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MAIN PROCESSES OF TRANSFORMATIVE EXPERIENCES: A Cultural Approach

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Introdução

Many effects of experiences have been studied, such as learning (Hennes, 2002), a more positive view of the self, other people and the world, and a renewed meaning in life (Gaggioli, 2016). Although studies have reported personal transformations, few studies have focused on understanding transformative experiences (Decrop et al., 2018). It is necessary to understand multiple dimensions to manage successful transformational experiences (Gelter, 2010; Gaggioli, 2016). The existing literature lack of studies on the types of incidents or events that lead to personal transformation.

Problema de Pesquisa e Objetivo

Especially in a cross-country approach, researchers must identify if personal long-term transformations are somehow related to cultural aspects. Culture has influences on individuals' attitudes and behavior (Presbitero, 2016; Smith & Khawaja, 2011). Finally, although there are studies on personal transformations and life-changing experiences, there are still few studies that focus on understanding transformative experiences from a cultural and cross-country perspective. Therefore, the research question is: how do individuals describe experiences that changed their lives?

Fundamentação Teórica

Personal transformations and experiences are closely associated and a plethora of studies investigated this topic in diverse contexts. Examples of research topics related to personal transformations are traveling (Frost, 2010), spirituality and religiousness of persons entering treatment for alcohol problems (Robinson et al., 2003), female HIV patients (Stevens & Hildebrandt, 2006), women who undergo surgical weight loss intervention (Sutton et al., 2009), first-birth men's and women's attitudes to mothering (Baxter et al., 2015), and so on.

Metodologia

The method is a qualitative and interpretive approach. Data collection took place from October 2019 to January 2020. The research is based on 56 written narratives from students from social science courses in Brazil (28) and Taiwan (28). Regarding the study instrument, participants were asked to select and write an objective reported narrative (Creswell, 2007) about an experience that transformed them, using as many details as possible to explain how this experience occurred. Content analysis was used to identify similar and different approaches among the narratives.

Análise dos Resultados

We put forward a framework of the essence of transformative experiences to help in a new understanding of experiences that contribute to personal growth and development, and, therefore, to promote social change. Besides the cultural dimension, the framework includes environment and time as transformative experience drivers. Drivers, in this study, are the situations that make transformative experiences develop. The context refers to the main situations that exist within transformative experiences which help to explain the phenomenon.

Conclusão

This means transformative experience depends on contrast, rupture or dilemma, but also determines personal and social change which are assimilated into a daily routine. Finally, the results show that cultural difference is a dimension which can be more explored by researches. Cultural aspects, such

as the way individuals deal with emotions and understand their self-development, can interfere in the transformation outcomes and the meaning an individual gives to his transformative experience.

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