imagination but constantly in his mouth."²⁸ Many prominent thinkers have argued that it is indispensable for individuals actually to face their death. Critchley continues by quoting Montaigne, "He who has learned how to die has unlearned how to be a slave."²⁹ All of this lends credence to the notion that by thinking about dying, one might enjoy life to the fullest. The COVID-19 epidemic, as Critchley contends in his article, made us anxious, probably death-related anxiety. The abovementioned worry "must be acknowledged, shaped and honed into a [sic] vehicle of liberation" ³⁰.

In the epidemic, isolation, a central existentialist idea, appeared to be widespread. In hospitals and at home, individuals suffered and occasionally passed away alone owing

²⁶ Ulrika Modeer and Anna Ryott, "COVID-19: A Reminder of the Power of Hope and Solidarity," *UNDP*, 2020, <https://www.undp.org/blog/covid-19-reminder-power-hope-and-solidarity>.

²⁷ Irvin D. Yalom, "Staring at the Sun: Overcoming the Terror of Death," *The Humanistic Psychologist* 36 (2008): 283-97, <https://doi.org/10.1080/08873260802350006>.

²⁸ Simon Critchley, "To Philosophize Is to Learn How to Die," *The New York Times*, April 11, 2020, <https://www.nytimes.com/2020/04/11/opinion/covid-philosophy-anxiety-death.html>.

²⁹ Ibid

³⁰ Ibid.

to the risk of infection. Support from members of the family was not permitted. Many more isolated themselves and were alone or with a small group of individuals (and maybe desiring to be unaccompanied). Each of us is alone in an existential sense. Nobody knows someone else; nobody may claim to comprehend the thoughts and feelings of another person entirely, and not everything can be known. Many individuals believe they do not even know themselves. This kind of alienation is common. This is significantly clearer now because of the epidemic. Dealing with the epidemic's loneliness is/was a topic covered in numerous podcasts. Indeed, it is a good thing that individuals are reuniting. However, individuals tend to avoid discussing alienation as an existential subject. Everyone is unaccompanied on this globe to undergo it as only they and their companions; love cannot change that, and numerous individuals have faced it because of COVID-19³¹.

We experienced an epidemic, but not simply virally; our existential predicament was pandemically hopeful since hope was an ontological condition, whereas a virus was not. Even in times of despair, we are hopeful; we are intentional creatures who constantly lean into "in order to" and "so that" statements. We may not be viral in every moment of our lives; however, we are always hopeful. Meaninglessness and hopelessness sag toward a sombre comprehension of an impermanent constraint we have already faced. However, the sorrow makes memories of earlier possibilities and, consequently, the hope of hope apparent. Never forget that even suicide is a last-ditch at hope. Even though these are the most terrible things to contemplate, they discuss how resilient hope can be even in the most trying circumstances in life. Our position does not require to be that dire; brief speculation about what might be mocked nihilism's parody³².

4.7.1 *Inspiration from Cetaceans*: Thoreau's deep communion with nature made him say, "The only medicine man needs is a draught of morning air." Experts say cetaceans (e.g., whales, dolphins, porpoises) are conscious breathers. They choose when and how to breathe, taking deep, "life-giving" breaths. Cetaceans are also very intelligent and communicate effectively with one another, even over long distances. They guide the divers and swimmers on how to rescue in distress. The strong whale should inspire us as a perfect being who is compassionate. The whale exhaling through its blowhole symbolises the freeing up of creative energies. Whales are symbols of solitude, leadership and strength. As a totem, the whale is believed to enable you to listen to your inner voice, understand your emotions and follow your truth³³.

a. Follow the flow. Whales migrate according to the ocean's rhythm and seek out warm currents. By moving in a direction that makes us feel joyful and healthy, we may all master swimming in harmony with nature.

³¹ William Berry, "The Existential Crisis You Are (or Should Be) Having," *Psychology Today*, 2020, <https://www.psychologytoday.com/us/blog/the-second-noble-truth/202004/the-existential-crisis-you-are-or-should-be-having>.

³² Todd DuBose, "When COVID-19 Meets Pandemic Hope: Existential Care of, and in, the Impossible," *Journal of Humanistic Psychology* 60, no. 5 (September 1, 2020): 564-70, <https://doi.org/10.1177/0022167820944645>.

³³ Narayani Ganesh, "Inspired by the Strong Compassionate Whale," *Speaking Tree*, July 6, 2020, <https://www.speakingtree.in/article/inspired-by-the-strong-compassionate-whale>.

b. *Get some fresh air.* Under whatever conditions, whales every time remember to surface. Take a break and breathe when matters get tiring.

c. *Be logical.* The whale is one of Earth's most intelligent life forms, so their big noggins are not merely from chowing down on plankton. Make time daily to challenge your mind and widen your thinking horizons.

d. *Hold hands.* Whales migrate in groups, or "pods", for a significant portion of their lifetimes. Similarly, look for loved ones who can direct you through life's ups and downs.

e. *Sing your original tune.* Whales interact with one another by singing distinctively and making other underwater noises. Therefore, let everything you say and do express your personality.³⁴ Scientists consider whales and dolphins the second and third most intelligent animals on Earth. Whales communicate with other whales by making noises to alarm them about approaching food or potential danger. Additionally, they converse with one another for entertainment. Some whale species can hear whales hundreds of kilometres distant. In comparison to air, sound travels four times more quickly in water³⁵.

4.8 Managing Stress through Breathing: The harmful consequences of chronic stress can be lessened by breathing exercises, which provide a straightforward, handy, and efficient technique to reduce stress and reverse your distress reaction ³⁶. To manage stress, bring your emotions down to the level of your navel, i.e., the trunk, and practice mindful breathing.

- Become aware of the rise and fall of your abdomen.
- In a sitting position, you may feel much better.
- Just breathe. Do not think of anything.
- Breathe through the movement of the rise and fall of your abdomen.

Practice following this procedure for 10 to 15 minutes, and the negative emotions and stress will disappear.

Through mindful breathing, we can take care of our emotions. The benefits of bringing attention to our breathing are measurable. By learning a few simple breathing techniques, we can:

- Bring down your body's stress levels
- Bring your heart rate down
- Bring down your blood pressure
- Enhance diabetic symptom relief

³⁴ Helen Briggs and Victoria Gill, "Whale Song Mystery Solved by Scientists," *BBC*, 22 February 2024 <https://www.bbc.com/news/science-environment-68358414>

³⁵ Chrisadventuresin, "Top 10 Things Humans Can Learn from Whales: Mind-Blowing Facts about the Family of Marine Placental Animals," *Steemit*, August 29, 2016, <https://steemit.com/nature/@chrisadventures/top-10-things-humans-can-learn-from-whales-mind-blowing-facts-about-the-family-of-marine-placental-animals-by-chrisadventures>.

³⁶ Ravinder Jerath et al., "Self-Regulation of Breathing as a Primary Treatment for Anxiety," *Applied Psychophysiology and Biofeedback* 40, no. 2 (June 1, 2015): 107–15, <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10484-015-9279-8>.

- Decrease depression
- Better control over ongoing pain
- Be more in control of how your body reacts to distress and exhaustion
- Lessen the likelihood of caregiver burnout

Psychologists have also utilised the power of breath. Patients can investigate challenges relating to awareness using a variety of breathwork approaches.

Sri Aurobindo says that the mind inhales and exhales thoughts, as do the lungs air we breathe. More than any other element, thought has the most tremendous significance in human life, whether it leads to a secular or spiritual end. Lockdown allowed us to breathe in and out and focus our attention on the rise and fall of our abdomen for 10 to 15 minutes. Then, the negative emotions like despair will be wiped out, and consequently, we will survive. By managing negative emotions, we experience tranquillity and happiness.

Cheering up and balancing gloom with light is indispensable during challenging times. With so many opportunities for joy, you might pause, take a deep breath, and smile. Eyes that can glimpse the clear sky. You are standing on Mother Earth-abundant greenery and springtime splendour. Adopt a calm, dignified stance as you take a few breaths in and out and become conscious of your surroundings ³⁷.

4.9 Strengths and Serenity: Devote some time to identify your strengths and weaknesses. Identifying your weaknesses is a strength. When a person has inner strength, it implies that he can treat the mind with love and guide him towards the right direction. Serenity is vital for spiritual development. Serenity cultivates qualities such as quietness, stillness, tranquillity, calmness, and peacefulness. One can develop these qualities by doing meditation.

Serenity is “the state of being calm, peaceful and untroubled.” Asking God to grant us serenity in trying times is not always easy, especially as the busyness of constant activity has been the *culture’s modus operandi*. However, serenity provides shelter amidst the storm of uncertainty. It requests that we “accept the things we cannot change and to have the courage to change the things we can.”

4.10 Walking meditation: Mindful walking is an excellent way to cope with stress, depression and anxiety and feel your feet are on the Earth. Walking generally consists of going from one point to another in everyday life. You may feel that you are almost constantly on the go on your feet. Walking meditation is different, deliberate, and serves a different purpose than simply going from one point to another. Walking meditation awareness is needed in difficult moments and with each step.

In walking meditation, a person is asked about how, while going for a walk, she would practice being aware of the steps taken and focused simultaneously on her incoming and outgoing breath. A wonderful addition to our seated meditation routine, mindful

³⁷ Lion’s Roar, and Gary Gach. “Practicing Equanimity in a State of Emergency.” *Pandemic Response and Religion in the USA: Doctrine*, March 19, 2020. <https://scholarworks.wmich.edu/religion-pandemic-doctrine/61>.

walking meditation is “meditation in motion.” Additionally, since walking is a common pursuit we all engage in, walking meditation is excellent for beginners. Walking meditation is more than just aimlessly wandering. Remember that we are practising being as mindful as possible; this exercise is about being conscious of our body and physical feelings as we move. Our bodies and minds are conscious of the present moment, and our eyes are open.³⁸ Building the routine of paying attention to the present moment takes practice. When walking during the day, try to focus as much as possible on the current moment. Concentrate on your breathing, physical sensations, or the sounds around you. Focus on your thoughts and pay attention to how they come and leave. Compare the behaviour when hurrying to a goal versus walking leisurely to see how it changes.

*4.11 Gratitude Journal: “Cultivate the habit of being grateful for every good thing that comes to you and to give thanks continuously. And because all things have contributed to your advancement, you should include all things in your gratitude.” – Ralph Waldo Emerson.*³⁹

“Gratitude has a dual meaning: a worldly one and a transcendent one. In its worldly sense, gratitude is a feeling that occurs in interpersonal exchanges when one person acknowledges receiving a valuable benefit from another. Gratitude is a cognitive-affective state typically associated with the perception that one has received a personal benefit that was not intentionally sought after, deserved, or earned but rather because of the good intentions of another person.”⁴⁰

Gratitude, according to Joshua and Wong,⁴¹ accomplishes four things:

1. Gratitude frees us from poisonous, bad emotions and the frequently accompanying brooding. Our attention is “shifted” when we write a letter, placing it on pleasant feelings.
2. Even when we do not formally communicate our gratitude to another person, doing so benefits us. We finished the workout, and consequently, we were joyful and more content with our existence.
3. The advantages of writing gratitude incorporate compound interest. The advantage of a daily or weekly practice might not be immediately apparent; however, after a few weeks and months, you will.
4. The brain is trained to be more in tune with feelings of thankfulness through the practice of gratitude: a positive plus a positive result in additional positives.

Bartlett and DeSteno⁴² established that acting kindly and helpfully and having an attitude of gratitude go hand in hand. In “Gratitude and Prosocial Behaviour: Helping when it costs you,” they go into considerable depth about this connection. Conclusions from the three research they mentioned:

³⁸ Kelly Hearn, “Walking Meditation as a Spiritual Practice,” *Frontier Therapy Magazine*, June 10, 2015, <https://frontiertherapymagazine.com/2015/06/10/walking-meditation-as-a-spiritual-practice/>.

³⁹ Doug Parker, “Living in a Spirit of Gratitude,” *Society for Marketing Professional Services (SMPS)*, <https://shorturl.at/0MhSG>

⁴⁰ Robert A. Emmons and Robin Stern, “Gratitude as a Psychotherapeutic Intervention,” *Journal of Clinical Psychology* 69, no. 8 (August 2013): 846–55, <https://doi.org/10.1002/jclp.22020>.

⁴¹ Brown Joshua and Joel Wong, “How Gratitude Changes You and Your Brain,” *Greater Good Magazine*, 2017, https://greatergood.berkeley.edu/article/item/how_gratitude_changes_you_and_your_brain.

⁴² Monica Y. Bartlett and David DeSteno, “Gratitude and Prosocial Behavior: Helping When It Costs You,” *Psychological Science* 17, no. 4 (2006): 319–25, <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1467-9280.2006.01705.x>.

1. Gratitude encourages prosocial behaviour,
2. Individuals who are grateful assist strangers and those who have assisted them (benefactors) in a similar manner
3. Reminding individuals that they were assisted by someone (a benefactor) nevertheless motivated helping behaviour shown toward strangers. The norm of reciprocity did not play a role.

Dickens and DeSteno⁴³ discovered a connection between appreciation and self-control. People who are grateful to put off receiving future rewards more than unthankful people. The researchers highlight the fact that this has repercussions beyond one's wealth. Expanding thankfulness could also assist individuals in making beneficial changes to their health-related behaviours.

The researches listed below show the gain of appreciation for one's physical and mental well-being.

- Expressing an appreciation and listing blessings had "high utility scores and were associated with substantial improvements in optimism"⁴⁴.
- When adults seeking therapy write gratitude letters, their mental health and well-being are ameliorated⁴⁵.
- Gratitude protects against stress and despair⁴⁶.
- The link between the character trait of gratitude and a sense of coherence is supported by positive reframing. How secure an individual is in their expectations for the future defines a feeling of coherence. It is the extent to which an individual feels upbeat and in charge of what will happen in the future⁴⁷.
- Two weeks after an acute coronary incident, hearts were healthier in patients who exhibited hope and appreciation⁴⁸.
- Positive emotions, excellent sleep, vitality, self-efficacy, and reduced cellular inflammation are related to gratitude and spiritual well-being⁴⁹.
- Gratitude could improve mental clarity, lessen obsessive thoughts, and worsen depression symptoms⁵⁰.

⁴³ Leah Dickens and David DeSteno, "The Grateful Are Patient: Heightened Daily Gratitude Is Associated with Attenuated Temporal Discounting," *Emotion (Washington, D.C.)* 16, no. 4 (2016): 421-25, <https://doi.org/10.1037/emo0000176>.

⁴⁴ Jeff C. Huffman et al., "Feasibility and Utility of Positive Psychology Exercises for Suicidal Inpatients," *General Hospital Psychiatry* 36, no. 1 (2014): 88-94, <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.genhosppsych.2013.10.006>.

⁴⁵ Y. Joel Wong et al., "Does Gratitude Writing Improve the Mental Health of Psychotherapy Clients? Evidence from a Randomized Controlled Trial," *Psychotherapy Research: Journal of the Society for Psychotherapy Research* 28, no. 2 (March 2018): 192-202, <https://doi.org/10.1080/10503307.2016.1169332>.

⁴⁶ Alex M. Wood et al., "The Role of Gratitude in the Development of Social Support, Stress, and Depression: Two Longitudinal Studies," *Journal of Research in Personality* 42 (2008): 854-71, <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jrp.2007.11.003>.

⁴⁷ Nathaniel M. Lambert et al., "A Changed Perspective: How Gratitude Can Affect Sense of Coherence through Positive Reframing," *The Journal of Positive Psychology* 4, no. 6 (November 1, 2009): 461-70, <https://doi.org/10.1080/17439760903157182>.

⁴⁸ Jeff C. Huffman et al., "Design and Baseline Data from the Gratitude Research in Acute Coronary Events (GRACE) Study," *Contemporary Clinical Trials* 44 (September 2015): 11-19, <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.cct.2015.07.002>.

⁴⁹ Paul J. Mills et al., "The Role of Gratitude in Spiritual Well-Being in Asymptomatic Heart Failure Patients," *Spirituality in Clinical Practice (Washington, D.C.)* 2, no. 1 (March 2015): 5-17, <https://doi.org/10.1037/scp0000050>.

⁵⁰ Hongyu Liang et al., "Mediating Effects of Peace of Mind and Rumination on the Relationship between Gratitude and Depression among Chinese University Students," *Current Psychology* 39, no. 4 (August 2020): 1430-37, <https://doi.org/10.1007/s12144-018-9847-1>.

Communicating thankfulness might be the one thing someone might do to enhance their health and happiness. Martin Seligman says, “When we take time to notice the things that go right – it means we are getting a lot of little rewards throughout the day.”⁵¹

Dopamine is released in the brain each time someone expresses or receives thanks. The substantia nigra and the ventral tegmental region of the brain create the neurotransmitter dopamine. The former concerns movement and speech, whereas the latter concerns reward⁵². Dopamine is released when appreciation is given or received, establishing a link between the action and positive feelings. Dopamine releases more often the more frequently someone expresses appreciation.

Benefits of Daily Gratitude Journaling, as Proven by researches

The daily thankfulness notebook is among the most well-liked exercises in gratitude. According to one study, this approach caused adolescents’ materialism to decline. Additionally, participants gave 60% more to charity⁵³. Individuals with Stage B, asymptomatic heart failure, may enjoy reduced inflammation after keeping a gratitude notebook⁵⁴. Redwine et al. tested an 8-week thankfulness journaling intervention on patients with stage 3 heart failure in their study, “Gratitude Journaling Interventions in Patients with Stage Heart Failure”. The intervention group also saw their trait gratitude scores rise compared to the control group.⁵⁵

The phases of Gratitude: Dr. Robert Emmons asserts that there are two phases to the experience of gratitude⁵⁶:

1. The first step is to recognise one’s goodness. When we affirm our existence and when we are grateful. We declare that life is usually good, rich in texture, and filled with qualities that make living worthwhile. Being told that we have received something makes us happy because of its presence and the thought the giver put into selecting it.
2. Second, expressing appreciation means acknowledging that some of this goodness comes from sources other than oneself. You can be grateful for the world, animals, and others but not yourself. At this point, we recognise the goodness in our lives and ask: who deserves our gratitude for making sacrifices so that we can live happy lives?

⁵¹ Tracy Hamler Carrick. “Writing Gratitude”, John S. Knight Institute for Writing in the Disciplines, The College of Arts and Science, Cornell University, 20-12-2023, <https://knight.as.cornell.edu/news/writing-gratitude>

⁵² Rita Carter et al., *The Human Brain Book*, Har/Dvdr edition (London, UK: Dorling Kindersley Limited, 2009).

⁵³ Lan Nguyen Chaplin et al., “The Impact of Gratitude on Adolescent Materialism and Generosity,” *Journal of Positive Psychology* 14, no. 4 (2019): 502–11, <https://doi.org/10.1080/17439760.2018.1497688>.

⁵⁴ Laura S. Redwine et al., “Pilot Randomized Study of a Gratitude Journaling Intervention on Heart Rate Variability and Inflammatory Biomarkers in Patients with Stage B Heart Failure,” *Psychosomatic Medicine* 78, no. 6 (2016): 667–76, <https://doi.org/10.1097/PSY.0000000000000316>.

⁵⁵ Ibid.

⁵⁶ Tiffany Sauber Millacci, “What is Gratitude and Why Is It So Important?”, *PositivePsychology.com*, 28 Feb 2017, <https://positivepsychology.com/gratitude-appreciation/>

1. *Begin modestly: "Be thankful for what you have; you will end up having more. If you concentrate on what you do not have, you will never, ever have enough."* – Oprah Winfrey.⁵⁷

2. *Keeping a Journal: "Writing helps to organise thoughts, facilitate integration, and helps you accept your own experiences and put them in context,"* Emmons says. "It allows you to see the meaning of events around you and create meaning in your life."⁵⁸

Start by jotting down only five things each week for which you are grateful. Emmons believes this exercise is effective because it actively and deliberately directs our attention toward fostering more appreciative thinking and eradicating unthankful thoughts. Viewing presents in life as fresh and exciting experiences prevents us from taking them for granted. He thinks that those who live a life of constant gratitude have a different perspective on life than those who cheat themselves out of it by never feeling grateful.⁵⁹

In an interview with UC Berkeley's *The Greater Good*, Emmons, the leading researcher in the field of gratitude, shared his proven research-based tips for greater psychological benefits of a gratitude diary.

- **Do not only experience the emotions.** According to research by psychologist Sonja Lyubomirsky and others, keeping a journal is more effective if you first consciously try to live a contented and more appreciative existence. "Motivation to become happier plays a role in the efficacy of journaling," as for Emmons.
- **Prioritise depth over width.** A thorough explanation of one specific thing you are grateful for has more advantages than a cursory enumeration of other things.
- **Be more private.** It has a more significant impact to focus on the individuals you are grateful for rather than the things you are grateful for.
- **Rather than merely adding, try subtracting.** Reflecting on how your life might be without specific blessings, rather than simply adding up all the wonderful things, can assist in arousing thankfulness.
- **Appreciate surprises.** Make an endeavour to document unexpected or surprising experiences because they tend to inspire greater levels of thankfulness.
- **Limit your intake.** Weekly or biweekly writing is preferable to daily journaling as a writing practice. Research by Lyubomirsky and her colleagues discovered that those who wrote in their thankfulness notebooks once a week for six weeks experienced an increase in happiness thereafter; those who wrote three times a week did not. According to Emmons, "We adapt to pleasant situations rapidly,

⁵⁷ Oprah Winfrey, "Be Thankful for What You Have: You'll End up Having More," *Brainy Quote*, https://www.brainyquote.com/quotes/oprah_winfrey_163087

⁵⁸ How to Reap the Benefits of Keeping a Gratitude Journal, *Advance*, <https://www.advance-performance.co.uk/blog-thebrainandmind/reap-benefits-keeping-gratitude-journal/>

⁵⁹ Robert Emmons, "Why Gratitude Is Good," *Greater Good*, 2010, https://greatergood.berkeley.edu/article/item/why_gratitude_is_good.

especially if we consistently focus on them.” “It seems counterintuitive, but it is how the mind works.”⁶⁰.

3. Reflect and become aware of your emotion through mindfulness: Naikan’s Exercise for Reflection

A technique for self-reflection called the Naikan Reflection was first created in Japan. The whole exercise lasts for approximately 10 minutes. Naikan translates to “looking within.” This activity is unlocked to everyone, regardless of religion or lack thereof. The procedure considers the following questions while concentrating on a specific individual and moment.

1. What did I receive from this person? (giving)
2. I gave this person what, exactly? (receiving)
3. What problems did I bring to this person? (hurting)

One might expand one’s appreciation and gratitude for others by reflecting. Additionally, it enables individuals to appraise their willingness to give versus in interpersonal interactions⁶¹.

Maintain a gratitude journal for the God, family, friends and neighbours. Since gratitude brings happiness so, this attitude should be cultivated. All of us should be grateful to God despite the present crisis.

5. Conclusion

During the coronavirus pandemic, most people at some point experienced stress, worry, depression, insecurity, anxiety, fear of death, etc. Physical, mental, social, emotional, and environmental well-being required regular maintenance during the lockdown and unlock period of the coronavirus pandemic. The truth is that all aspects of well-being are closely connected. By practising the strategies - being grateful to others and God, cultivating spiritual values (i.e., compassion, honesty), maintaining calmness and self-control through equanimity, preparing a gratitude journal, having hope and existential thinking, inspiration from cetaceans, managing stress through breathing, strength, and serenity, walking meditation and global togetherness - one can improve well-being even in a bad period like a pandemic, lockdown, or economic crisis.

Spiritual practices played a significant role in helping individuals cope with the stress and anxiety brought about by the COVID-19 pandemic. Engaging in spiritual activities provided a sense of hope, purpose, and connection, which are crucial for mental health. Practices such as gratitude, meditation, and maintaining spiritual values helped individuals maintain a positive outlook and emotional balance.

These spiritual practices can be equally beneficial in coping with stress during future pandemics or crises. By integrating such practices into daily life, individuals can build resilience and improve their overall well-being.

⁶⁰ Jason Marsh, “Tips for Keeping a Gratitude Journal,” *Greater Good Magazine*, 2011, https://greatergood.berkeley.edu/article/item/tips_for_keeping_a_gratitude_journal.

⁶¹ Kori D. Miller, “14 Benefits of Practicing Gratitude,” *PositivePsychology.Com*, June 18, 2019, <https://positivepsychology.com/benefits-of-gratitude/>.

Limitation: The limitation of this study was that the information was gathered from the Scopus database only.

Ethical Approval: The study did not include any human subjects or human materials. Hence, ethical approval of the study was not required based on guidance from the institutional review board.

Conflict of Interest: None

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