

# Positive Psychology and Post Truth: Alleviating the Non-Clinical Impact of the Pandemic

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**Abstract:** This study explores the non-clinical impact of the post-pandemic era on adolescents, specifically the post-truth phenomenon and mitigation mechanisms. Post-truth refers to an era characterized by truth distortion, emerging from widespread mistrust and misinformation during the pandemic. This skepticism persisted post-pandemic, affecting how teenagers process information and influencing their cognitive behaviors. A positive psychological approach is proposed to reconnect rational truth and conscience, fostering appropriate thinking behaviors after the pandemic. Employing qualitative methods with a phenomenological design, the study encompasses fieldwork, literature review, data analysis, and results presentation. The data spans research findings from 2019-2022 indexed in SINTA and Scopus, supplemented by the author's observations from online and offline media, as well as discussions with relevant informants. Findings indicate that positive psychology can guide adolescents toward maintaining rationality and conscience, encouraging adaptive behavior, appropriate emotional responses, and critical thinking amid post-truth challenges. The study underscores the need for further research into positive psychological interventions that can effectively reduce post-pandemic non-clinical impacts across age groups. This approach aims to enhance teenagers' resilience, promoting sound judgment and adaptive cognitive practices in uncertain informational landscapes.

## 1 INTRODUCTION

The pandemic phenomenon has left clinical and non-clinical impacts. Even though studies and discussions about pandemics have begun to decrease, the impact of the pandemic is still attached to every life. Some of them are impacts on education (Chertoff et al., 2020; Kufi et al., 2020; Stoller, 2021), economy (Hiscott et al., 2020; Susilawati et al., 2020), health (Vieira et al., 2020), and social interactions (Nicola et al., 2020; Rupani et al., 2020). Some of the impacts mentioned are temporary and, as of now, are in the

process of recovery. In the future, these efforts aim to support a more stable and dignified life in the aftermath of the pandemic.

The reality that can be felt as a non-clinical impact is the birth of a post-truth era which has meaning, namely, threats to people's ability to know what is true such as the spread of misinformation and the rejection of established scientific claims (Barzilai & Chinn, 2020). This condition was partly triggered by the overwhelming amount of information about the

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pandemic absorbed by individuals, which led to confusion. At times, certain groups exploited this panic by spreading false information to take advantage of the situation. Given the need to improve the quality and accuracy of information on the Internet, especially due to its accessibility and the necessity for continuous updates, international and national public information bodies, research centers, and journal publishers must play a crucial role in addressing this challenge (Ruiz-Frutos et al., 2020).

The post-truth era was predicted to occur in 1984 in a book entitled “Big Brother is Watching You” by George Orwell's and written on several references (McCune, 1999). The book describes illustrations of technology that are "brothers" to everyone. Like a brother, he has the power to supervise and even provide intervention to someone according to the mutual relationship between users and technological devices (Pavlovski & Dunder, 2018; Power, 2016).

Truth is close to positive situations that are built from psychological dimensions. Positive psychology focuses on enhancing the quality of life and preventing the development of pathologies that can arise when life loses its sense of meaning. By fostering a meaningful existence, it aims to improve overall well-being and resilience against negative psychological impacts (Seligman & Csikszentmihalyi, 2014). The presence of positive psychology in the realm of science and technological development is the study of conditions and processes that contribute to the optimal development or functioning of certain people, groups and institutions, including in this case, namely with regard to the provision of living modalities of post-pandemic society in facing the post-truth era (Gable & Haidt, 2005).

**2 METHODS**

This study uses a qualitative method with a phenomenological design. The information disclosure stage of the study begins with field studies, literature studies, analysis of the results of the studies, and presentation of information seen in Table 1. The data used is research results collected from 2019-2022 with SINTA and Scopus indexed characteristics. The supporting data added are the results of the author's observations in online and offline news media, as well as the results of discussions with informants that are relevant to research needs.

Table 1: The research stages

Step	Activity
Problem Sensing	The researcher observes the state of the surrounding issues related to the scientific field. The goal is that the transfer of information between situations and the rational capacity of researchers is balanced so that it can lead to predictions of problem solving.
Problem Exploration and Analysis	The researcher collects all kinds of information that appears in the surrounding situation, then analyzes it with a scientific methodological approach according to relevant references.
Problem Posing	The information that has been analyzed, then determines the focus of the problem which is the main topic of research or scientific study. The goal is for researchers to easily classify supporting data sources that can answer problems.
Problem Solving	The researcher has completed a study based on scientific methodology on one main research focus.

**3 DISCUSSION**

Field findings show that the pandemic has left both individuals and groups affected in various ways, requiring consequential decisions to satisfy many constituencies (Engemann & Miller, 2022). These decisions are sourced from information owned by individuals, so it will be very risky if the information they have actually leads to decisions that are detrimental to many constituents, including the individuals themselves. As experienced during the pandemic, the overwhelming amount of information in today's digital era exceeds the

average person's ability to process all the data they encounter. This abundance can lead to confusion and difficulties in discerning accurate, meaningful information (Skarpa & Garoufallou, 2021). The abundance of information from the main internet site is the most common source of information for the community (Suppasri et al., 2021).

Information that was born in the post-truth era originates from the existence of outward propaganda of information technology devices and its mission to conquer 'hearts' over 'heads', meanwhile having an impact on the creation of public opinion by the emotions and personal meanings of each user of information technology (Glăveanu, 2017). The severity of these varied opinion conditions has created confusion for the community in making decisions to choose each view of life. This is partly encouraged because the post-truth era trades corruption of arguments and evidence to protect ideological commitments and social identity in certain circles which are built on the basis of consensus (Lapsley & Chaloner, 2020).

Inoculation theory is becoming a potential alternative in this new context to help inform better public understanding of issues such as climate change, genetically modified organisms, vaccine hesitancy, and other contested scientific beliefs such as conspiracy theories about COVID-19 (Compton, van der Linden, et al., 2021). This is based on the theory of inoculation which originates from the classical social psychological theory of resistance to persuasion which explains how an attitude or belief can be made resistant to attack through pre-exposure to weakened forms of challenge (McGuire, 1970). Whereas inoculation describes how existing conditions (attitudes, beliefs, positions) can be made more resistant to future influences, in the same way medical inoculations can make existing conditions (healthy bodies) more resistant to future viral influences (Compton, van der Linden, et al., 2021; Compton, Wigley, et al., 2021).

The inoculation theory framework is based on positive psychology by identifying positive psychological pathways of 'value activation' and 'healthy values' as alternative methods to be a potential reference by sustainability research (Raymond & Raymond, 2019). In the future positive psychology and inoculation theory as its affirmation are expected to play a realistic alternative, additional, non-stigma role in fighting mental illness which has increased dramatically due to the COVID-19 pandemic and the VUCA

(Volatile, Uncertain, Complex, Ambiguous) environment (Luthans & Broad, 2022). Support for positive psychology in dealing with the post-truth era, one of which is supported by the results of research on 72,000 participants from clinical and non-clinical populations of children and adults in 41 countries which stated that positive psychology effectively accompanies information health as indicated by individual mental health (Carr et al., 2021).

Inoculation theory is one of the products of positive psychology which has the opportunity to provide a positive modality for society in the post-truth era. The academic community at various levels of education shows a trend of increasing concern about "post-truth" issues, namely, threats to the ability to "sort and choose" the truth of information (Barzilai & Chinn, 2020). These capacities also affect the existence of knowledge or science, because they have the potential to use science to legitimize and enforce policies based on values claimed by certain groups according to the information they have.

## 4 CONCLUSIONS

The pandemic ended with the birth of a new era, namely after the truth which became a non-clinical impact due to the attack of the COVID-19 virus in the world. Post-truth leads the individual to a new way of thinking, feeling, and behaving with full shadows of doubt in every life decision taken in the course of individual development in the future. The dimension of thoughts, feelings, and behavior as those who become "victims" after the truth are dimensions that have been studied for many years in conventional psychology to modern psychology, one of which is positive psychology. Realizing this connection, positive psychology is a potential alternative to assist individuals in facing the post-truth era which is dominated by digital information.

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