

# Before and After Courage: Understanding Laypeople's Most Courageous Actions and Emotional Dynamics

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**Abstract:** With an emphasis on the most audacious choices taken, this study investigates the connection between courage and emotions in individual decisions and behaviors. This study used semi-structured interviews with 45 people to examine how courage is perceived and the emotional dynamics that surround heroic deeds. Participants consider their most daring actions and the feelings they had both before and after the deed by answering three thought-provoking questions. The results indicate what kinds of incidents are thought to be the most daring in the lives of regular people. Qualitative content analysis also reveals the emotional journey of courage, exposing a spectrum of feelings from anticipation and dread to relief, pride, and success thereafter. These varied tales add to the body of knowledge on courage and emotions and provide insightful information for studies on decision-making, psychology, personal growth, and how emotions interact with courage in big life decision.

**Keyword:** Courage, Courageous Action, Courageous Decision, Emotions

**JEL Classification:** J24

## 1. Introduction

Since the first day we, as human beings, stepped onto the stage of history, we have witnessed numerous changes, developments, and, as a result, many achievements. The fundamental basis for this change and development is undoubtedly our ability to work together and organize. However, the desire and necessity to be together and work together have also brought competition with them. Therefore, it can be said that cooperation and competition, intertwined throughout the historical process, are indispensable elements of change and development. These two elements, shaped by cooperation and competition, have given rise to the concept of courage and heroism throughout the history of humanity, perhaps as a result of two seemingly contradictory yet complementary elements. Living together, undertaking risky and monumental tasks,

establishing and dismantling states, fighting for freedom, attaining power, and more, have all naturally led to courageous and heroic actions (Mert, 2021c).

Courage is a complex and multifaceted construct that has intrigued scholars across various disciplines, including psychology, philosophy, and sociology, management, health, business, psychiatry, and anthropology (Mert, 2022a). It is often associated with the ability to confront fear, adversity, and moral dilemmas. The study of courage has gained prominence for its relevance in understanding human behavior, ethical decision-making, and personal development.

Being a complex virtue, courage is essential to human existence and frequently calls for people to face fear, hardship, or moral quandaries. There is a complex emotional dynamic at play in the field of courage, both prior to and following acts of bravery. Gaining an understanding of these emotional dynamics is crucial for improving personal growth, deciphering the intricate psychology of humans, and expanding the conceptual understanding of courage. The study of emotion has undergone a revolution in recent decades, which has the potential to fundamentally alter decision theories. It has been shown that emotions are strong, ubiquitous, and occasionally helpful decision-making drivers (Lerner et al., 2015).

The psychology of courage is still developing, despite its popularity (Kelley et al., 2019). The study by Sasse, Halmburger, and Baumert (2022) highlights the importance of emotional processes for moral bravery and suggests that emotions—especially anger—play a crucial role in morally courageous actions. In line with this viewpoint, our research delves deeper into the relationship between emotional processes and courage, examining their significance prior to and following acts of bravery. We propose that an understanding of the emotional dynamics underlying bravery is essential to an understanding of the complexity of human decision-making, especially in morally challenging and brave situations. Additionally, Baumert et al. (2023) suggest that personality dispositions influence how emotionally reactive people are, affecting both those who take action and those who stay passive in response to norm violations.

People of all cultures and centuries have been enthralled with and inspired by courage. Though it has historically been praised as a positive quality, little is known about its emotional aspects. By examining the emotional dynamics underlying brave acts and revealing the complex interactions between courage and the emotions it evokes, this study seeks to close this gap. In line with the recommendations of Graham et al. (2019),

it aims to categorize courage as an emotion within the future-focused family of emotions and close the gap between courage as a disposition and a separate emotion.

We must take into account the complementary effects of reason and feeling in our quest for courage that is universally acclaimed (Wanqiu, 2015). Consistent with the findings of Sasse, Halmburger, and Baumert (2022), this investigation explores the complex interplay between emotions and bravery in individual decision-making, offering a more profound comprehension of the emotional dynamics that underlie courageous deeds. My research focuses on comprehending the use of vigilant problem solving in complicated decisions, which is also consistent with the findings of Kelman, Sanders, and Pandit's (2016) study on decision-making among senior government officials. But the main focus of my work is on decisions that need bravery and the emotional dimensions of those decisions, rather than the alert approach that is usually applied to complex decision-making.

My study aims to answer the following research questions: What is the most courageous behavior people exhibit? How do individuals' emotions change before and after exhibiting courageous behavior? By addressing these questions, I aim to comprehensively investigate the emotional dynamics of courageous behavior, offering a more profound understanding of the emotional underpinnings of acts of valor. This information can assist develop psychological models and interventions that promote courage, offer insights into emotional resilience, and evaluate the emotional effects of brave deeds on one's own development and well-being. Individuals should anticipate emotional changes in response to brave actions, including feelings of happiness, relief, and accomplishment. According to Mert (2021d), if bravery can be modeled, it will become easier to grasp, more useful, and more resilient. Bravery is a complex and difficult idea on its own. In response to this request, my research aims to model the emotions that precede and follow brave behavior.

The following portions of this research are carefully structured to explore the emotional dynamics of bravery in greater detail. I'll read up on pertinent books about bravery, emotional reactions, and behavioral psychology to provide a solid theoretical framework for our investigation. A theoretical framework will be established to comprehend the emotional changes that occur both before and after courageous acts. I will evaluate the findings, examine emotional reaction patterns, and weigh the significance of our findings in light of previous research in the discussion section. The limits of the study and possible future research directions will also be discussed.

## 2. Literature Review

Following Aristotle, one can develop a more thorough grasp of what bravery entails by focusing on three essential elements of courageous action (Hamric, Arras & Mohrmann, 2015). First of all, brave deeds reveal careful consideration. Secondly, a challenging, agonizing, or dangerous circumstance is necessary for bravery. Ultimately, the genuinely brave agent works for an objective or purpose that is ethically admirable. According to Mert (2021a), the specific dimensions of courage are danger, fear, power, consciousness, doing what is necessary, decision, aim, difficult circumstances, morality, generosity, and choice.

Additionally, the notion of courage is being researched more and more in the field of management. All of the studies—Mert (2021a), Mert and Aydemir (2019), Mert (2007), Mert (2022b), Aydemir and Mert (2018), and Şen and Mert (2020)—highlight the significance of bravery as a crucial component that managers and leaders must take into account. They stress how important it is to manage bravery well and how important it is to leadership and decision-making. These pieces serve as a helpful reminder of the crucial part bravery plays in the fields of management and leadership.

Furthermore, the research carried out by Mert and associates makes a substantial contribution to our comprehension of courage in a variety of settings. The impact of workplace social bravery on people's life satisfaction is examined by the authors in "The Effect of Workplace Social Courage on Life Satisfaction: A Scale Adaptation" (Mert & Köksal, 2022b). Their research clarifies the connection between general well-being and bravery in the workplace. The role of courage in the Coast Guard and its impact on the relationship between organizational commitment and personality traits are examined in "The Role of Coast Guard Courage in the Relationship between Personality and Organizational Commitment" (Mert & Köksal, 2022a). The importance of courage in the context of several professions is highlighted by this study. Additionally, in "Organizational justice, life satisfaction, and happiness: The mediating role of workplace social courage" (Mert, Sen, & Alzghoul, 2022), Mert, Şen, and Alzghoul (2022) explore the mediating function of workplace social courage in the relationship between these three constructs. The authors of the paper "The role of courage and interactional justice in emotional exhaustion of emergency nurses: A cross-sectional study in Türkiye" (Köksal & Mert, 2023) investigate how these two factors could help emergency nurses feel less worn out emotionally. Lastly, taking gender variations into account, Köksal, Mert, and Gürsoy (2022) examine the connection between organizational justice and

workplace social courage. Together, these studies highlight the significance of courage in decision-making, overall wellbeing, and a variety of other facets of life and work.

### **2.1. Courage and Emotions**

Although there has been a lot of research on courage, the emotional dimensions of bravery are still largely unexplored. Human reactions to problems are largely influenced by emotions, so gaining a thorough awareness of the emotional dynamics of courage is crucial to developing a thorough comprehension of this virtue. It is often known that people feel a variety of emotions when confronted with circumstances requiring bravery. At the intersection of confidence and the anxiety sparked by a terrifying circumstance lies courage. A person's confidence eventually finds its proper balance with their amount of dread. Facing frightening circumstances head-on aids in a person's development of self-awareness and clarity on their ideals (Putman, 2001).

When it comes to feelings, melancholy and depression elicit different reactions. More so than sadness, depression elicits complex emotions such as increased anger, fear, and anxiety. If fear is a particular manifestation of anxiety, then anxiety does not always elicit more complicated emotions than terror (Schwartz & Weinberger, 1980).

Understudied is the relationship between fear and courage, which are frequently perceived as contradictory but related ideas. According to recent research, perception and cognition play a part in fear experiences, while courage, as a "emotional virtue," plays a part in controlling fear. This study explores this dynamic interaction, examining if fear has biological or perceptual roots and whether fear and courage are inherently or extrinsically related. The analysis reveals that fear encompasses various dimensions, including the conceptual, emotional, situational, and subjective aspects (Navarini & De Monte, 2019).

Techniques for managing fear, including as extinction, cognitive control, active coping, and reconsolidation, have been studied in the context of emotional regulation. A thorough analysis of the underlying brain systems reveals that these strategies rely on both similar and unique parts of a fear circuitry (Hartley & Phelps, 2010). Additionally, this study uses moral bravery as a mediating mechanism to examine the relationship between emotional reflexivity and work-life integration. The aim of this study is to enhance our comprehension of the critical functions that these nursing ideas play in promoting efficient coping mechanisms that lead to the realization of work-life integration (Jena, Sarkar & Goyal, 2021).

According to Barney (2023), courage is a multidimensional attribute that is recognized and attractive in popular culture. In order to overcome training-related challenges, the law enforcement Blue Courage program incorporates creative aspects that explicitly address concerns connected to legitimacy and wellness. Blue Courage, which has its roots in the noble and purposeful ideals of police, acknowledges the significant influence that an officer's health and well-being have on both the individual officer and the profession at large (Drake, 2021).

## 2.2. Key Theories Related to Relationship Between Courage and Emotions

A theoretical framework is necessary in order to understand how emotions change prior to and following brave deeds. This framework incorporates a number of psychological models and theories that offer insightful information about bravery and emotional states. The following theoretical underpinnings help explain emotional changes in the context of courage:

*Viktor Frankl's Logotherapy:* According to Frankl's idea, people discover meaning and purpose in life by taking on and conquering obstacles (Devoe, 2012). Frankl concluded that work, love, and suffering are the three fundamental methods to actualize meaning in a self-transcending fashion. Forsyth (2003) explains Frankl's three values. Frankl bases this result on phenomenological investigation rather than moral or philosophical principle. Daring deeds are frequently motivated by the search for purpose. This hypothesis states that when confronted with challenges in life, people may feel anxious and frustrated (an emotional state before to courage). But after doing something brave that is consistent with their beliefs and meaning, people feel satisfied and fulfilled (this is the emotional state that follows bravery). This theory highlights the transformative power of courage in shifting emotional states towards a more positive and meaningful outlook.

*Self-Determination Theory (SDT):* Human motivation and well-being are influenced by autonomy, competence, and relatedness, according to SDT (Deci & Ryan, 2012). Taking initiative and pushing outside of one's comfort zone are common components of courageous deeds. Because these feelings are frequently connected to face the unknown, people may feel fear, self-doubt, or apprehension prior to such acts of courage. However, people can undergo an emotional transition marked by emotions of accomplishment, self-efficacy, and a sense of relatedness to those who share their beliefs (emotional state after courage) by acting courageously and exhibiting autonomy and competence (Ryan, Huta & Deci, 2008).

*The James–Lange Theory:* The James–Lange theory states that feelings are the body's reaction to physiological changes (Cannon, 1987). People who perform brave deeds may experience physiological changes in their bodies, such as elevated heart rate, perspiration, and adrenaline. These bodily responses might come on either side of worry or fear (an emotional state that comes before bravery). People may go through an emotional transition after performing brave deeds that is marked by a feeling of triumph and even euphoria (emotional state after courage).

*Terror Management Theory:* Last but not the least, the application of the "Terror Management Theory" to the present investigation on courage and emotions can yield significant insights. The theory of terror management (Solomon, Greenberg, & Pyszczynski, 1986) investigates how people deal with realizing they are mortal. According to this theory, people deal with existential angst by growing in their cultural worldviews and sense of self–worth, which give their lives purpose and meaning. These psychological defense systems assist people in overcoming their fear of dying.

Applying this idea to the present investigation, bravery can be understood as a means by which people face and overcome the existential fear resulting from realizing their own death. Fearless and difficult situations are frequently faced in acts of courage, which might be interpreted as a reaction to existential issues. Being courageous enables people to stand up for their principles and convictions, which helps them feel important and purposeful even in the face of danger. Additionally, fear management theory can be connected to a knowledge of how people's emotional responses alter before and after courageous deeds. People may have elevated existential anxiety prior to displaying courage, which can be characterized by feelings of fear, trepidation, or self–doubt. Fearless deeds can help control this existential apprehension, and brave acts can cause emotional states to change. Happy, relieved, and a feeling of accomplishment are examples of positive emotions that might surface after successfully facing existential worries (Mert, 2010). Thus, the current study can investigate how people use courage as a coping technique to deal with existential dread while preserving their cultural worldviews and sense of self. The research can offer a greater understanding of how people manage their death fears and preserve a feeling of meaning and significance in life by exploring the emotional dynamics accompanying acts of courage.

### **3. Method**

#### **3.1. The Participants**

There were 22 male and 23 female participants in the sample. The sample's age ranges from 24 to 50 years old. The sample's participants are roughly 35.4 years old on average. The participants' educational backgrounds are as follows: Three have earned associate degrees, fourteen have completed postgraduate work, and twenty-three have finished their undergraduate degrees. Engineers, physicians, civil servants, specialists, managers, and personnel administration professionals are among the participants' varied vocations and positions. The sample encompasses a wide range of professions and industries.

#### **3.2. Data Collection**

Semi-structured interviews were used to gather data for this research. Responses to a series of four open-ended questions about brave deeds and the emotional dynamics surrounding them were obtained from the participants. The purpose of the questions was to investigate how the participants perceived courage, what it was like to behave courageously, and how their brave acts elicited feelings in them. The following are the queries posed:

- When you look back on your life, what do you think was the bravest action you've ever taken?
- When you reflect on the time when you exhibited this behavior, what did you feel before the action?
- How did you feel after displaying this behavior?

#### **– Procedure**

The method of gathering data was done in a private, controlled environment. Prior to the interviews, each participant was approached individually, and informed consent was acquired. The identical set of questions were posed to each participant.

A qualitative content analysis methodology was used in the data analysis. After the interviews were recorded, the information was methodically examined to find reoccurring themes and patterns pertaining to the emotional dynamics of brave deeds. Following their categorization and interpretation, these themes offered insights into the participants' experiences of courage and the feelings that accompanied it.



## 4. Findings

Table 1 displays the participants' responses to the three interview questions.

**Table 1. The participants' answers**

	<b>The Bravest Action</b>	<b>Emotions (Before)</b>	<b>Emotions (After)</b>
1	Getting involved in the traffic accident I caused instead of leaving the scene when I had the chance.	The mistake is yours, go take responsibility for the mistake.	My conscience was very clear.
2	Raising two children.	I'm glad I did.	Happiness.
3	Early marriage.	Anxiety.	I'm not sorry.
4	Giving birth to my children naturally.	I said, "I can do it."	Oh, it's really bad. I wished I hadn't made this decision.
5	Skydiving from an airplane and marrying my partner shortly after.	Fear.	A great excitement.
6	Taking a leap into a busy life in a different city (far from where I lived).	Excitement and anxiety.	I became happy.
7	Getting divorced despite everything.	It was as painful as giving birth.	I hesitated.
8	Driving a car and spending two years alone with my twin children.	I had to do it at that moment. Driving a car was a necessity for me because my spouse was on duty.	Foolish courage. But now, the greatest happiness.
9	Leaving my job, which I had been working at for five years, without finding another one.	Courage.	Happiness and concern.
10	Conveying my thoughts directly to my manager.	Confidence.	Peace.
11	Taking a job in a different city.	I was nervous and stressed.	I said, "I'm glad I did it."
12	Deciding to go abroad within a month.	Ambition, I thought about my goal in line with my ambitions.	Peace and success.
13	Being able to speak in front of certain people.	Apprehension.	It makes you feel good and relaxed.
14	Starting university in another city at the age of 16.	I don't remember.	I would have regretted it if I hadn't done it.
15	The decisions I made in my own life.	I asked myself if I could do it.	Fear.
16	My decision to move away from my family.	That I can do it and that this is what I want.	Although I occasionally felt discouraged, I didn't change my decision.

	The Bravest Action	Emotions (Before)	Emotions (After)
17	I believe I'm brave in my family relationships.	Determination.	Sadness, but happiness because I didn't know the correctness of my decision.
18	Being outspoken and speaking the truth, right or wrong, without hurting those around me.	I wondered if I might be misunderstood when I spoke.	I thought the action I took was right.
19	Being able to tackle problems.	I can handle it.	The comfort of having accomplished something.
20	I was brave in the decision to get married only once, as I often sacrificed myself to avoid hurting people.	I wondered if they were right.	I'm glad I acted according to my own beliefs.
21	Getting a divorce when I had a one-year-old baby.	Fear.	Relief.
22	Choosing to live on my own.	Indecision.	I had self-confidence, and now it has increased even more.
23	Diving in the sea.	Fear.	Relief.
24	Continuing my education despite everything.	Wanting success badly.	Happiness, a feeling of "I can do it, I can succeed," savoring life.
25	Retaking the university entrance exam (ÖSS) to pursue my ideal profession.	I thought it would shape my life professionally and affect my entire life.	The question in my mind: "What if I can't do it?"
26	Attending a diving course.	Fear.	A great happiness because I did this and succeeded.
27	Trying not to compromise on my honesty and integrity.	I thought about possible negatives. However, I didn't compromise my principles. Today, I might be facing some difficulties (financial and spiritual), but I am still very happy.	I don't like to praise myself, but I felt that I had done something praiseworthy.
28	Coaching and preparing the school basketball team for matches.	Excitement and belief in success.	Pleasure and sorrow. The experiences were enjoyable, like training, but after the matches, it was sorrowful.
29	Saving lives during an earthquake.	Adrenaline, anxiety, and fear.	Sorrow, exhaustion.
30	Getting married and having children.	I had to experience this happiness.	If I were born again, I would want to have my children again. May God grant everyone this.
31	Changing jobs four times in ten years.	Curiosity	Relief.
32	Defending the correctness of the work done to my family and colleagues on certain issues.	I wondered if the situation was wrong and if I needed to persuade.	Relief.

	The Bravest Action	Emotions (Before)	Emotions (After)
33	Taking every possible risk to advance and changing organizations to climb the ladder.	Curiosity	There should be a fear of new things for personal development.
34	Becoming a public servant after 19 years in the private sector.	I took a risk.	I chose the consequences of risk.
35	Becoming a government official.	I knew I did the right thing.	I felt that I did the right thing.
36	Rescuing 27 people and bringing them back to life one by one under the debris in the 1992 earthquake.	Pride.	Happiness and peace.
37	Marrying the girl I love.	Confidence in myself.	Happiness.
38	The determination to prepare for university entrance.	No turning back.	I said, "I'm glad I did it."
39	Responding appropriately to unjust criticism from the battalion commander after a night shift.	I considered everything the battalion commander could do.	A great relief.
40	Preventing the real estate agent from ripping me off without getting into a physical fight.	Anger and anxiety.	Serenity
41	Deciding to live separately from my family.	I was a bit scared and excited.	My self-confidence increased.
42	Participating in the inventorying of historical artifacts.	My motivation increased with the work done.	My motivation increased with the work done.
43	Being able to pursue my goals.	I can do it.	I already knew it could be done.
44	Having two children.	Doubt.	I became happy.
45	Getting married.	I struggled a lot, repeatedly questioning if it was the right decision and if he was the right person.	I still don't know; it's been three years.

#### 4.1. The Most Courageous Actions

For this research project, I categorized the answers to interview questions about people's brave choices. My goal was to investigate how these brave individuals divided their decisions between two major spheres of their lives: decisions relating to their jobs and those about their personal lives, particularly those concerning their families. An interesting distribution of these brave choices was found by the investigation;

- "Work-Related" category: 32.06% (Females 34%, Males 29%)

- "Private Life" category: 68.44% (Females 66%, Males 71%)

In terms of self vs others related categorization of the provided responses, the total percentages for self-related actions (self) and others-related actions (others) are as follows:

- Self-Related Actions (Self): 49% (Females 39%, Males 63%)
- Others-Related Actions (Others): 51% (Females 61%, Males 36%)

I have categorized the responses into various types of courage, including moral, physical, and personal courage:

- Moral Courage: 44% (Females 41%, Males 47%)
- Physical Courage: 14% (Females 14%, Males 14%)
- Personal Courage: 42% (Females 45%, Males 39%)

The results of the investigation showed a noteworthy difference in the distribution of brave choices between the categories of private and professional life. 32.06% of the brave decisions in the "Work-Related" category were found, with minor differences between the percentages of females (34%) and males (29%). However, with 68.44% of the brave decisions falling into the "Private Life" category, there was a clear difference between the percentage of males (71%), and females (66%) who made these decisions. Variations in the distribution were revealed by additional investigation of acts connected to oneself and others. 49% of the brave decisions were self-related actions (self), with a notable difference between males (63%), and females (39%). On the other hand, the remaining 51% consisted of acts relating to others (others), with a difference in distribution between males (36%), and females (61%).

Organizing brave choices into categories of bravery also produced insights. 44% of the decisions were based on moral courage, with slight differences between males (47%), and females (41%), in this regard. On the other hand, physical bravery stayed the same at 14% for both sexes. Ultimately, 42% of the brave decisions were made on a personal level, with a minor difference between males (39%), and females (45%) in this regard.

#### **4.2. Emotions (Before the Courageous Action)**

The responses have been categorized into different emotional categories associated with courageous acts, and the percentages for each category are as follows:

- Negative Emotions: 35.56% (Females 47,83%, Males 22,73%)
- Positive Emotions: 35.56% (Females 30,43%, Males 40,91%)
- Mixed Emotions: 8.89% (Females 8,70%, Males 9,09%)

- Uncertainty: 20.00% (Females 13,04%, Males 27,27%)

The feelings that people felt before to taking brave activities were the basis for categorizing the answers in this investigation. These feelings were divided into four groups, each of which had a corresponding percentage. Of particular note, "Negative Emotions" comprised 35.56% of the total, including anxiety and terror. It is noteworthy that a greater proportion of women (47.83%) than men (22.73%) reported experiencing negative emotions. On the other hand, "Positive Emotions" accounted for 35.56% of the replies as well, encompassing sentiments of confidence and happiness. A higher percentage of men (40.91%) expressed positively in this regard. 8.89% of the total were "Mixed Emotions," which represented a combination of positive and negative aspects. The distribution of this emotion was fairly equal between males (9.09%) and females (8.70%). Lastly, "Uncertainty" was mentioned in 20.00% of the replies, suggesting that there were no distinct emotional states. Males (27.27%) were slightly more likely than females (13.04%) to fall into this category.

#### **4.3. Emotions (After the Courageous Action)**

The responses have been categorized into different emotional categories associated with courageous acts, and the percentages for each category are as follows:

- Negative Emotions: 13.33% (Females 17.39%, Males 9.09%)
- Positive Emotions: 66.67% (Females 65.22%, Males 68.18%)
- Mixed Emotions: 8.89% (Females 8.70%, Males 9,09%)
- Uncertainty: 11.11% (Females 8.70%, Males 13.64%)

Four separate emotional categories, each with a corresponding percentage, were identified from the analysis of responses to daring behaviors. "Negative Emotions" comprised 13.33% of the replies, signifying emotions like anxiety and fear. The number was slightly higher in females (17.39%) as opposed to males (9.09%). With 66.67% of the comments falling into this category, "Positive Emotions," which includes feelings like pleasure and happiness, was the most popular category. Following acts of bravery, a considerable degree of positive was shown by both males (68.18%) and females (65.22%). The category "Mixed Emotions," which encompasses both positive and negative aspects, accounted for 8.89% of the total. The distribution of this category was identical for males (9.09%) and females (8.70%). Last but not least, 11.11% of respondents indicated that they were "uncertain," which suggests that their feelings after

brave deeds are not always clear. A somewhat higher percentage of men (13.64%) than of women (8.70%) expressed this confusion.

## 5. Discussion

The study's conclusions highlight the variation within this idea by offering a thorough analysis of the many acts that people consider to be their most daring life moments. This wide variety of valiant deeds emphasizes how complex bravery is. Building on earlier studies (e.g., Mert, 2021b) that highlighted the importance of knowledge and awareness in the development of courage, this study examines people's perceptions of what they consider to be the most courageous acts they have ever done in addition to exploring the emotional dynamics that precede and follow these acts.

### 5.1. The Most Courageous Events of Laypeople

Participants recognized bravery in moral and ethical decisions, such as sticking to the facts even when doing so would harm others or arguing that a task is correct. Making decisions about a family and relationships, such as having children, getting married young, and divorcing, also showed bravery. Taking up challenging life transitions, like going back to school, making big life decisions, and adjusting to a new career, were recognized as brave acts. Participants also acknowledged acts of physical and survival bravery in rescue operations, skydiving, and crisis management. These results highlight how unique and complex bravery is in a variety of life situations.

The findings show that most brave decisions are related to personal matters, like connections with family members, decisions made for oneself, and life-changing experiences. Decisions about marriage, raising children, maintaining one's integrity, and familial ties are a few examples. These choices in private life are intrinsically brave since they frequently carry heavy emotional and social consequences.

However, brave judgments made at work made up a smaller but still significant fraction of all the comments. These choices frequently involved acts of integrity in the workplace, career transitions, and obstacles on the professional front. Even though they are a small portion of the information, they highlight the value of bravery in the workplace.

According to this distribution, people show courage at different times in both their personal and professional life. While brave actions relating to work underscore the

significance of courage in achieving career goals and maintaining professional integrity, the ubiquity of courageous decisions in private life emphasizes the emotional and intensely personal aspect of these acts.

The study's conclusions show that participants' stories of their bravest life experiences placed a strong focus on deeds linked to others. About eighty percent of the reported behaviors fall into the category of "others-related," highlighting the significant impact that brave acts of altruism and social orientation have on people's lives. This implies that people frequently identify their most courageous moments as those in which they act in a way that helps or supports other people. These results are consistent with earlier studies emphasizing the self-transcendent quality of courage and its relationship to social ideals and compassion. This study clarifies the interpersonal aspects of courage and highlights the significance of viewing courage as a virtue that has a significant impact on relationships and social interactions in addition to being an individual attribute. Knowing this facet of courage has consequences for programs and initiatives that try to promote courage in a variety of settings, such as leadership development and education, with an emphasis on encouraging pro-social and empathic actions.

An interesting difference in the distribution of brave decisions between settings linked to work and private life is revealed by the examination of the data. The "Private Life" category has a significantly higher frequency of brave decisions, suggesting that people tend to make braver judgments in their personal life. This discrepancy may be seen in the differences between the sexes, as men tend to make slightly more daring choices in both categories.

There are notable variations in the distribution of brave choices between activities linked to oneself and others. Self-related behaviors are more common, indicating that people frequently make brave decisions that primarily affect themselves. Males tend to be more inclined toward self-related brave decisions than females, with these differences being particularly noticeable.

The classification of brave decisions into several categories illuminates the predominant function of moral bravery, implying that people frequently make choices based on their moral convictions. A balanced response to physical challenges is indicated by the constant distribution of physical courage between genders. Though it is common, personal courage shows only slight differences between the sexes, suggesting that both men and women possess personal courage when making decisions.

## 5.2. Emotional Responses Before Courageous Acts:

Responses were divided into four categories in this analysis according to the feelings they had prior to taking brave activities. Interestingly, "Negative Emotions" (35.56%) included emotions such as worry and fear and were more common in females (47.83%) than in males (22.73%). Similarly, happiness and confidence were included in "Positive Emotions" (35.56%), with a higher percentage of men (40.91%) than women. "Mixed Emotions" (8.89%) was a composite of both positive and negative aspects, split equally between men and women (8.70%) and females (9.09%). Finally, "Uncertainty" (20.00%) indicated a lack of distinct emotional states and was slightly more common in men (27.27%) than in women (13.04%).

The replies have been divided into various emotional groups, exposing a spectrum of feelings connected to brave deeds. The majority of respondents reported feeling afraid, which is indicative of the widespread experience of anxiety and trepidation in stressful circumstances. The study revealed that courage and confidence were noteworthy emotional elements, indicating that a considerable number of participants derived inner strength and determination to face challenging situations. The less significant influence that excitement played suggests that brave acts are also inspired by a sense of enthusiasm and a belief in the possibility of success. Another very minor but noticeable emotion was curiosity, which suggests that the drive to learn about and explore the unfamiliar can inspire bravery. Finally, some responses mentioned ambition, highlighting the fact that one's own objectives and desires might motivate people to take risks. This wide range of feelings emphasizes how complicated and multidimensional courage is in our human experiences.

People described feeling a range of emotions prior to acting bravely. These feelings included dread, fear, anxiety, self-doubt, and, in certain situations, grief. These results align with other research suggesting a variety of unpleasant emotions are frequently evoked when one steps into the unknown or takes on difficulties. This could be explained by the James-Lange Theory, which holds that physiological changes occur before emotions. Before brave deeds, physiological reactions like elevated heart rate and adrenaline production may exacerbate feelings of fear and anxiety.



### 5.3. Emotional Responses After Courageous Acts:

Four emotional categories were used to group responses into for analysis of feelings following brave deeds. "Negative Emotions" accounted for 13.33% of the replies; females reported experiencing dread and worry at a slightly higher rate (17.39%) than males (9.09%). "Positive Emotions" dominated at 66.67%, including contentment and happiness, with significant positivity shown by both males (68.18%) and females (65.22%). "Mixed Emotions" comprised 8.89%, signifying a combination of favorable and unfavorable aspects. The distribution of this category was comparable for males (9.09%) and females (8.70%). Lastly, "Uncertainty" indicated ambiguous emotional states following brave actions in 11.11% of respondents; this percentage was slightly larger in men (13.64%) than in women (8.70%).

Four major categories have been established to better organize the emotional reactions to brave deeds and give a more succinct picture of the fundamental feelings that are connected to them. Positive emotions were expressed by the majority of respondents. This category includes a range of positive emotional experiences, including motivation, tranquility, self-confidence, relief, happiness, and enjoyment. The vast majority of participants said that their brave deeds had made them feel happy, safe, and inspired. These feelings emphasize the inner power, contentment, and personal fulfillment that courageous deeds can bring about. The second category of emotions include regret, fear, sadness, and sorrow. A few individuals mentioned experiencing remorse or anxiety regarding their brave decisions. The third one, mixed emotions, stands for reactions that are typified by a range of emotional states, including intense excitement, foolish bravery, worry, conscience-clearing, or heightened confidence. Due to their brave acts, members of this group reported feeling a combination of happy and negative feelings. Lastly, feelings associated with uncertainty. Responses in this category show the doubt and uncertainty that come with brave deeds. Participants voiced reluctance or inquired about the consequences or sense of their choices.

### 5.4. Emotional Shift

Analyzing the changes in emotions before and after brave deeds yields some intriguing results. Both genders felt equal amounts of negative feelings, such as worry and anxiety, prior to the brave deed (around 35.56%). In contrast to women, men did, however, report relatively fewer negative emotions. At roughly 35.56%, both genders showed similar levels of positive feelings, such as confidence and contentment, with men reporting somewhat more optimism than women. On the contrary, the emotional dynamics changed following the bravery. The replies were overwhelmingly positive, with over

66.67% of participants expressing sentiments of contentment and happiness. It's interesting to note that this movement in mood toward happiness was the same for men and women, suggesting that doing brave things frequently results in emotional uplift after the fact.

Notable was also the change in negative feelings, which became far less prevalent following the brave deed. This decrease was seen in both genders, indicating that acting bravely can assist in reducing unpleasant feelings. Mixed emotions held steady both before and after the brave deeds, suggesting that people feel a combination of good and bad things depending on the circumstances. Before the brave deed, 20% of replies expressed uncertainty; following the action, this percentage dropped to 11.11%. This shows that after brave deeds, people usually have more coherent emotional states.

Overall, the results point to a change in emotional states from mostly negative and uncertain to mostly happy when brave acts are taken. Both genders experience the same emotional metamorphosis, highlighting the courage's universally beneficial effects on emotional health.

### **5.5. Theoretical Implications and Contextualization**

These findings have important ramifications, especially when considering the body of current work. The study's identification of emotional reactions advances our knowledge of the psychological dimensions of courage. The findings support current views, demonstrating that courage is the capacity to act in the face of fear rather than the lack of it. The study also emphasizes how critical it is to recognize and welcome the emotional journey that comes with bravery. This knowledge can guide interventions and systems of support to assist people in overcoming the emotional difficulties that come with brave deeds.

This study also clarifies the emotional dynamics that accompany bravery in action. We can better understand the complex relationship between courage and emotions by examining emotional changes that occur before and after acts of courage. Although brave deeds may be preceded by fear and anxiety, they frequently result in a deep emotional shift towards happiness and contentment, demonstrating the profound impact of courage on well-being and meaning in life.

The knowledge of Frankl's logotherapy, which emphasizes the significance of discovering meaning in life, can be enhanced by this research. The study illuminates how people get meaning from their choices and the feelings that go along with them by

examining the emotional dynamics of brave acts. This can offer insightful information about the existential aspect of bravery and how it shapes a meaningful life. By examining how brave choices connect with people's innate motives and aspirations, the current study can also be considered as advancing the Self-Determination Theory. Clarifying the emotional foundations of courage can aid in determining how much courage is derived from internal elements like autonomy and self-determination and how this connects to general well-being.

Regarding The James-Lange Theory, your research can offer empirical evidence on how physiological reactions and emotional experiences are interconnected in the context of courage, providing a fresh viewpoint on this well-known theory. This is done by looking at the emotional shifts that occur before and after courageous acts. Lastly, by examining how brave deeds may operate as a coping technique for people to deal with existential fears and thoughts of mortality, my research may add to the Terror Management Theory. The relationship between courage and existential phobia management can help clarify the function of courage as a psychological defensive mechanism.

#### **5.6. Limitations and Future Research**

There are a number of limitations to this study that suggest important areas for further investigation. In order to improve the generalizability of results, it is crucial to include a wider range of participants, taking into account variables like age, gender, culture, and socioeconomic background. This is shown by the little sample diversity. In order to increase the validity of results, it is also necessary to incorporate other objective measures, such as physiological markers, given the dependence on self-reported emotions. The cross-sectional approach of the study emphasizes the necessity of doing longitudinal studies in the future to investigate the temporal dimensions of emotional reactions to courage over time. Moreover, the study's primary focus was on the emotional responses of individuals to acts of courage, which made it necessary to broaden the scope of the investigation to include the interpersonal and social dynamics of courage. The exclusion of outside variables that can affect emotional reactions, such as the kind of brave deed and the cultural setting, points to a worthwhile direction for additional research.

Longitudinal studies that follow people's emotional journeys over time are advised for future research in order to get a thorough grasp of how emotional reactions to courage have evolved. It is crucial to look into how context and culture impact the emotional dynamics of courage; this calls for comparative research in a range of cultural contexts to identify differences in emotional reactions. The accuracy of insights can be increased

by including objective indicators of emotional responses, such as physiological data and neuroimaging. Examining the differences between individual and group bravery might help us understand the distinct emotional dynamics that exist in various situations. With potential applications in education, leadership development, and mental health, future research should examine strategies to control emotional reactions to courage in an effective manner. Ultimately, a more comprehensive understanding of this intricate phenomenon can be obtained by examining the intersections between emotional responses to courage and variables such as gender, age, and personal history. By addressing these shortcomings and following these research suggestions, we can advance our knowledge of the emotional aspects of bravery.

## **6. Conclusion**

To sum up, this study explored the emotional dimensions of bravery, with a particular emphasis on the emotional shifts that occur in people both before and after they act bravely. The results of this study have shed important light on the value of courageous deeds and the emotional journey that goes along with them.

The main conclusions of this study imply that people feel a variety of emotions both before and after courageous deeds. Participants frequently expressed feelings of fear, anxiety, trepidation, and self-doubt prior to brave behaviors. But once they showed courage, their emotional landscape changed to positive emotions like relief, thankfulness, contentment, and fulfillment. These results illustrate the complex emotional dynamics of bravery, emphasizing that it is the capacity to act in the face of dread rather than the absence of fear. This knowledge can help people prepare for and deal with brave deeds, which will ultimately result in increased happiness and contentment with life.

It is crucial to comprehend the emotional dynamics of courage because they have practical implications. It can guide the creation of support systems and interventions to assist people in navigating brave acts in a successful manner. For example, people can better prepare to deal with pre-courage emotions by realizing that they frequently involve fear and anxiety. Additionally, by using this knowledge, specialists in the domains of psychology, counseling, and leadership may help people develop their emotional intelligence and resilience.

Furthermore, understanding the emotional journey connected to courage can result in more successful leadership development and personal training programs in

organizational and educational environments. It can provide people the confidence to take measured risks and overcome obstacles without compromising their mental health. In conclusion, this research advances our knowledge of courage and the emotional foundations of it. The emotional changes that precede and follow brave actions are clarified, laying the groundwork for future studies and useful applications that can aid people in their quest of bravery and self-improvement.

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