

When life is no longer a journey: The effect of the COVID-19 pandemic on the metaphorical conceptualization of life among Hungarian adults – a representative survey.

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The COVID-19 pandemic fundamentally impacted the life of people all around the world. It not only put people's physical health at high risk, but it also triggered a variety of social isolation measures, such as quarantine and social distancing, radically altering day-to-day habits and routines. Can such an exogenous shock, as contextual influence (Kövecses, 2015), also affect our metaphorical conceptualizations concerning LIFE? Based on an earlier representative survey carried out in Hungary in the pre-COVID era in 2016, Benczes and Ságvári (2018) found that older generations view LIFE predominantly as STRUGGLE/WAR, while young Hungarian adults have a tendency to conceptualize LIFE as JOURNEY and ADVENTURE.

We carried out a follow-up survey on how Hungarian adults conceptualize LIFE in February 2021, during the second wave of the COVID-19 pandemic, when travel restrictions were in full force in Hungary. Our results indicate that the pandemic had no profound effect on what metaphorical sources Hungarian adults used to conceptualize LIFE. The range of the most frequent metaphorical source domains in 2021 was remarkably similar to those of 2016, with a restricted set of major metaphor types – including STRUGGLE/WAR, ROLLERCOASTER, GAME, TREADWHEEL, ADVENTURE, CHALLENGE, GIFT, JOURNEY, THEATER, WEATHER – dominating metaphorical conceptualization across all age groups.

However, the COVID-19 pandemic significantly impacted the frequency of use of some of these source domains. According to our data, the STRUGGLE/WAR source domain became the most frequent conceptualization in the full sample, showing a prominent increase in all of the generations. JOURNEY, however, substantially decreased in the whole sample, especially among young adults. Our study also found that the choice of preference of the source domains showed less alterations among older generations – implying that the older we get, the more resistant to change our metaphorical conceptualizations become, even under extreme conditions such as COVID-19.

References

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