

# Study on the Social Mentality of Low and Middle-income People in Different Industries During the Covid-19

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## Abstract

**Under the Covid-19, the social mentality of low-and middle-income people has changed with the development trend of the Covid-19. This paper collects data through questionnaires and interviews, and based on the Grounded Theory, it shows that people's mentality is in a downward trend from positive to negative from the early to the middle and late stages through open-ended, main axis and selective coding, and thus explores the influence of objective factors on mentality and personal beliefs during the Covid-19, and finally constructs a logical relationship model of social mentality of low-and middle-income people during the Covid-19. We also verify the reliability and validity of the intrinsic logical relationship model in this paper, and provide valid conclusions and data for the study of social attitudes of low- and middle-income people.**

## Keywords

**Low and Middle-income People; Social Mentality; Grounded Theory.**

## 1. Introductory

### 1.1. Research Background

Social mentality is a social state of mind diffused in the whole society or social group in a certain period of social development, which is the sum of the feelings, social emotional tone, social consensus and social values of the whole society. Social state of mind is a collection of social psychological contents such as emotions, cognition, and values shared by most members of society [1]. As a major public health emergency, the epidemic inevitably affects people's lives, employment and business operations. For example, the economic difficulties and living difficulties caused by the epidemic have caused people to lose the motivation of social life, and the consumption level and economic level are declining. When society produces drastic changes, the social mentality also changes drastically and becomes more complicated [2]. During the Covid-19, there were many middle and low income people in the society who could not make ends meet and lived under great pressure, and such a phenomenon occurred in all corners of the society, but it has not been paid attention to.

### 1.2. Research Significance

The purpose of this paper is to let the public know more about the social mentality and living conditions of the low- and middle-income groups during the Covid-19, as well as the various difficulties they faced at that time, so as to eliminate some stereotypes and bring more care to them. This study will help the government and society to formulate precise measures and policies to help the low-income group, and to carry out the verification of low-income families, as well as the implementation of special social assistance systems, such as medical assistance, housing assistance, and judicial assistance, so as to improve the quality of life of this group. In addition, this study also helps to carry out psychological counseling and welfare policies for this group to enhance their social well-being. This study can provide more support for academic

research by analyzing and discussing the real thoughts and mindsets of low- and middle-income people during the epidemic, as there are few studies on this group and people's knowledge about them is lacking.

## 2. Research Methodology and Data Collection

### 2.1. Grounded Theoretical Approach

In 1967, Glazer & Strauss proposed Grounded Theory. The Grounded Theory approach is to compare and analyze different data, cases, and theories to distill the relevant attributes based on the correlation between the information and the theory. The ultimate goal of this theory is to establish an independent theory[3]. This theory closely links empirical research and theoretical structure by providing methods and steps to generalize and compose theories from raw data, allowing the researcher to develop concepts and compose theories through systematic analysis of existing data [4].

In this paper, relatively accurate data and information were obtained through interviews and questionnaires. Using the rooting theory, the information was refined, analyzed as well as constructed, and after open coding, it went on to subsequent spindle coding and selective coding, from which the relevant attributes and theoretical frameworks were obtained. After obtaining the precise and key theoretical elements through the theoretical saturation test, the questionnaires and interviews were combined to analyze and explore the individuals in depth, categorize the factors and relationships, and construct the social mentality of the low- and middle-income populations in different industries during the epidemic using a "top-down" approach [5].

### 2.2. Research Data

The research time of this study is from March 2023 to June 2023, a total of 55 low- and middle-income people were interviewed and surveyed, the basic information of the interviewees is shown in Table 1, and finally 55 valid samples were collected. From the data, it is found that most of the low-income people are distributed in less than 5,000 yuan, and most of the middle-income people are distributed in 10,000-15,000 yuan (the research object of this paper takes Beijing as an example).

**Table 1.** Descriptive statistics of respondents' basic information

basic information	categorization	number of people	proportions (%)
gender	man	25	45.4
	woman	30	54.6
unit of employment	University/college	35	63.6
	care worker	6	10.2
	sanitation	2	3.6
	security	4	7.7
	mechanic	4	7.7
	nannies	3	5.4
	farmer	1	1.8
income	Less than 5000 yuan	18	32.7
	5000-10000 yuan	5	8.1
	10000-15000 yuan	19	34.5
	15000-20000 yuan	8	14.5
	20000 or more	6	10.2

### 3. Analysis of Influencing Factors and Modeling

#### 3.1. Open Coding

In this phase of the study, the raw data were extracted and coded, and the raw data were colloquial and low-level. The raw data were extracted and organized using an Excel spreadsheet for frequency analysis, and data with less than 9 frequencies and low attribution were excluded [6]. Finally, 13 initial concepts were extracted from the original data, and this table is the result of the conceptualization of the original data. The 13 initial concepts were summarized into 11 category-based concepts, and the frequency of occurrence of categories is shown in parentheses in this table.

**Table 2.** Conceptualization of raw data combing

original text	conceptualization	Scoping (frequency)
Low- and middle-income people felt inconvenienced by travel, health and work-induced stress during the epidemic.	Manifestations of stress	Pressure generation (50)
In the early stages of the epidemic, low- and middle-income groups generally believed that the epidemic would soon pass and maintained a positive mindset.	Positive mindset in the early stages of an epidemic Optimistic and hopeful	Trust (16)
In the middle of the epidemic, low- and middle-income people have generally adapted and are coping more calmly.	Peace of mind in the middle of an epidemic Take things calmly	Adaptability Peace of mind (19)
Late in the epidemic, low- and middle-income populations were instead preoccupied.	Anxiety in the late stages of an epidemic Post-Epidemic Anxiety Mentality	Negative psychology (34) Anticipation
After the end of the epidemic, low- and middle-income people are facing life positively and paying more attention to their health.	Positive impact of the epidemic	Physical and mental health (13)
Low- and middle-income people generally perceive that travel, socialization, work, and physical aspects of their lives have changed as a result of the epidemic.	Impact on life Negative impact	Change of habits (37)
During the epidemic, the most common emotions among low- and middle-income people were panic and nervousness, anxiety and irritability, and paranoia, respectively.	Emotional anxiety and paranoia	Negative emotions (34)
Exercise and talking with family and friends are commonly used by low- and middle-income people to relieve and regulate their emotions.	Mitigation Methods Variety	Mitigation modalities (30)

#### 3.2. Spindle Coding

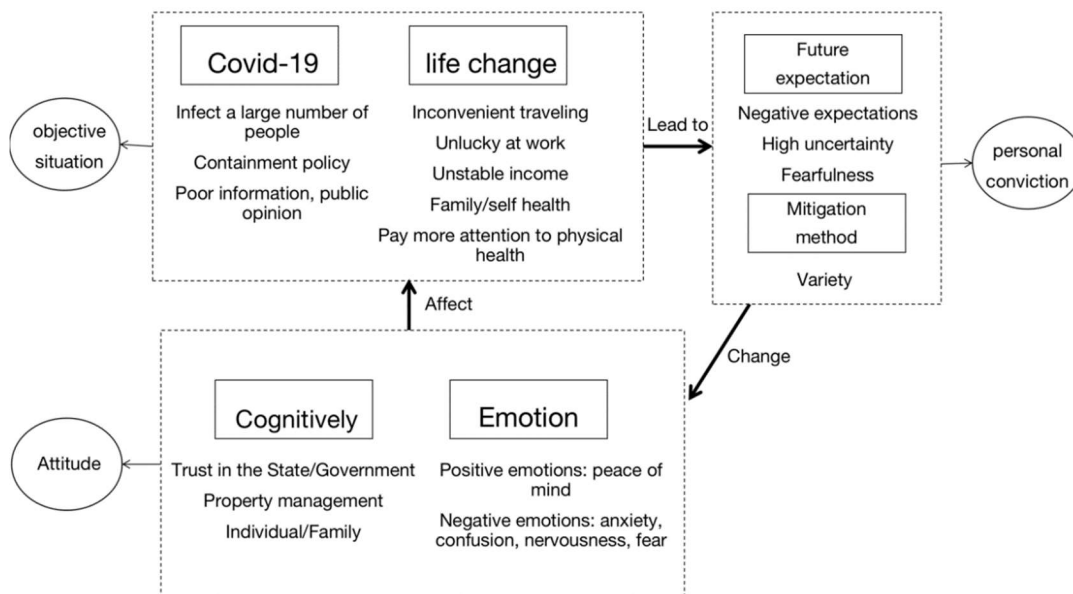
This paper mainly focuses on analyzing and summarizing the laws between different categories, and when the raw data were sorted out, a total of 11 preliminary categorized concepts were analyzed, with some connections between some subcategories. By extracting and mining the core of the concepts and finding the connections between the concepts, the concepts were reclassified to get the final main categories. Five main categories were identified at this stage: cognition, emotion, life change, relief approach, and future expectation, and the connotations of the main categories and their subcategories are shown in the table [7].

**Table 3.** Results of the analysis of the frequency of concepts and categories

main category	subcategory	Conceptual explanations
cognitively	trust	Confidence in State and Government policy-making
	adaptability	Facing the epidemic calmly and adapting to life under sealing control
emotion	positivity	Facing the epidemic and prevention and control requirements with a positive mindset
	smooth mindedness	Take a calm view of the epidemic situation and adopt a step-by-step mentality
	negative psychology	Anxiety, confusion and panic about the epidemic, fearing that the virus will affect themselves and their families.
	negative emotion	Loss of motivation and enthusiasm to do things, no hope for life
life change	habit change	Traveling, socializing, and working have changed as a result of the epidemic prevention and control, which has changed some of your habits
	physical and mental health	Increased emphasis on physical health in the wake of the epidemic
mitigation method	relief	Relieve stress and distract negative emotions by talking with family and friends and exercising
future expectations	anticipation	Expectations for the future are skewed negative due to recurring outbreaks and containment of the epidemic
	stress generation	Uncertainty about the future of life is high and people feel stressed as a result

### 3.3. Selective Coding

By analyzing the influencing factors of the above main categories, it was found that during the epidemic, the epidemic produced some changes in people's lives in terms of travel, work, income, health, etc., which caused the negative psychology of people's expectations for their future lives as well as the psychology of the aftermath of the end of the epidemic, which led to changes in the people's perceptions and moods, and these changes in mentality turned to affect the process of epidemic prevention and control [8].



**Figure 1.** The internal logic of the social mentality of low- and middle-income groups during the epidemic

### 3.4. Research Testing

Theory saturation is a criterion for the completion of a rooted theory-building model when newly collected data can no longer be generalized to extract a new theory. The study initially identified the conceptual categories of social mentality of low and middle income groups during the epidemic. And then the remaining 1/3 of the interview data were tested against each other, and no new concepts, categories, inter-category correlations, and new theories were found, so the sampling could be stopped and it was determined that the study had reached theoretical saturation [9].

In addition, in the process of verifying the reliability and validity of the model of intrinsic logical relationships in this paper, five interviewees were selected to verify the logical relationships of the social mentality of the low- and middle-income groups during the epidemic, and the meanings of the categories in the model as well as the relationships expressed by the causal paths were explained to the interviewees first, and the interviewees were asked to confirm whether the model would be able to conform to the meanings that they wanted to express, and if it contradicted the meanings expressed by the interviewees, the modify the model, and the interviewees did not object to the construction of the model, so the paper has a certain degree of reliability and validity.

## 4. Research Interpretation and Discussion

The internal logical relationship diagram of the social mentality of the low- and middle-income people during the epidemic constructed on the basis of the Zagan theory shows that the objective situation, i.e., the epidemic has arisen, which has led to changes in people's lives in terms of traveling, work, income, health, etc., and such changes have caused changes in the personal beliefs of the low- and middle-income people, and the group of people has generally appeared to have a negative expectation of the future of their lives, and holds a strong sense of fear as to whether or not the epidemic has reappeared [10]. Changes in personal beliefs led to a differentiation of people's mentality, and in the low- and middle-income groups, with the changes in the stage of the epidemic, there was a shift from a positive to a negative mentality, and there were changes in the level of trust in the government and in the safety of personal property [11].

### 4.1. Objective Situation

The emergence of the epidemic firstly led to a large number of people infected, in terms of infection, the trend of the epidemic is in an unstable state. Since the middle and late stages of the epidemic, the number of infections has been increasing, which once caused people to fall into a state of panic, so the government has taken strict sealing and control policies and measures [12]. The complex and changing epidemic was reported by various media on the Internet, and the news about the epidemic became both true and false, which made people unable to judge the authenticity of the information, thus creating a certain degree of panic and anxiety. In addition, studies have shown that, in the face of such major emergent public health events as the new coronary pneumonia epidemic, there is a mismatch between the information released by the government and the information received by the people, and due to the cognitive level and degree of understanding of individuals, it is extremely easy for low- and middle-income people to interpret the information inaccurately or in a blind spot [13]. All the negative factors have caused many changes in people's lives, such as inconvenient travel, poor work, unstable income, etc. [14].

### 4.2. Personal Beliefs

As a result of the fluid situation of the epidemic, people's personal beliefs gradually changed. From the early stage of the epidemic, most low- and middle-income people generally believed

that the epidemic would pass quickly and did not affect their personal expectations for the future. As the situation of the epidemic continued to change, people gradually developed fatigue and were suspicious and uneasy about their future lives [15]. The economic and living difficulties brought by the epidemic also made people's expectations for the future drop significantly, and the social mentality in this period tended to be negative, leading to a loss of people's enthusiasm for social life, which put the economic level during the epidemic on a downward trend [16]. Multiple influencing factors led people to discover ways to relieve stress, such as exercising, reading, brushing up on their dramas, and talking with family and friends. Low- and middle-income people generally showed that these ways of relief diverted their own attention from the epidemic and effectively released their inner negative emotions.

### 4.3. Mindset

In the early stage of the epidemic, people held positive emotions about the development of the epidemic, and most people showed the mentality of taking one step at a time. When the epidemic developed to the middle and late stages, people's emotions gradually turned negative as the long-term closure and control policy prevented many people from going to work, visiting their families and socializing normally [17]. The epidemic, as a major sudden event, made many people overwhelmed by the development of the situation, and some places were temporarily shut down by the epidemic and prevention and control measures, which inevitably affected people's life, employment, business and so on. As a result, people's perceptions changed, with general trust in the state and government since the early stages, and a change in the level of trust in the government in the later stages of the epidemic. [18]. The epidemic did not only lead to psychological damage, but also caused irreversible damage in the physical aspects of people, such as the after-effects of the new crown recovery. This factor has led most people to emphasize on their own physical and mental health as well as that of their family members to avoid secondary damage to the body caused by the neocoronavirus as much as possible.

## 5. Conclusion

This paper explores the social mindset of low- and middle-income people in different industries during the epidemic based on the rooting theory, and collects data through questionnaires and interviews, which include a total of 55 low- and middle-income people. In order to find out the intrinsic relationship among situations, beliefs and mindsets during the epidemic, this paper coded the data open-ended, principal axis and selective coding, and finally constructed a logical relationship model of the social mindset of low- and middle-income people during the epidemic [19]. During the epidemic, objective situations such as containment policies and poor information led people to produce and change their personal beliefs, and in the change of personal beliefs, people mainly showed the psychology of negative expectations for the future life, and this kind of change led to the emergence of unstable social mentality, and the mood changed continuously with the development of the epidemic, with a lot of ups and downs. Ultimately, people's social mentality affects the government's response to the epidemic and people's living conditions [20]. In the future, a series of quantitative studies can be conducted on the social mentality of middle-income and low-income people, to explore their changes in the epidemic, and to put forward more specific and effective suggestions and measures.

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