

Onset of coronavirus pandemic led to a 74% drop in overall emotional wellbeing, study finds

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People in China who said they felt knowledgeable about the coronavirus at the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic were more likely to have a

positive emotional state than were those who said they didn't feel well informed, according to a new study co-authored by a Johns Hopkins University researcher.

Drawing from two large nationwide surveys conducted in China around the time of the [coronavirus outbreak](#), Johns Hopkins Carey Business School Assistant Professor Haiyang Yang found that the onset of the pandemic led to a 74% drop in overall emotional well-being. Factors that accentuated the decline included residing near an outbreak epicenter, being a member of a vulnerable group such as the elderly, and dealing with relationship issues during a lockdown.

Yet Yang and his co-author, Jingjing Ma of Peking University, note that people who perceived themselves as knowledgeable about the virus—regardless of the actual amount of their knowledge—experienced more happiness during the outbreak than did those who didn't perceive themselves as informed about COVID-19. This higher perception of one's own knowledge was associated with a stronger sense of control, which helped protect emotional well-being, Yang says.

What's more, this conclusion was largely consistent across demographic and economic groups.

"People's perceptions about themselves are often more potent in influencing their emotional well-being than the corresponding objective aspects," says Yang, a psychology expert. He adds that the findings of the study, which is published in *Psychiatry Research*, could inform public policymakers and mental health authorities who seek to protect or boost psychological well-being during a major outbreak such as COVID-19.

"Resources for [mental health care](#) should be made more available to groups that are most psychologically vulnerable during an epidemic," Yang says. "Specific policies, programs, and interventions need to be

developed to help foster positive family relationships during an extended lockdown. Also, efforts that increase people's understanding of how to effectively prevent infection can help boost their sense of

More information: Haiyang Yang et al. How an Epidemic Outbreak Impacts Happiness: Factors that Worsen (vs. Protect) Emotional Well-being during the Coronavirus Pandemic, *Psychiatry Research* (2020).
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Provided by Johns Hopkins University

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