Meaning-making during COVID-19 in Indian College Youth: An Exploratory Study

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Meaning Making?

- How one interprets a situation based on their prior experiences, knowledge and belief systems.
- Central to recovery post a disaster

The Pandemic

- COVID-19 pandemic - a natural disaster
- Major psychological impacts include-
  a) Pervasive anxiety
  b) Frustration
  c) Disabling loneliness
  d) Fears related to infection

Aim

To understand how Indian college students were making sense of the pandemic.
The Theory

GLOBAL MEANING
- GLOBAL GOALS
- GLOBAL BELIEFS
- SUBJECTIVE SENSE OF MEANING

SITUATIONAL MEANING

Stressful Event → Appraised Event Meaning
- Attributions
- Primary Appraisals
- Secondary Appraisals

Discrepant? → YES

Distress

Meaning Made
- Changes in appraised meaning
- Changes in Global Meaning

Meaning Making
- Automatic Effortful Coping

No Distress → NO
Methodology

• Semi-structured interviews

• Thirty-five students from various states in India (57% women, N=20) aged from 18 to 25 years (M= 21.01, SD= 1.57). September- November, 2021

• Transcriptions were generated using an AI tool called Otter-ai.

• Thematic Analysis was conducted using NVivo.
The phases of the thematic analysis included

(a) Familiarizing with the data

(b) Coding initial interesting aspects of the data

(c) Producing potential themes

(d) Naming the chosen themes

(e) Selecting characteristic examples of the themes and writing the reports
Additional themes: Impact of the Pandemic, Outcomes of meaning, and Behavioural coping mechanisms.
Findings

Pre-pandemic Global meaning-

• Most participants did not actively think of meaning in their lives.

• Focus on education, career, and relationships.
Findings

During the pandemic-

- Pandemic related worries
- Appraisal - threat
- Attribution
- Meaning Made - **Benefit finding** was most used, followed by **Reinforcing Global Meaning. Denial** was least used
- Most participants stated that Meaning Making led to positive outcomes - Improved relationships, Improved Coping Skills, etc.
- Negative outcome - **Feeling Uncertain**
Findings

A congruence between meaning-made and the behavioural coping mechanisms adopted.
Discussion & Recommendations

- Broader study would be required to generalise the findings further
- Therapeutic Settings and Personal Use
- Impact of pandemic- Development of promotion-prevention strategies
Questions?