

Conflict resolution for Psychology students: A culture of peace's proposal

Resolución de conflictos para estudiantes de psicología: Una propuesta de Cultura de Paz

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Background

Studies on conflict resolution have given preference to descriptions of coping styles and interventions in school populations, neglecting the need and relevance of training university students on this topic. This research started from the culture of peace perspective, which stands for structural and cultural changes and depends on a sense of community and acknowledgment of the individual-environment interdependence for conflict management.

Aims

The objective was designing a social mediation program with students from a Psychology faculty based on a participatory diagnosis and a global model intervention.

Method & procedures

The research design was qualitative, cross-sectional and followed a critical and participative approach. The field work included semi-structured interviews with student representatives, academic tutors and authorities. The selection of authorities included the entire population (two career directors), for the other study groups, the sample design was non-probabilistic by case-type design. There were nine participants, six of them are cisgender women and three are cisgender men. The participants were selected according to the criteria of having more experience regarding the research problem from their roles (students, tutors and authorities). This criterion was applied to obtain depth in the information and to consider the perceptions and expectations of key actors who could make up the driving group of the intervention proposal.

Results & discussion

The thematic analysis identified needs and potentials in a faculty of Psychology regarding conflict resolution from the points of view of different actors. The main results of the diagnosis established a first schematization of the topics susceptible to work from Psychology and the alternative dispute resolution methods, a description of the stress management strategies by students, an approach to an ecology of coping styles in the face of conflict of students, academic tutors and authorities beyond standardized measurements and expectations about the characteristics of a mediation program. Based on the preceding diagnosis, the Social Mediation and Conflict Resolution Laboratory is proposed, whose objective is to strengthen the social mediation and conflict resolution skills of Psychology students and the community in general, with a constructivist, humanist and participatory approach. This model is formulated in four phases and offers activities, expected results and evaluation criteria. A global model is proposed that includes three components: curricular, positive discipline or self-regulation, mediation, and community outreach. The phases and expected results, control plan and limitations of the program are presented.

Conclusion

The proposal of the Social Mediation and Conflict Resolution Laboratory contributes to peace studies by offering a systematized, comprehensive and critical reflection on the training of university students in conflict resolution. But this research also contributes to the studies on culture of peace by emphasizing the relevance of participation and democratic decisions. Regarding the intervention proposal, this program will allow Psychology students strengthen communication and professional skills that contribute to generate a culture of peace in their communities and work spaces and, at the same time, to improve their own well-being. Moreover, this paper is also a starting point to discuss the importance of conflict management in other professional profiles. It is noteworthy to point out to the responsibility of the university communities to train Psychology professionals with the ability to transform positions with a perspective that tends to a sense of community, empathy and recognition of the interdependence between the individual and its environment. Future research should develop the ecological relation of coping styles, mediation with a social and community approach, and its pedagogical (and andragogic) function. In addition, it is important to strengthen and revitalize peace studies within a Latin American perspective.

Keywords: conflict resolution, mediation, mediation program, Psychology students, university students

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