

## LOCKDOWN CAPTIVITY: THE WISH TO **BREAK OUT AND TRAVEL**

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### **Short bios:**

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## Lockdown captivity: the wish to break out and travel

### Abstract

Not being able to travel an unprecedented condition for many. This paper focuses on the sense of being trapped in lockdown and having to adapt to new – non-tourist – roles. The aim is to conceptualise the lockdown captivity phenomenon and to propose this concept as measurable, and relevant to tourism. Using an adapted role captivity scale, we provide empirical findings on the impact on individuals of losing their tourist role. This study is part of a wider research project on the travel related cognitive and affective dimensions experienced during the Covid-19 lockdown.

### Theoretical background

To be a captive is to lack freedom (Pearlin et al. 1990); the Oxford dictionary defines ‘captivity’ as a state of being kept as prisoner or in a space that one cannot have a choice to leave. The lockdowns, travel bans, and other restrictive measures imposed all around the globe, while slowing the spread of Covid-19 (Hall, Scott & Gössling, 2020), have put individuals in inescapable situations. Under lockdown, no travel or leisure activities can take place, and although some cultural and leisure facilities can be accessed on digital platforms, the curtailment of their freedom of movement, and the consequent loss of their role as tourists, has been challenging for many. Parkman (2020) evidenced that feeling trapped might arouse emotional and physical distress. In fact, individuals who find themselves in an unwanted and stressful situation quite often feel like captives (see Pearlin 1975). This feeling is defined by the impossibility of changing or escaping a difficult situation (Aneshensel, Pearlin & Schuler, 1993).

The concepts of stress and worry in relation to tourism have been studied in the context of uncertain situations while traveling and in investigations of tourists’ risk judgement factors associated with their tourist role (Lepp & Gibson, 2003; Pearce, 1985; Wolff & Larsen, 2013). Host populations often view tourism as a stressor, and their stress-related negative health outcomes have been examined by Jordan, Vogt & Deshon (2015) and Jordan, Moran & Godwyll (2019).

This work complements previous tourism studies by examining the feelings aroused in people who see themselves as in captivity and deprived of their tourist role. Drawing on research from clinical psychology (Aneshensel, Pearlin & Schuler, 1993; Pearlin et al. 1990), we propose a conceptualisation of the lockdown captivity phenomenon, expressed in the following definition: **Lockdown captivity is an unwanted situation in which individuals feel trapped because, unable to travel, they experience the loss of their tourist role, and are powerless to do anything about it.** Lockdown captivity is assessed empirically by adopting the Role Captivity Scale (Pearlin et al. 1990).

### Methods

A convenience sample of Italian (Trento) and Hungarian (Budapest) university students was used to assess the psychological impact of lockdown and the loss of tourist role. Participants were contacted by email and sent a web-link to the survey. In the last two weeks of the lockdown (22<sup>nd</sup> May – 7<sup>th</sup>

June 2020), a total of 627 responses was collected. Incomplete surveys were eliminated (n=92) giving a sample of 535 (73.1% female;  $M_{age} = 22.74$ ;  $SD_{age} = 1.98$ ; Italian 62.2%, Hungarian 37.8%). The male and female respondents' ages differed slightly: Male= 23.56, Female =22.44. The data collection period was crucial in assessing the effects of lockdown because it coincided with the initial lifting of restrictions. During lockdown, people in Italy had to remain within a three hundred metre radius of their home, while in Hungary restrictions were less severe. The scale validity and reliability of the structured questionnaire were ensured by a pre-test (n=20). We used an adapted version of the multi-item, single factor role captivity scale devised by Pearlin et al. (1990). The concept of role captivity first emerged in research within gender studies on depression (Pearlin, 1975) and has been widely used in clinical psychology to assess the psychological state of caregivers (Parkman, 2020).

## Results

To assess the psychological impact of lockdown captivity, the role captivity scale used in clinical psychology was adapted to the tourism context. Table 1 shows the adaptation changes [in bold] and descriptive statistics. In the cross-cultural sample internal consistency is high (Cronbach's  $\alpha_{TOTAL} = 0.800$ ;  $\alpha_{IT} = 0.802$ ;  $\alpha_{HUN} = 0.806$ ).

**Table 1**

Scale adaptation, measurement items (n=535)

How much does each statement describe your thoughts about your lockdown situation? How much do you:

	<b>Role captivity (original items by Pearlin et al. 1990)</b>	<b>Lockdown captivity</b>	<b>Mean</b>	<b>Std. Dev.</b>	<b>Skewness</b>	<b>Kurtosis</b>
1	Wish you were free to lead a life of your own	Wish you <b>could break out of the lockdown situation</b>	4.54	1.831	-0.402	-0.908
2	Feel trapped by your (relative's) illness	Feel trapped by <b>the lockdown situation</b>	4.85	1.639	-0.620	-0.369
3	Wish you could just run away	Wish you could just run away	4.27	1.895	-0.237	-1.103
		<b>SUM</b>	<b>13.66</b>	<b>4.545</b>	<b>-0.0323</b>	<b>-0.572</b>

Note: (1 = very much; 7 = not at all)

Table 2 shows the correlations between coping with the absence of tourism-related activities and lockdown captivity. The activities listed in the table were all prohibited during the lockdowns. Convergent validity for lockdown captivity was evidenced by the strong correlation with difficulty in coping with the travel bans. Correlations were higher in the Italian sample, explained by the stricter and longer lockdown period. Discriminant validity was also confirmed by the ease with which participants coped with not going to university. Our analysis demonstrated that the **Lockdown Captivity Scale** was associated with all these tourism relevant variables in the expected direction.

**Table 2**

Correlation between lockdown captivity (total) and tourism relevant variables

In the past three months, how did you cope without the following (1=I really missed it, 7=I was perfectly fine without it)	Lockdown captivity (total)		
	Full sample	Italy	Hungary
Going to concerts and festivals	-0.131**	-0.185**	-0.064
Attending university	-0.287**	-0.313**	-0.212**
Travelling	-0.316**	-0.360**	-0.244**
Being on vacation	-0.294**	-0.345**	-0.226**

\*\*. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

*Two-way ANOVA tests on role captivity level by gender and country*

Two-way ANOVA tests were employed to examine the potential importance of gender and country (Italy and Hungary) as factors influencing lockdown captivity (Levene's Test for Equality of Variance showed equality of variance,  $p = .5290$ ). As shown in table 3, the ANOVA tests indicate that there was a significant main effect on lockdown captivity between males and females [ $F(1, 531) = 15.27$ ,  $p = 0.000$ ]. Females (mean=14.18) appeared to feel more trapped than males (mean=12.27). This result on gender inequality is in line with prior studies in psychology, attesting that females usually [have several roles in the family, and feel more stressed when trapped in unwanted roles or situations](#) (Arcand *et al*, 2020; Pearlin, 1975).

**Table 3**

Two-way ANOVA tests on lockdown captivity by gender and country

	df	Mean square	F	Sig
Main effects				
Gender (G)	1	305.769	15.266	0.000
Country (C)	1	2.255	0.113	0.737
Interaction effect (G x C)	1	4.721	0.236	0.628
Error	531			
<b>Corrected Total</b>	<b>534</b>			

The ANOVA tests indicate the lack of a significant effect on lockdown captivity between Italy and Hungary [ $F(1, 531) = 0.113$ ,  $p = 0.737$ ]. The two-way ANOVA tests reveal that there was no significant gender and country interaction with respect to overall lockdown captivity level [ $F(1, 531) = 0.236$ ,  $p = 0.628$ ].

**Concluding remarks**

The loss of the tourist role is one of the involuntary transformations that people experience under lockdown. Worries about health, economic and social issues [are heightened by not knowing when the crisis period will end](#). This research letter contributes to knowledge development [by a\) investigating the psychological aspects of losing one's tourist role and b\) introducing the concept of lockdown captivity which can be applied in any situation in which people feel trapped and want to escape](#). We

found a significant difference between females and males in their perceptions of lockdown captivity. Limitations of the study are the imbalance between the Italian and Hungarian samples, and the overrepresentation of female respondents. Future studies should explore the tourism-related consequences of being captive in unwanted situations in greater detail, focus on different age and gender cohorts, and avail of a larger probability sample size.

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