

# Hope during the COVID-19 lockdown – the role of organization interventions

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## Abstract

**Purpose** – The study aims to investigate organization interventions experienced by employees during the lockdown for Coronavirus disease-2019 (COVID-19), and the effect of these organization interventions on hope.

**Design/methodology/approach** – The respondents for the study were employees in full-time white-collar or professional job positions; they performed their job roles by way of work from home (WFH) in Sri Lanka during the COVID-19 lockdown. Structural equation modelling was used to analyse the data.

**Findings** – Results showed that employees maintained high levels of hope while working from home. The study identified four organization interventions that (a) promote collaborative and coordinated work, (b) promote meaningful goals and a sense of social support, (c) alleviate psychological strain and (d) assist in maintaining physical health. These four organization interventions increased hope during the COVID-19 lockdown while working from home.

**Originality/value** – The literature calls for research on intervention studies explaining the promotion of hope. The present study was built on the theories of positive organizational behaviour, conservation of resources theory and hope theory. The findings support that these three traditional theories have lasting theoretical resonance in explaining present-day phenomena with unique applications.

**Keywords** Conservation of resources theory, COVID-19, Hope, Hope theory, Lockdown, Organization interventions, Pandemic, Positive organizational behaviour, Psychological capital, Telecommuting, Work from home, South Asia, Sri Lanka

**Paper type** Research paper

## 1. Introduction

Hope enables individuals to plan to meet goals, imagine alternative paths to meet goals and challenge difficult circumstances. The goals can be “anything that individuals desire to get, do, be, experience, or create” (Peterson and Byron, 2008, p. 787). Hence, hope is important and valuable to be maintained by individuals. This is especially true in times of difficulty. The world has witnessed the pandemic Coronavirus disease-2019 (COVID-19), which is like no other health crises of the past such as severe acute respiratory syndrome (SARS CoV-1), Middle East respiratory syndrome (MERS), swine flu (*H1N1 influenza*) and Ebola and Zika virus infections (Bhadoria *et al.*, 2021). The COVID-19 pandemic had a broad and profound effect on individuals and organizations incapacitating economies worldwide. The pandemic has made a tremendous psychological influence on individuals due to isolation, health concerns for them and their loved ones and uncertainty. Hope has become a much-needed state for survival during this pandemic.

The state-regulated lockdowns and social distancing measures to mitigate the COVID-19 pandemic have transformed millions of employees into a working-from-home workforce



overnight. Work from home (WFH) or telecommuting as an optional work arrangement was not new to the world since it was foreseen as early as 1950, become viable in early 1970 with the creation of personal computers and portable modems and initial implementations occurred in the mid-1970s (see Hill *et al.*, 1998). The literature identifies WFH as one of the best options for workplace flexibility (for review, Gajendran and Harrison, 2007; Raghuram and Wiesenfeld, 2004). However, the recent literature during the pre-COVID-19 era suggests that the WFH option was discouraged by organizations and not favoured by employees (Putnam *et al.*, 2014; Wall Street Journal, 2020). Still, the COVID-19 lockdown did not allow organizations and employees to view WFH as an optional work arrangement. The state-mandated WFH during the lockdowns forced all employees to physically be located at home but psychologically or behaviourally involved in their job roles. Some studies provide evidence for an increase in the workload and job responsibilities of employees during the COVID-19 pandemic (MTI Consulting, 2020). To overcome problems faced because of the pandemic, organizations had to think strategically about the use of WFH and maximizing the full potential of the workforce. Organizations introduced several interventions to engage employees in their job roles while working from home during the COVID-19 lockdown. Hope is malleable to development (Luthans *et al.*, 2006); these organization-led interventions may have influenced employees' hope when faced with tremendous difficulties created by the pandemic and when adjusting to the forced work arrangement of WFH.

In the above context, the main construct of the study is hope. In investigating the effect of organization inventions on hope, the study draws on three theories, i.e. positive organizational behaviour (Luthans, 2002), conservation of resources theory (Hobfoll, 2002) and hope theory (Snyder, 2002). In brief, positive organizational behaviour focuses on a "positive approach to developing and managing human resources in today's workplace" (Luthans *et al.*, 2007, p. 542). As a derivative of positive organizational behaviour, psychological capital which is widely known as PsyCap identifies hope as a positive psychological construct and as one of its four constituents (Luthans *et al.*, 2004, 2006, 2007). The conservation of resources theory (Hobfoll, 2002, p. 307) stipulates that individuals accumulate resources from their environment, and these "resources are centrally valued in their own right or act as a means to obtain centrally valued ends", where hope is identified as one of such resources. The hope theory asserts that in relation to the ongoing events in individuals' lives, they have the will for successful goal-oriented determination and viable means to accomplish these goals (Snyder *et al.*, 1996, p. 321). Drawing on these theories, which were reviewed in detail in the next section, the specific objectives of the study were to investigate the effect of organization-led interventions implemented during the COVID-19 lockdown in enhancing employees' hope, who performed their job roles working from home in Sri Lanka.

Concerning the importance of the study, firstly, the literature suggests that a limited number of empirical research on hope has been conducted in work settings (Luthans *et al.*, 2007, p. 546; Wandeler *et al.*, 2017). Of these, many explored its impact on employee behaviours and organizational outcomes as reviewed in the next section. Although the literature suggests that organization interventions could enhance hope, empirical studies involving specific organization interventions to enhance hope are rare (for review Namono *et al.*, 2021; Wandeler *et al.*, 2017; Zhong *et al.*, 2021). According to Luthans *et al.* (2007), hope is a unique psychological capital valuable to be possessed by any individual, a valuable resource in work settings, and it is identified as malleable to development. Hence, it is important to better understand organization interventions implemented and whether these interventions helped develop hope.

Secondly, in connection with the above, the present study integrates positive organizational behaviour, conservation of resources theory and hope theory to investigate the influence of organization interventions on employees' hope. In doing so, we respond to

calls for more research in different contexts and samples and more research on intervention studies explaining the promotion of hope (see Reichard *et al.*, 2013; Wandeler *et al.*, 2017 for review). The COVID-19 lockdown and WFH make our study context novel with respect to previous studies that suggested possible connections between organization interventions and hope (see Wandeler *et al.*, 2017).

Thirdly, hope is a valuable personal resource to be possessed during a situation of crisis, like the COVID-19 pandemic. Our surmise is that hope helps individuals to withstand the circumstances created by the pandemic and helps them to preserve their energies. This is in line with recent observations during the COVID-19 pandemic (Genç and Arslan, 2021; Turliuc and Candel, 2022; Zhong *et al.*, 2021) as well as other fast-paced and unpredictable workplace contexts experienced by employees, such as mergers, acquisitions and layoffs (Wandeler *et al.*, 2017). Although hope is a positive psychological strength against uncertainty, unpredictability and adversity, empirical research that addressed how hope operates and what organization interventions are effective on employees during the COVID-19 lockdown has not surfaced sufficiently, yet.

Fourthly, hope has become a construct of interest due to the mandatory adoption of WFH with the occurrence of the COVID-19 lockdown. Employees faced not only a threat to life but also required an involuntary adjustment to unfamiliar/inexperienced work form, i.e. WFH. In this regard, Adams *et al.* (2002) identify the workplace as a conspicuous source of a sense of purpose for employees. Therefore, the results of our study provide employees' experience of organization interventions and the effect of these on their hope during the COVID-19 lockdown. When thinking beyond the era of COVID-19, since organizations and employees worldwide have paid the start-up price for WFH, there will be a long-run explosion of this work form as a standard perk for employees in the post-COVID-19 era (Bloom, 2020). Therefore, it is important to understand organization interventions effective under the condition of WFH for the creation of better workplaces, organizational sustainability and employees' well-being.

Fifthly, we tested our research model in a South Asian developing country, Sri Lanka, drawing responses from 245 employees as detailed in the section on the sample. As emphasized by Reichard *et al.* (2013), our study provides much-needed diversity to empirical evidence on hope and its antecedents.

## 2. Review of literature

The present study was grounded on positive organizational behaviour (Luthans, 2002), conservation of resources theory (Hobfoll, 2002) and hope theory (Snyder, 2002). These three theories and their importance for the present study are reviewed in the following sections.

### 2.1 Positive organizational behaviour

Positive organizational behaviour, which is defined as “the study and application of positively oriented human resource strengths and psychological capacities that can be measured, developed, and effectively managed for performance improvement” (Luthans, 2002, p. 59), is built on the presumption of using positive approaches to develop and manage people in the context of work. Luthans *et al.* (2004, 2006, 2007), building on the literature on positive organizational behaviour, proposed and empirically validated four positive psychological constructs (i.e. hope, resilience, optimism and self-efficacy) under the umbrella term psychological capital (PsyCap). According to Luthans *et al.* (2007, p. 542), positive organizational behaviour as well as its derivative PsyCap proposes “individual motivational propensities that accrue through positive psychological constructs”. Unlike human capital which centres on individual competence to accomplish tasks and social capital

which centres on individual ability to navigate interpersonal context, PsyCap centres on individual strengths to capitalize on the positive aspects of the environment (Kim *et al.*, 2017). Still, PsyCap enables individuals to transit from the actual self to the possible self by allowing them to explore their becoming, without restricting them to being, thus transcending human and social capital (Kim *et al.*, 2017, p. 661). With reference to hope, Stengers (2002, p. 245) identifies the difference between probability and possibility by stating “if we follow probability there is no hope, just a calculated anticipation authorised by the world as it is. But to think is to create possibility against probability. It doesn’t mean hope for one or another thing or as a calculated attitude, but to try and feel and put into words a possibility for becoming”. Thus, the constituents of PsyCap depict positive and strength-based state-like capacities with malleability to development that have “a positive impact on work-related individual-level performance and satisfaction” (Luthans *et al.*, 2007, p. 542). As a constituent of PsyCap, hope focuses on an individual’s positive psychological state, which involves persevering towards goals as well as redirecting paths to goals, when necessary, for success (Luthans *et al.*, 2007).

### 2.2 Conservation of resources theory

The conservation of resources theory (Hobfoll, 2002) posits that individuals persist in acquiring, retaining, perfecting and building resources that are valuable to them. Hobfoll (1989, p. 516) identifies these valuable resources as “objects, personal characteristics, conditions, or energies that are valued by the individuals or that serve as means of attaining of these objects, personal characteristics, conditions, or energies”. Further, individuals who hold resources are in a better position to build up further resources, which may lead to a spiral of gains in resources (Hobfoll, 2002). One of the personal characteristics or personal resources identified by Hobfoll (2002) as a valuable resource to individuals and important in the context of work is hope. As an internal resource, individuals hold hope and take advantage of it to build more resources, which, in turn, leads to generating other resources. High and low levels of hope result in hopefulness and hopelessness, respectively. Wandeler *et al.* (2017, p. 52) state “higher levels of hope, higher levels of professional performance, and higher levels of mental health are characteristics of healthy functioning persons and are resources. . . . Beyond hope being generally related to better mental health, a specific relationship exists between hope and healthy behaviour at work”. Further, interactions among these resources result in mutual stabilization in situations of these are lost or threatened (Wandeler *et al.*, 2017). Hope can promote a perception of an individual’s ability to control and influence his or her surrounding successfully when faced with situations of uncertainty and a threat to life (Schaufeli and Taris, 2014; Ullah *et al.*, 2022) such as the situation created by the COVID-19 pandemic. Individuals who are hopeful will withstand challenges. In this context, Wandeler *et al.* (2017) emphasize the need of understanding facilitating conditions that provide the basis for hopeful thinking.

### 2.3 Hope

Hope is a belief in one’s capacity to initiate and sustain actions and one’s capacity to generate routes to reach goals (Snyder *et al.*, 1996, p. 321). The belief in one’s capacity to initiate and sustain actions is named as agency and the belief in one’s capacity to generate routes is named as pathways (Snyder *et al.*, 1996, p. 321). Agency taps the perceived capacity to pursue goals or goal-directed determination, while pathway taps the perceived ability to generate means or routes to attain goals or plan to meet goals (Snyder *et al.*, 1996, p. 321). Hence, hope constitutes “the will to succeed and the ability to identify, clarify, and pursue the way to success” (Luthans *et al.*, 2007, pp. 545–546). Hope theory postulates that agentic and pathways thinking are “positively related, additive and reciprocal, but neither component

alone defines hope, nor are they synonymous” (Wandeler *et al.*, 2017, p. 49). Hence, agency and pathways combined entail an overall perception that one’s goals can be met (Snyder *et al.*, 1996, p. 321).

The present study draws on the temporal state of hope or state hope which is identified by Snyder *et al.* (1996, pp. 321–322) as “related to the ongoing events in people’s lives” that “reflect particular times and more proximal events” and “more strongly relate to mental analyses of those situations”. Since measured with reference to a given moment, state hope provides a snapshot of goal-directed thinking; this goal-directed thinking plays a vital role in the subsequent accomplishment of desired outcomes (Snyder *et al.*, 1996, p. 321–322; also see Reichard *et al.*, 2013; Wandeler *et al.*, 2017 for review). Previous research supports that individuals with high hope have physical, emotional and psychological resources to persist in efforts to obtain desired outcomes in contrast to individuals with low hope. Previous research provides evidence to suggest that hope is positively associated with coping with disability (Elliott *et al.*, 1991), preventing and recovering from physical illness (Snyder *et al.*, 2000), health and well-being (Reichard *et al.*, 2013) and life satisfaction (Yildirim *et al.*, 2022). Further, beyond the context of individuals’ life in general, the extant literature provides ample evidence to suggest that individuals’ hope is positively associated with desirable outcomes that are of interest to organizations’ performance such as financial performance (Peterson and Luthans, 2003) and profitability at firm/unit level (Luthans *et al.*, 2007; Reichard *et al.*, 2013). Besides such findings at the firm level, previous research across countries, industries and work settings also suggests that hope is positively associated with many other valued outcomes from employees at work, such as innovative work behaviour (Namono *et al.*, 2021), creativity (Rego *et al.*, 2012), knowledge sharing and knowledge creation (Goswami and Agrawal, 2020), work engagement (Ozyilmaz, 2020), job involvement (Ullah *et al.*, 2022) and employee retention (Peterson and Luthans, 2003); hope is negatively associated with absenteeism (Avey *et al.*, 2006), burnout and stress (Reichard *et al.*, 2013).

Overall, hope discourses essential motivational, cognitive and emotional processes of an individual’s thinking, feeling and action, which can contribute to or hamper his or her capabilities for meeting job demands and challenges facing workplaces. Hence, as a developable capacity and a workplace construct, hope provides organizations with an avenue to drive employees’ performance for organizational success.

#### 2.4 COVID-19, WFH and hope

When concerning the COVID-19 lockdown as a specific event in employees’ lives (refer to Snyder *et al.*, 1996), it created uncertainty, social distancing, procrastination, loneliness and psychological exhaustion (Charoensukmongkol and Phungsoonthorn, 2021; Kumar *et al.*, 2021; Palumbo, 2020; Turliuc and Candel, 2022; Wang *et al.*, 2021). As a resource-providing state, hope is important for employees to cope with dynamism (Ahmad, 2020) and to engage in new work methods (Namono *et al.*, 2021) in the pandemic-stricken work context. Zhong *et al.* (2021) state that hope denotes motivation and persistence to attain the desired ends despite the adversity presented by the pandemic. In the same context, Kim *et al.* (2017, p. 662) state that when a planned route is infeasible, highly hopeful employees have the capability to seek alternative routes, the ability to set realistic but challenging goals and the ability to come up with back-up plans instead of getting discouraged by predicament along with a positive outlook for the continued pursuit of centrally valued ends. Even if employees encounter barriers in meeting the desired ends, possessing high hope leads to resuscitating their energy to seek alternative avenues and to be assertive in the chosen routes (Snyder *et al.*, 1996).

When considering the context of WFH during the COVID-19 pandemic, it is a forced choice for employees that resulted in workplace isolation, which could subsequently elevate levels of loneliness (Wang *et al.*, 2021). The conditions experienced by workers was identified as

stressful (Kniffin *et al.*, 2021) since they were made to involuntarily perform their job roles under serious health-related threat and unusual working conditions using a difficult as well as a new work form. In the new normal – in the post-pandemic era, WFH will be a standard mode of work in the corporate world. The orientation of hope was towards a yet uncertain future (Wandeler and Bundick, 2011). Luthans *et al.* (2004, p. 516) describe this as “future-referenced, affective cognition based on the wish for events and some expectation of the occurrence of these events”. Employees’ adherence to new approaches, like WFH, can be identified as connected with taking risks for which success is not very certain. Still, hopeful employees are optimistic about future achievements, which leads them to find alternative routes to achieve the intended outcomes when their usual routes are blocked. Further, hopeful employees may depict higher levels of professional performance as well as mental health as characteristics of healthy functioning individuals (Wandeler *et al.*, 2017). Hence, hope is a personal resource to have persevered in challenging situations created by the COVID-19 pandemic and associated WFH.

### 2.5 Organization interventions

The interventions of positive psychology are activities that could build positive individual capacities, such as hope (Meyers *et al.*, 2013; Wandeler *et al.*, 2017). The term organization intervention is used in our study to refer to organization-initiated interventions. In the contemporary corporate world, it is possible to assume that these interventions are often structured with explicit intentions of enhancing work performance by influencing the physical and psychological health of the workforce. These organization interventions revolve around four dimensions relating to the workplace, namely, jobs (such as autonomy), roles (such as role conflict), leaders (such as facilitation) and work groups (such as cooperation) (refer to James *et al.*, 2008 for more). The extant literature provides support for organization interventions that promote hope. For example, Luthans *et al.* (2006), Combs *et al.* (2010), Ruddell *et al.* (2010), Avey *et al.* (2011), Barrios *et al.* (2019) and Namono *et al.* (2021) provide evidence for the importance of targeted/focused interventions or “micro-interventions” to enhance hope. Extant knowledge can be questioned in extraordinary contexts. The term organization intervention is used in the present study to include any organization-led support practice specifically designed and implemented with the aim of helping employees and maintaining a productive workforce during the COVID-19 lockdown. While confronted with enormous unpredictable hardships during the COVID-19 lockdown, business organizations have designed and implemented various support practices on trial-and-error in line with the vision and its application to maintain employees’ contributions for the continued pursuit of organizational goals recognizing their work mode as WFH. We postulate that organization interventions are positively related to employees’ hope in driving them successfully through the COVID-19 lockdown, and therefore, these operate as antecedents of hope. Therefore, the following is proposed as the main hypothesis of the study.

- H1. Organization interventions implemented during the COVID-19 lockdown promoted hope in employees, who worked from home

These organization interventions may span around various dimensions of work. As reviewed in the following paragraphs, the extant literature allows us to identify four types of organization interventions that might be appropriate in our context.

*Work collaboration and coordination (WCC).* Organization interventions addressing work collaboration and coordination could revolve around leadership behaviour, organizational structure and organizational culture (Reichard *et al.*, 2013), which are identified within the broad term of favourable environmental conditions (refer to Deci and Ryan, 2000 for more). Further, shared goals are also identified to enhance employees’ hope. Goswami and Agrawal

(2020, p. 188) state “shared goals enable members to have consensus on what is essential at work, to share the same vision and ambitions and to be energetic about pursuing the missions and common goals of the whole organization” and “act as volunteer binding force among employees”. Goswami and Agrawal (2020) empirically showed that when employees have shared goals, the likelihood for them to cooperate and work together is higher, and that shared goals are positively related to hope. In the context of COVID-19, Zhong *et al.* (2021) showed that interventions adopted by campuses relating to teaching, interaction and support increased students’ hope. Based on the literature reviewed above that provides evidence for the capacity of these favourable conditions of the organization environment for the development of hope, it is hypothesised:

*H1a.* Organization interventions implemented during the COVID-19 lockdown addressing work collaboration and coordination promoted hope in employees, who worked from home.

*Work direction (WD).* As per Reichard *et al.* (2013), “low-cost strategies” that revolve around the job itself can foster hope in employees (refer to Deci and Ryan, 2000 for more). In this regard, Kenny *et al.* (2010) and Reichard *et al.* (2013) provided empirical evidence to support that the provision of job autonomy for employees is positively related to hope. Snyder *et al.* (2000) emphasised the importance of promoting employees’ hope by creating favourable organizational conditions to maximize their sense of pursuing meaningful goals while experiencing the satisfaction of performing job tasks as well. In this regard, Adams *et al.* (2002) also stated that goals and tasks shared in the workplace increase the sense of social support, which could help in internalizing a sense of hope. Empirical research support that allowing freedom for employees to set their own goals helps to foster hope (Adams *et al.*, 2002; Wandeler and Bundick, 2011) as well as allowing opportunities for employees to find solutions to problems, make decisions and implement new ideas help to foster hope (Adams *et al.*, 2002). Hence, Wandeler *et al.* (2017) suggest the importance of providing training programmes in goal setting and problem-solving for employees to better engage in setting and pursuing goals. In the specific context of COVID-19, Wang *et al.* (2021, p. 16) showed that job autonomy, workload and monitoring can alter challenges involving WFH, i.e. work-home interference, ineffective communication, procrastination and loneliness. It is hypothesised:

*H1b.* Organization interventions implemented during the COVID-19 lockdown addressing work direction promoted hope in employees, who worked from home.

*Psychological wellness (PsyWell).* Support from the organization plays an important role in fostering hope in situations where employees are confronted with novel work contexts or challenging circumstances. The research provides evidence of psychological strain experienced by employees while working from home (Palumbo, 2020) as well as working from home during challenging circumstances of COVID-19 (Turliuc and Candel, 2022; Wang *et al.*, 2021). Hope is a valuable personal resource to be possessed during a situation of crisis, like the COVID-19 pandemic. Our surmise is that hope helps individuals to withstand the circumstances created by the pandemic and helps them to preserve their energies. This is in line with recent observations (Genç and Arslan, 2021; Turliuc and Candel, 2022; Zhong *et al.*, 2021) during the COVID-19 pandemic as well as other fast-paced and unpredictable workplace environment experienced by employees, such as mergers, acquisitions and layoffs (Wandeler *et al.*, 2017). Previous research showed that open communication and feedback practised between management and employees are identified as positively related to hope (Adams *et al.*, 2002). Furthermore, leader behaviour and mentoring relationships (Avey *et al.*, 2011), the nature of supervision (Tillman *et al.*, 2018) and the workplace social environment (Wandeler *et al.*, 2017) are identified as important conditions of the organization environment that foster employees’

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levels of hope. [Wandeler et al. \(2017\)](#) suggest the possibility of providing training programmes in time management, aerobic exercise and relaxation techniques as a basis for promoting hopeful thinking in employees. In addition, the literature suggests the sharing of new or innovative organizational strategies or practices with employees. For example, a recent study by [Fazal-e-Hasan et al. \(2023\)](#) showed that organizations' adoption of innovative green practices and open communication of such initiatives and obtaining employees' feedback have a positive impact on employees' hope. It is hypothesised:

*H1c.* Organization interventions implemented during the COVID-19 lockdown addressing psychological wellness promoted hope in employees, who worked from home

*Physical wellness (PhyWell).* The literature provides evidence that disasters and mass emergencies, like the COVID-19 pandemic, represent enormous physical threats ([Carter et al., 2023](#); [Drury et al., 2016](#); [Ntontis et al., 2020](#); [Stoyanova et al., 2022](#)). The lifestyle of people changed, and physical activity levels fell very low in the COVID-19 pandemic-stricken environment ([Rožman and Tominc, 2022](#); [Washio et al., 2022](#)). Furthermore, people always felt the threat of COVID-19 infection to their physical health ([Stoyanova et al., 2022](#)). In addition to the concern of getting infected with the virus, people suffered several other physical health concerns such as weight gain due to disruptions to daily routines of eating, exercise and sleep patterns ([Washio et al., 2022](#)). Both [Stoyanova et al. \(2022\)](#) and [Washio et al. \(2022\)](#) highlighted the importance of coping resources to improve health status. Previous studies such as [Carter et al. \(2023\)](#) and [Stevenson et al. \(2021\)](#) suggest that individuals' identification with leaders involved in the management of an emergency is important, and leaders should be able to foster a sense that actions taken are in the public interest. In the organizational context, employees' experiences of dealing with the workplace are important in creating an identification with the workplace, in creating a sense of control as well as in creating favourable perceptions towards work, peers and the employer ([Krug et al., 2021](#); [Mousa et al., 2020](#)). Therefore, organization support and meaningful relations with employees for them to maintain physical health during the lockdown could generate hope. It is hypothesised:

*H1d.* Organization interventions implemented during the COVID-19 lockdown addressing physical wellness promoted hope in employees, who worked from home

### 3. Methodology

#### 3.1 Measures

Hope was measured with the six-item state hope scale of [Snyder et al. \(1996\)](#). These items were on an eight-point scale, where 8 denotes definitely true and 1 denotes definitely false, as suggested by [Snyder et al. \(1996, p. 335\)](#). Organization interventions or organization-led support practices implemented by the organizations during the COVID-19 lockdown were measured with a scale developed for the present study, which had 16 items. In developing this measurement scale, five steps were followed. Firstly, we did a preliminary investigation into organization-led support practices implemented during the COVID-19 lockdown by firms operating in the country. Secondly, previous theoretical and empirical work was reviewed to isolate practices that are prominent in the literature that appear to fit into our study and to isolate practices that are identified as important in the study context. Thirdly, these practices were assessed by a panel of experts to ensure face and content validity. Fourthly, the measurement scale was pre-tested to ensure content and face validity. The fifth and final step ensured internal consistency reliability, factor structure, convergent validity, discriminant validity and construct reliability (see next section for procedure). Items were on a five-point scale (5 – strongly agree, 4 – agree, 3 – neither agree nor disagree, 2 – disagree, 1 – strongly disagree). This item measure is shown in [Table 4](#).



3.2 *Sample and method of data collection*

The target study population is employees in full-time white-collar or professional job positions who performed their job roles by way of WFH during the first government-mandated lockdown in Sri Lanka that took place nationwide from mid-March to mid-May 2020. Considering the millions of workers in Sri Lanka that qualify for this categorization, we used convenience and snowball sampling methods to identify the study sample (refer to [Jager et al., 2017](#); [Sekaran and Bougie, 2016](#)). Initial contacts were made through personal networks, employees' welfare associations and industry associations. Since the first occurrence of the government-mandated lockdown was sudden, official data were not available to have a clear picture of the number of employees who were in full-time jobs performed their work by way of WFH. We made every attempt to obtain a representative sample, which is reflected in the respondents' characteristics shown in [Table 1](#). The sample required when the target population is over 100,000 (>100,000) is 384 ([Sekaran and Bougie, 2016, p. 263](#)). Data were collected during the above-mentioned first lockdown period in response to the COVID-19 pandemic. The survey questionnaire was developed using Google Forms and distributed via email and social media. Since the questionnaire was anonymous, it protected the anonymity of the respondents. Considering the difficulties faced by the populace and organizations, and their unpreparedness for a health crisis of this magnitude, data collection dragged on to one month after the end of the first government-mandated lockdown in Sri Lanka. We managed to obtain 245 valid responses, which we considered satisfactory since the number of responses received fell within the rules of thumb proposed by [Sekaran and Bougie \(2016, p. 264\)](#), and on par with other previous studies conducted during the COVID-19 pandemic, such as [Ullah et al. \(2022\)](#) and [Wang et al. \(2021\)](#). The respondents' characteristics are shown in [Table 1](#).

Characteristic	%
<i>Age</i>	
20–35 yrs	70
36–50 yrs	22
51–65 yrs	8
<i>Sex</i>	
Female	51
Male	49
<i>Marital status</i>	
Single <sup>†</sup>	51
Married	49
<i>Highest level of education qualification</i>	
Postgraduate degree	18
Bachelor's degree	59
Certificate or diploma	23
<i>Sector</i>	
Service sector	74
Manufacturing sector	26
<i>Years of operation of organizations to which respondents attached to</i>	
More than 20 yrs	41
5–20 yrs	44
Less than 5 yrs	15

**Table 1.**  
Respondents'  
characteristics

**Note(s):** <sup>†</sup> Includes never married, separated, divorced and widowed  
**Source(s):** Table by authors

3.3 Method of data analysis

Harman’s single-factor test statistics for common method variance provided satisfactory results (refer to Podsakoff *et al.*, 2003 for procedure and thresholds). Since the measurement scale for organization interventions was created by us for the present study, both EFA and CFA were performed (refer to Cabrera-Nguyen, 2010; Hurley *et al.*, 1997; Worthington and Whittaker, 2006). EFA was performed using principal component factor analysis, whereas CFA was performed using the structural equation modelling (SEM) procedure. When comparing data analysis options, specifically between SEM and multiple regression, Cheng (2001) showed that SEM is more effective than multiple regression, while Nunkoo and Ramkissoon (2012, p. 777) provided compelling justifications for choosing SEM over multiple regression analysis. Accordingly, the present study used SEM for the analysis. The results of SEM were assessed based on normed chi-square statistic ( $\chi^2/df$ ) and fit indices. A value near 1.00 for the normed chi-square statistic is considered a sign of good fit (refer to Arbuckle, 2007). Regarding fit indices, the Tucker–Lewis index (TLI), comparative fit index (CFI) and root mean square error of approximation (RMSEA) were used. Tucker–Lewis index and CFI values close to 1 but above 0.95 are considered as an indication of good fit; an RMSEA value around 0.05 is considered a sign of good fit (refer to Arbuckle, 2007).

4. Results

The results of EFA for hope led to identifying a single factor for hope. As shown in Table 2, the hope construct explained 63% of the variation. The construct yielded Cronbach’s alpha value of 0.880, AVE of 0.630 and construct reliability of 0.910.

The results of EFA for organization interventions yielded four factors, namely, WCC, WD, PsyWell and PhyWell. These four factors explained 68% of the variation (Cronbach’s alpha = 0.919). The values of AVE and construct reliability relating to each factor of organization intervention are given in Table 2. Table 3 shows the correlation between variables. The diagonal entries of the correlation table show the square root of AVE.

The results of CFA are shown in Tables 4 and 5. Fit indices derived from CFA are shown in Table 5. As shown in Table 5,  $\chi^2/df$  and fit indices of TLI, CFI and RMSEA fulfil the recommended thresholds (refer to Arbuckle, 2007). Table 5 shows estimates for hope. All four organization interventions significantly predict hope, i.e. WCC (0.206,  $p < 0.01$ ), WD (0.318,  $p < 0.001$ ), PsyWell (0.185,  $p < 0.05$ ) and PhyWell (0.152,  $p < 0.05$ ). Figure 1 shows the final model with path coefficients. The coefficient of determination of 0.182, which is shown in Table 4, suggests that WCC, WD, PsyWell and PhyWell account for 18% of the variation of hope. Therefore, the results shown in Tables 4 and 5 support the main hypothesis (H1) of the study as well as H1a, H1b, H1c and H1d.

Variable	Explained variation	Cronbach’s alpha	AVE	Construct reliability	Number of factors yielded
Hope	62.966	0.880	0.630	0.910	1
Organization interventions	67.94	0.919	–	–	4
WCC	18.230	0.856	0.579	0.846	–
WD	17.295	0.844	0.505	0.836	–
PsyWell	16.653	0.812	0.528	0.816	–
PhyWell	15.770	0.758	0.532	0.772	–

Source(s): Table by authors

Table 2.  
EFA - fit indices

**Table 3.**  
Correlations

Variable	Mean	SD	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
1 Age (in yrs)	34.32	2.51	—								
2 Sex <sup>†</sup>	—	—	0.031	—							
3 Marital status <sup>†</sup>	—	—	0.182*	0.079	—						
4 Sector <sup>†</sup>	—	—	0.076	0.046	0.073	—					
5 WCC	3.85	0.74	0.095	0.029	0.065	0.017	0.760**				
6 WD	4.05	0.72	0.079	0.066	0.098	0.026	0.430**	0.710			
7 PsyWell	3.68	0.81	0.102	0.034	0.073	0.033	0.427**	0.467**	0.727		
8 PhyWell	3.77	0.78	0.098	0.013	0.081	0.029	0.482**	0.448**	0.416**	0.729	
9 Hope	6.83	0.92	0.118	0.121	0.114	0.103	0.392**	0.447**	0.363**	0.337**	0.794

**Note(s):** <sup>†</sup>Binary coded (refer to characteristics of respondents), \*  $p < 0.05$ , \*\*  $p < 0.01$ , diagonal entries, square root of AVE

**Source(s):** Table by authors

**5. Discussion of the findings, contribution to theory and implications for practice**

The study was conducted in a time period of immense uncertainty, unpredictability and threat to life, under which hope is a valuable personal resource for individuals to maintain and promote. As a constituent of PsyCap, hope provides purpose, meaning and belief for individuals in their ability to withstand and constitute personal resources to influence their surroundings to attain goals in the context of COVID-19 and WFH. Drawing from the positive

Model	$\chi^2/df$	CFI	TLI	RMSEA	Coefficient of determination
Hope	3.115	0.891	0.883	0.078	0.182

**Source(s):** Table by authors

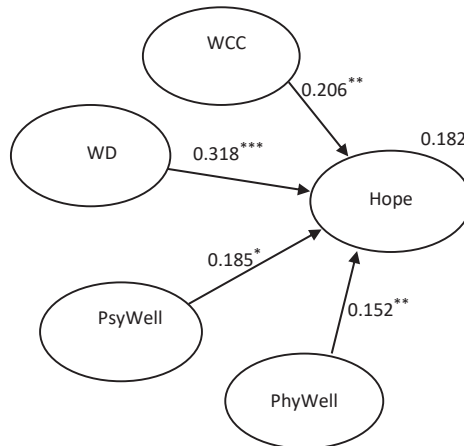
**Table 4.**  
CFA – indices of final model

Path		Standardised regression estimate
Hope	← WCC	0.206 <sup>**</sup>
Hope	← WD	0.318 <sup>***</sup>
Hope	← PsyWell	0.185 <sup>*</sup>
Hope	← PhyWell	0.152 <sup>*</sup>
A1	You are satisfied with the support received from other departments/ sections of your organization for work ← WCC	0.810 <sup>***</sup>
A2	You are satisfied with the support received from your department/ section for work ← WCC	0.851 <sup>***</sup>
A3	There is no resistance from your department/section for the way work is conducted ← WCC	0.767 <sup>**</sup>
A4	Employees of your organization are willing to share work ← WCC	0.694 <sup>***</sup>
B1	Your organization's expectations from its employees are quite clear ← WD	0.824 <sup>***</sup>
B2	Your organization offered flexible work hours/days ← WD	0.812 <sup>***</sup>
B3	Your organization's treatment to all employees is consistent ← WD	0.776 <sup>***</sup>
B4	Your organization delegated responsibility to employees for their own work ← WD	0.701 <sup>***</sup>
B5	Your organization reassured the importance of employees to it ← WD	0.692 <sup>***</sup>
C1	Your organization shared positive outcomes with employees ← PsyWell	0.761 <sup>***</sup>
C2	Your organization is confident about its survival ← PsyWell	0.825 <sup>***</sup>
C3	Your organization is appreciative of the work done by you during this difficult time ← PsyWell	0.707 <sup>***</sup>
C4	Your organization extended the deadlines for your work goals ← PsyWell	0.692 <sup>***</sup>
D1	Your organization is interested in knowing the health status of employees ← PhyWell	0.745 <sup>***</sup>
D2	Your organization took necessary actions to make employees aware about hygienic behaviours ← PhyWell	0.792 <sup>***</sup>
D3	Your organization regularly collects information on employees' health conditions ← PhyWell	0.815 <sup>***</sup>
E1	If I should find myself in a jam, I could think of many ways to get out of it ← Hope	0.640 <sup>***</sup>
E2	At the present time, I am energetically pursuing my goals ← Hope	0.761 <sup>***</sup>
E3	There are lots of ways around any problem that I am facing now ← Hope	0.678 <sup>***</sup>
E4	Right now, I see myself as being pretty successful ← Hope	0.749 <sup>***</sup>
E5	I can think of many ways to reach my current goals ← Hope	0.877 <sup>***</sup>
E6	At this time, I am meeting the goals that I have set for myself ← Hope	0.814 <sup>***</sup>

**Note(s):** <sup>\*\*\*</sup> $p < 0.001$ , <sup>\*\*</sup> $p < 0.01$ , <sup>\*</sup> $p < 0.05$

**Source(s):** Table by authors

**Table 5.**  
CFA - Estimates for hope



Note(s): \* $p < 0.05$ , \*\* $p < 0.01$ , \*\*\* $p < 0.001$

Source(s): Figure by authors

**Figure 1.**  
Model with  
standardised path  
coefficients

organizational behaviour (Luthans, 2002), conservation of resources theory (Hobfoll, 2002) and hope theory (Snyder, 2002), we postulated and tested a model linking organization interventions to hope. The findings presented above provide much-needed support for the beneficial effects of organization interventions in promoting hope when employees are performing their job roles by way of WFH during the COVID-19 lockdown. The interventions identified, namely, WD, WCC, PsyWell and PhyWell, are significantly related to hope. The findings suggest that these interventions can promote hope to persist in their goal-directed achievements and to find alternative routes to accomplish these goals if normal routes are blocked while engaged in the form of WFH during the pandemic. Snyder *et al.* (2003) proposed that any intervention to raise hope should be simple with sufficient guidance. The findings of our study on the four interventions confirm the proposition of Snyder *et al.* (2003). Hence, the four organization interventions lead to creating hopeful employees who are capable of handling negative elements in their environment and are more optimistic about their surrounding and future. Given the limited research on hope and hope-raising interventions conducted in a time period of a crisis and a forced work arrangement, our study contributes to the extant literature and provides implications for practice.

### 5.1 Contributions to the extant literature

The present study makes four contributions to the extant literature. Firstly, the study was built on positive organizational behaviour (Luthans, 2002), conservation of resources theory (Hobfoll, 2002) and hope theory (Snyder, 2002). The study's primary contribution lies in the application of these three theories to better understand contemporary phenomena. Our study applied these three theories in the context of working from home during the COVID-19 lockdown. We proposed, tested and provided empirical evidence to show that organization interventions are antecedents or enhancers of hope during the disruption of the pandemic. The findings provided clear evidence that employees are in need of personal resources to successfully engage in job roles using the involuntary work mode of WFH during the COVID-19 lockdown. Further, the findings support that the positive organizational behaviour, conservation of resources theory and hope theory have lasting theoretical resonance in explaining present-day phenomena with unique applications.

Secondly, the extant literature suggests that empirical research on hope in organization settings is rare (see [Wandeler et al., 2017](#) for review). Previous studies called for more research in different contexts and samples on organization interventions to explain the promotion of hope (see [Reichard et al., 2013](#); [Wandeler et al., 2017](#)). Since empirical studies on organization interventions that promote hope are rare, it is very difficult to find already empirically validated measurement scales on organization interventions. We have created and empirically validated a 16-item organization intervention scale. We have followed the five-step procedure described in the section on measures for this purpose. Following [Cabrera-Nguyen \(2010\)](#), [Hurley et al. \(1997\)](#) and [Worthington and Whittaker \(2006\)](#), we tested the empirical data for both EFA and CFA. As described in the section on measures, the 16-item organization intervention scale ensured face validity, content validity, internal consistency reliability, factor structure, convergent validity, discriminant validity and construct reliability. The findings showed that organization interventions promote hope – the construct that received much attention in positive organizational behaviour, conservation of resources theory and hope theory. Therefore, our research is novel and adds value to the existing literature.

Thirdly, the four organization interventions can be identified as micro-interventions (refer to [Luthans et al., 2006](#)) targeted specifically for the crisis and difficulties created in making employees accustomed to using WFH for the completion of their job roles. Further, a scrutiny of [Table 4](#) implies that these four organization interventions can also be identified as low-cost interventions (refer to [Reichard et al., 2013](#)). The literature supports the contention that strategies for lowering work stress and coping in general, such as targeted training in goal setting, time management and relaxation techniques facilitate a basis for hopeful thinking (refer to [Wandeler et al., 2017](#)). However, it is possible to argue that the context created by the COVID-19 lockdown together with the adoption of WFH is unique and novel, which expects organizations to be more strategic in the use of limited resources, which led to the adoption of interventions found in our study. Therefore, our study advances knowledge about organization interventions that can foster hope.

Fourthly, the interventions we identified fostered hope ([Snyder et al., 1996](#)) that comprise both agency and pathways for an individual to present high hope. As per hope theory ([Snyder, 2002](#)), hope is necessitated by both goal-directed determination and planning ways to meet goals, whereas each component alone is insufficient to achieve hope ([Snyder et al., 1996, p. 321](#)). Therefore, the findings provide evidence for organization interventions that enrich the higher-order construct of hope. The goal-directed nature and focus on alternative routes are what employees much needed when performing job roles in the form of WFH in the COVID-19 lockdown. The organization interventions assisted employees to develop alternative routes to desired goals and enhance their determination through agency thinking to benefit from alternative routes to adapt and confront the unfamiliar created by the COVID-19 lockdown and WFH. When considering from the employees' adaptive capacity development perspective, the four organization interventions identified helped employees to fruitfully handle more goals and farther ambitious goals allowing them opportunities to develop their capacities further.

Fifthly, the literature calls for empirical research in hope-raising interventions in different contexts and samples (see [Reichard et al., 2013](#)). We contributed to this call by designing and testing our model on a sample of employees who worked from home full-time during the COVID-19 lockdown in Sri Lanka. We believe our study is one of a kind to be conducted in the country. Studying hope as a personal resource and organization interventions that promote hope is very important because Sri Lanka is one of those countries from the developing world which do not have many resources to spare and are faced with immense economic challenges. The interventions found can also be identified as low-cost micro-interventions, as mentioned earlier. A scrutiny of the interventions found implies that the success of these relies more on organizational characteristics such as leadership, organizational structure and culture. In this regard, our study also contributed to the call by [Wandeler et al. \(2017, p. 53\)](#) by providing

reasonable answers to the questions they raised, i.e. “What can companies do to promote hope? What can leaders do to promote and also leverage the hope of their employees?” based on a study conducted in an Asian developing country during the COVID-19 lockdown.

### 5.2 *Implications for practice*

The present study provides multiple implications for practice. Firstly, considering the context, in which the study was conducted, i.e. the COVID-19 lockdown and mass working from home, the findings present organization-led interventions that are introduced on the urgency of trial-and-error without much detailed planning. Assuming the possibilities of future crises similar to COVID-19 or higher/lesser in magnitude, the interventions found in the study would be of value to organizations and policymakers. Our practices showed four interventions that can be implemented to promote hope, and which interventions are the most contributing to cultivating hope. Further, it is undeniable that the workplace is one of the main sources of hope in our study context. Since the COVID-19 lockdown and WFH have been experienced by all most all employees, the findings of the study offer insightful direction to organization decision-makers as options when cultivating hope.

Secondly, in connection to the above, the findings imply which characteristics and whose capabilities are important in the organization interventions. The interventions of WD, PsyWell and PhyWell imply the importance of organizational leadership for successful adoption. The intervention of WCC implies the importance of supporting work culture, which could also ultimately be attributed to organizational leadership. [Snyder and Shorey \(2004\)](#), in this regard, asserted that high-hope bosses play an important role in employees' lives in creating hope in them.

Thirdly, the findings of the study showed that the employees' level of hope is high (mean = 6.83, on an eight-point scale). From the point of employees' capability development, the context of work and events of the surrounding environment pose opportunities for personal development. The organization interventions experienced by employees under extreme pressure and lack of control during the COVID-19 lockdown and WFH have promoted hope providing opportunities for them to manage personal situations, life events and work outcomes successfully. The effect of this can be viewed from two angles. On the one hand, hope-nurturing interventions at difficult times suggest organizations' efforts to satisfy the basic psychological needs of employees, which is pronounced in the self-determination theory of [Deci and Ryan \(2000\)](#). On the other, any development in employees' personal resources will eventually be fruitful for organizations when concerning individual-level desirable behaviours and outcomes in the workplace.

Fourthly, even in the post-pandemic era, the value of hope as a personal resource is high. Hope is identified as one of the most relevant personal resources for a fast-changing world ([Luthans et al., 2006](#)). Further, hope and underline goal-directed thinking are teachable and learnable ([Snyder, 2002](#)). According to [Snyder \(2002\)](#), a lack of hope results in when individuals are not being taught to think in a hopeful manner. Furthermore, when individuals accumulate experience in an environment, they may yield beliefs on their capabilities to generate pathways and sustain energy essential to pursue goals. Therefore, if organizations take steps to make employees aware of the power of organization interventions on employees' hope capabilities, they could be encouraged to seek such opportunities within or outside of the workplace to enhance their thinking of agency and pathways.

Fifthly, the pre-pandemic studies showed that WFH reduces organizational expenses such as maintenance cost, utility and building rent and reduces commute time for employees (refer to [Hill et al., 1998](#)). However, the evidence for the benefits of WFH is mixed. Few studies showed increased work effectiveness and improved work morale (refer to [Hill et al., 1998](#)) due to greater flexibility in the location and timing of work. Still, some other research showed

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WFH reduces upward, downward and horizontal work communication and increases feelings of isolation (refer to [Gajendran and Harrison, 2007](#)). More recent studies showed that the WFH as a work mode was discouraged by employers for concerns such as its consequences for innovation and productivity, and the reluctance of employees to use this as an option due to possible effects on their career (refer to [Putnam et al., 2014](#); [Wall Street Journal, 2020](#)). However, the world now recognizes WFH as a standard mode of work. This implies that organizations and employees need to prepare themselves to accept WFH and get the maximum out of this work mode. For this, organizations must support and nurture WFH. In this regard, organizations could provide avenues for employees to lodge their experiences/concerns relating to WFH and assistance received from organization interventions in setting realistic goals and finding alternate routes for attaining goals. Such steps may also increase employees' voice in the workplace for work design.

## 6. Conclusion

Hope is a personal resource that should be protected to attain goals. Individuals who are more hopeful do better in work and life. The study investigated organization interventions experienced by employees during the COVID-19 lockdown while performing job roles by way of WFH, and whether organization interventions promoted hope. The findings of our study provide timely information on employees' levels of hope during the COVID-19 lockdown, organization interventions adopted during this period and the effect of these interventions in promoting hope. The study identified four organization interventions (i.e. WCC, WD, PsyWell and PhyWell) adopted by organizations. These interventions can be identified as micro-interventions (see [Luthans et al., 2006](#)) or low-cost strategies (see [Reichard et al., 2013](#)) effective in enhancing hope. All four interventions significantly positively promoted employees' hope. As a human capacity, hope is malleable to development ([Luthans et al., 2006](#)). Therefore, the organization interventions identified in the study have promoted hope during the COVID-19 pandemic when employees were performing their work in the form of WFH. Since WFH is predicted to stay for a considerable time in the future, WFH and achieving desirable work outcomes will continue to have significant strategic importance in the workplace. Hope is one of the most valuable personal resources for employees to successfully manage their personal situations, life events and work outcomes. Therefore, the organization interventions identified in the study provide a meaningful understanding of possibilities that will be of interest to different audiences alike, such as researchers and decision-makers. Overall, the findings of our study support that the traditional theories, i.e. positive organizational behaviour, conservation of resources theory and hope theory have lasting theoretical resonance in explaining present-day phenomena with unique applications. As discussed earlier, our study contributes to both theory and practice.

## 7. Limitations and directions for future research

The present study has a few limitations, which could form the basis for further research. Firstly, the study was confined to a sample of respondents pooled using the sampling methods of convenience and snowball. Future research could consider having a larger representative sample of the population, which would allow opportunities for testing, for example, moderator effects of demographic characteristics. Secondly, as reviewed earlier, hope provides positive effects for individuals and organizations, such as increased life satisfaction ([Yildirm et al., 2022](#)), enhanced innovative work behaviour ([Namono et al., 2021](#)) and increased job involvement ([Ullah et al., 2022](#)). Therefore, future research could investigate mediator relationships involving hope. Thirdly, future research could broaden the depth of analysis by further diversifying the coverage of interventions. Otherwise, future research



could explore the things that organizations must avoid to promote hope in situations of crisis. Fourthly, the investigations of state hope provide employees' with levels of hope at a specific time. In the case of our study, it was during the COVID-19 lockdown while working from home. The cross-sectional design of the study suits our investigation. However, future research could examine the longitudinal effects of organization interventions. Fifthly, future research could empirically investigate the limits of hope ameliorating the workplace, especially in situations of uncertainty and unpredictability. Last but not least, as reviewed earlier, PsyCap, which is limited to selected four constructs that come under positive organizational behaviour, identifies hope as one of its components. Hence, future research could investigate the effects of organization investigations on all four components of PsyCap.

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