Review of: "The two sides of Experienced Crisis: Enabling and preventing Coping strategies during Covid-19 Pandemic"

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Review of the article The two sides of experienced crisi: Enabling and preventing coping strategies during Covid-19 pandemic

Using interview data, the article focuses on the experiences of the first stages of Covid 19 pandemic with the notion of crisis as its starting point. The term crisis, according to the author, etymologically refers to choosing, deciding and judging. A crisis has a dual face: it is both a threat and an opportunity. A society-level crisis like a pandemic converts to personal crises. This article portrays the two faces of the crisis in an interesting way.

In the introductory part of the article, previous research on Covid-19 crisis is first reviewed. The studies often emphasize the negative consequences of the crisis, such as fear and panic, sense of loss of control, economic problems etc. The next section deals with more general (earlier) research on the effects of crises and brings up the positive side of a society level crisis.

In the methods section it is told that the data for the study come from semi-structured interviews with 46 Greeks, 24 of whom live in Greece and 22 abroad. The study at hand focuses on the sections that deal with how the interviewee has experienced the Covid-19 pandemic. The term 'crisis' was not introduced by the interviewers, but the interviewees used it spontaneously. The data have been analyzed by open coding techniques.

The findings demonstrate that people can respond to a crisis either by seeing it as a source of fear or by seeing it as a source of hope. The results section is divided into two parts, first of them depicting the view dominated by fear, and the second depicts the views instilled with hope.

I find this article as interesting and important as it highlights the possibility of seeing the Covid-19 crisis as an opportunity to take a pause and make positive changes in everyday life. The data set portrays the views of a wide array of people. However, the I think the paper could be enhanced in several ways.

Suggestions related to the theoretical framework

The main theoretical concepts underpinning the article are crisis and coping. Relying heavily on an article by Tangjia (2014), the main idea is that Covid-19 is a society level crisis which converts to individual level crisis; the crisis can be

seen as a danger or an opportunity, and that the personal resources, psychological or other, determine the outcome of the crisis. It would be useful if a distinction was clearly made between societal crisis (disaster) and individual life crisis. The terms coping and coing strategy are not defined. I feel the theoretical basis of the study could be made more sturdy and coherent by explicitly using the transactional stress model (which seems to underly the concepts used) formulated by Richard Lazarus and Susan Folkman in (Lazarus & Folkman 1984; Biggs & al. 2017). This would not be a big job, as the idea is already present in the text. According to F & L, when encountering a potentially harmful situation, the person makes the primary appraisal of the situation by interpreting it as a threat or a challenge. The interpretation the influences the emotions and coping strategies related to the situation, and the coping strategies are influenced by resources. The ways of coping can be classified as emotion-focused or problem-focused.

Suggestions related to the aim of the study

While the reader can imagine the research question driving the article, it would be very helpful if the aim was explicitly stated.

Suggestions related to the Method section

The data set seems adequate for the study. The sample is relatively large for a qualitative study, and its demographic and geographic variation is valuable. It would, however, be nice to know about the breadth of the interview passages used in this study.

I also would like to read more on how the analysis proceeded. How was the passages to be analyzed for this study identified? What was the unit of analysis? Did the author have in mind the two faces of crises and did they purposefully pick the passages that represented either of them? What were the levels of codes? Is it possible that other ways of relating to the crisis could have been found – etc. denial of the crisis altogether, coping in a very practical way etc.?

Were the interviewees classified into negative or positive groups? Or was it so that passages (meaning units) were first identified and then classified? Could both negative and positive stance be found in a same interview? Were there interviewees who did not represent either of these stances?

Suggestions related to the findings

The results present in a rather descriptive way the negative and experiences related to the pandemic. I feel using the theoretical concepts provided by stress theory could render the results more analytical.

While I think that the breadth of the sample is valuable as such (the findings do not reflect the views of a restricted group of people), I´m wondering whether the variation could be benefited more by saying something about the differences (or lack thereof) between older and younger, male and female interviewees.

Suggestions related to the discussion

The discussion emphasizes the importance of realizing that a crisis can be an opportunity. I strongly agree! The discussion could, however, dig a bit deeper into the ways in which the positive view could be strengthened on the societal

level. E.g., the media have an important role in shaping the views people have on this kind of shared adversity. The column written by Arundhati Roy, published in Financial Times in the spring 2020, is a beautiful example of how a new perspective to the crisis can be opened for the readers.

Other issues

- As a non-native English speaker myself, I have learned that all the texts I have written in English are greatly enhanced by a good language check. I think the same applies to this text.
- The list of references should be checked, as it seems to include sources that are not mentioned in the text.
- There is some repetition in the text: at least the sentence "Lived experiences of crises ultimately…" appears twice in the text.
- The subheading "Analysis" could be changed into "Findings" which would be more in line with the common style in scientific articles
- In the introduction it is said that the Covid-19 crisis is "the greatest global challenge of our time". Now that pandemic is more or less in control, it is all the more evident that the climate catastrophe is a far worse global crisis and more difficult to master.

To conclude, I really hope the author is willing to revise their paper, thus enhancing its potential to be a notable contribution to the discussion on the social and psychological aspects of the Covid-19 pandemic.

References

Biggs, A., Brough, P. & Drummond, S. (2017) Lazarus and Folkman´s theory of stress and coping. In C. Cooper & J. Quick (Eds.) Handbook of stress and health. John Wiley.

Lazarus, R. & Folkman, S. (1984) Stress, appraisal, and coping. New York: Springer.