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The Logic of Making Sense of Natural Disasters: A Research on the Coronavirus Pandemic in Turkey

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Abstract

Natural disasters and personal misfortunes are universal human experiences. Time to time most of us face such challenges individually as well as collectively. Since the beginning of 2020, we all have been facing Coronavirus pandemic. The Covid-19 outbreak has been affecting the lives of many people from almost every age in various dimensions. History shows that as the most adaptive creature on earth, we have survived through most of these disasters. How do we manage these calamities and catastrophes? Studies indicate that our coping strategies depend on how we “make sense” of them. The aim of this study is to examine how Turkish people perceive and make sense of Coronavirus outbreak. A quantitative online survey was conducted using an online access panel. The survey was completed by 3597 people over the age of 18 residing in different cities of Turkey. Our findings highlighted three distinctive ways of making sense of Covid-19 Pandemic: A third (30%) of the respondents approve *conspiracy theories* (1) that political or economic global manipulation is behind the Coronavirus outbreak, while nearly the same percentage (29%) believe that the outbreak is a manifestation of *divine judgement/trial* (2), just over a fifth (22%) of the respondents stated that Coronavirus does not have any special meaning other than that it is a *natural* epidemic (3). Finally, only 9% of the respondents clearly believe that the outbreak is a form of *divine punishment*.

Keywords: natural disasters, Covid-19, divine attribution, conspiracy theories, religious coping