

**Repensar a
Psicologia da Educação**

**Rethinking
Educational Psychology**

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CHAPTER 2

ERASMUS´STUDENTS WELL-BEING IN UNIVERSITY OF MADEIRA

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Abstract

Nowadays people are travelling not only to relax or to spend their free time, but also to develop themselves, form new relationships and get to know themselves better. People try to find in travels a deeper experience which can influence their life. The way of how people travel are very various- from standard 1-2 weeks holidays to moving to another countries for few months to experience living among new people and new culture.

If the ways of travelling are very diverse, does it mean that people are looking for something different in their journeys? Are there any differences of how their travel influence their well-being? In this research we are going to answer these questions by examining Erasmus students of Madeira and Madeira's tourists in their well-being.

Key words : Well-being, Tourism, Erasmus students, Human Optimal Psychology Experience (HOPE)

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Introduction

In the past psychology was focusing on the treatment of psychopathology, but nowadays one of the subfield – Positive psychology- concentrates on increasing flourishing in people's life. Flourishing can be defined as a *dynamic optimal state of psychosocial functioning that arises from functioning well across multiple psychosocial domains* (Garcês, Pocinho, Jesus & Rieber, 2018). In general the main goal of positive psychology is to achieve the well-being which is created by five variables – positive emotions, engagement, relationships, meaning and accomplishment (PERMA) (Garcês, Pocinho, & Jesus, 2018; Garcês, Pocinho, Jesus, & Rieber, 2018).

Positive psychology can be applied in a very diversified areas due to the fact that the interested of positive psychology is various – resilience, flow, optimism, humor etc. One of the areas where the ideas can be applied is tourism. As it was mention before, tourists are not only looking for fun, but also for a deeper experience which is valuable and enrich their lifes. The knowledge how tourism and well-being are related can have a huge influence in tourism industry and travelers' quality of life (Garcês, Pocinho, Jesus & Rieber, 2018).

The HOPE Positive Psychology Model

To adress the PERMA model to tourism a new theoretical model was developed on Madeira Island, Portugal. The model is called *Human Optimal Psychological Experience* (HOPE) and its main variables are well-being, optimism, creativity

and spirituality. The four variables are affecting the action and activities which are taken by the person as well as well-being. Additionally well-being has an influence for the HOPE. In summary this dynamic models works as a loop- each part of the model is related with each other and have an impact for *Human Optimal Psychological Experience* (Figure 1).

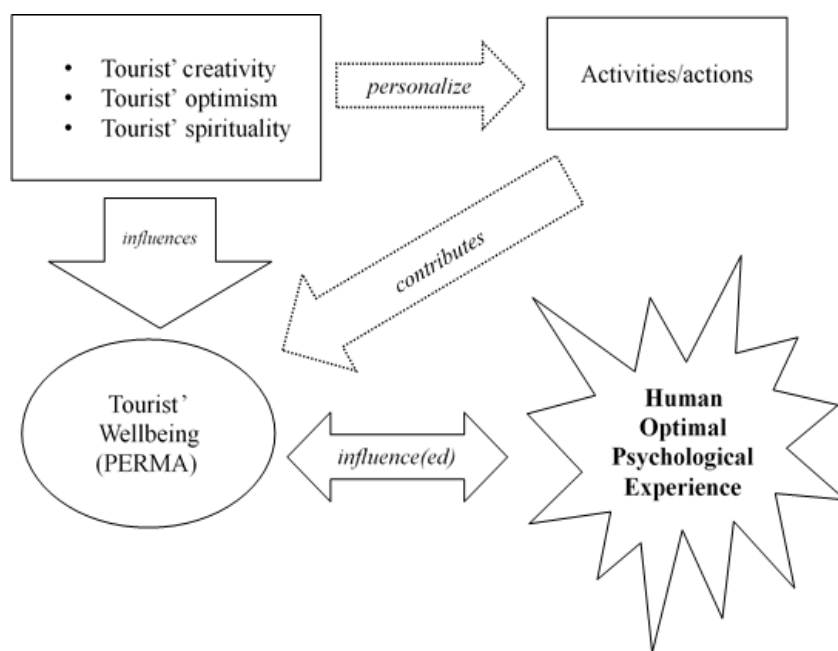


Figure 1. A conceptual framework of HOPE (Garcês et.al, 2018)

Adjusting the HOPE model to tourism, this model is characterized by:

- a) The tourist ability to search for new experiences which enrich his/her life due to meeting and endorsing new cultures and/or contexts (creativity)
- b) The tourist ability to see unwanted events (delayed airplane, lost wallet) in Seligman’s understanding of optimism- as temporary, specific and external which increase positive tourism experience (optimism)

c) The tourist belief that the travel's experience has a meaning for his/her life and will influence the self-growth (spirituality)

In summary the variables of HOPE mentioned before (creativity, optimism, spirituality) influence the positive emotions (satisfaction, fulfilment of tourist experience), engagement (in/with new culture) relationship (with the local community), meaning (that the tourism experience has impact in the self-growth) and sense of accomplishment (feeling success in finishing the journey) . As it has been shown the HOPE model can describe the tourist well-being based on PERMA. This knowledge can help in the future to personalise through the activities and actions undertaken in the travel destination and increase the tourist well-being.

Erasmus students: the First European Union student exchange programs

Our important group of the research were Erasmus students, who are studying in Madeira. First European Union (EU) student exchange programs originated in 1987 (European Commission, 2019). Nowadays this program is called Erasmus+ and it is for European countries and students, mainly from EU, but there are also agreements between non-members or outside European states. There are also included programs for teachers and institutions. The aim of the Erasmus program is to provide an opportunity and a chance to study abroad, do a workplacement and learn a language. It is one of the best changes to get to know new cultures, people and knowledge. Schemes can last from three months to one academic year. Generally, students choose one semester at universities with the same field of study from home university. Erasmus+ not including just universities, but has opportunities for organisations like education

and training providers, research organisations and private businesses. Every year, students from all over the world start a new semester in Madeira. Especially from Italy, Spain, the Czech Republic, but also from Poland, Slovakia, Austria, Greece, France or Germany. They become part of the university and local community.

Aims of the research

The goal of this research was to examine if there are any significant differences in the well-being between Erasmus students and tourists who visited Madeira. These two groups are very differentiated from the purpose of the visit, duration of stay to the challenges which occur during their time on Madeira Island. Due to that many differences of the conditions of their visit on Madeira, we assumed that the level of the well-being will vary. Our aim is to get to know which context (living on Madeira for few months vs visiting the place as a tourist) have stronger influence on the well-being.

Method

Participants

In the research participated 226 people. The youngest participant was 14, and the oldest 77. The age mean (M) was 39,46 ($SD= 16,15$). The sample is 58% was under 40 years old ($n=131$), and 42 % was older than 41 years old ($n=95$). Women made for 58,4 % ($n=132$) and the sample of men 41,6 % ($n= 94$).

Due to the aim of the research the group was divided into two groups – Erasmus students and Tourists. The sample of Erasmus students was 13,3% ($n=30$) and tourists made up for 86,7% ($n=196$) of the sample.

Instruments

To measure the wellbeing of the tourists and Erasmus students we used the Tourism Wellbeing Scale (TWS) (Garcês, Pocinho, & Jesus, forthcoming). The questionnaire has 8 items which can be respond from 1- *Totally Disagree* to 7- *Totally Agree*. Each of the items are in line with different theoretical factors.

- Item I *I found out new ways of being that gave meaning to aspects of my life.* (Meaning)
- Item II *I had lots of fun* (Positive emotions)
- Item III *I was able to see the positive side of the less agreeable situations that occurred* (Optimism)
- Item IV *I faced this experience as a unique/original opportunity* (Creativity)
- Item V *I engaged in the community activities ex. cultural, events etc.* (Engagement)
- Item VI *This experience was a dream come true* (Accomplishment)
- Item VII *I experienced a connection/relationship with something higher than myself* (Spirituality)
- Item VIII *I felt good in the relationship I developed with new people* (Positive Relationships)

The well-being is the total score obtained by the sum of all the item ranging from minimum of 8 and maximum of 56. The reliability was analyzed through Cronbach's Alpha and the value was 0.874.

Procedure

The data was collected in the research program *Tourist's Wellbeing on Madeira* in specific designated areas of Funchal (capital of Madeira Island). Tourists who wanted to participate in the research were filling the paper version of the questionnaire. Likewise, volunteer Erasmus student participated in the research.

Afterwards the statistic analysis were made with the program SPSS Statistics 25. To validate the reliability of our research Cronbach's Alfa was calculated. The reliability of the whole scale was 0.765 what means that it is a bit lower than in the original questionnaire (0.874), however the reliability remained still satisfying.

Results

To examine if there are any differences between Erasmus students and Madeira's tourists in well-being we used the test t-student. According to Central Unit Theorem we established that the assumption of normal distribution was met.

In the result there are statistically significant differences between Erasmus students and Madeira's tourist in the well-being ($p=0.006$). Erasmus students tend to have higher well-being ($M=46.4$, $SD=3.32$) than Tourist who visited Madeira ($M=44.29$, $SD= 5,92$).

In the particular variables 3 of them turned out to be statistically significant – *Meaning* ($p=0.01$), *Creativity* ($p=0.09$) and *Positive Relationship* ($p=0.00$). In the *Meaning* Erasmus students ($M=5.7$, $SD= 1,05$) have higher results than

Tourists ($M=5.13$, $SD= 1.18$). The variable *Creativity* is higher among Erasmus students ($M= 6.3$, $SD= 0.70$) than among Tourists ($M=5.89$, $SD= 1.06$). Likewise *Positive Relationship* have higher values in Erasmus students group ($M=6.20$, $SD=0.76$) in comparison to Tourists ($M=5.54$, $SD=1.14$).

Table 1

T-test student – Erasmus students and Tourists means difference

Variables		t	df	p	Mean Difference
Meaning	Equal variances assumed	2,498	224	,013	,572
	Equal variances not assumed	2,720	41,04	,010	,572
Positive emotions	Equal variances assumed	1,062	224	,289	,179
	Equal variances not assumed	1,216	42,96	,230	,179
Optimism	Equal variances assumed	,260	224	,795	,051
	Equal variances not assumed	,250	37,46	,804	,051
Creativity	Equal variances assumed	2,027	224	,044	,407
	Equal variances not assumed	2,732	52,00	,009	,407
Engagement	Equal variances assumed	,326	224	,744	,076
	Equal variances not assumed	,296	36,11	,769	,076
Spirituality	Equal variances assumed	-,522	224	,602	-,157
	Equal variances not assumed	-,588	42,29	,560	-,157
Positive Relationships	Equal variances assumed	3,058	223	,003	,656

	Equal variances not assumed	4,076	51,38	,000	,656
Accomplishment Achievement	Equal variances assumed	1,157	223	,249	,269
	Equal variances not assumed	1,244	40,69	,221	,269
Well-being	Equal variances assumed	1,904	224	,058	2,10918
	Equal variances not assumed	2,855	61,94	,006	2,10918

Table 2

Group descriptive statistics: Erasmus vs Tourists

	Profession	N	M	SD	SD Error Mean
Meaning	Erasmus	30	5,70	1,05	,19
	Tourists	196	5,13	1,18	,08
Positive emotions	Erasmus	30	6,13	,73	,13
	Tourists	196	5,95	,87	,06
Optimism	Erasmus	30	5,43	1,04	,19
	Tourists	196	5,38	,98	,07
Creativity	Erasmus	30	6,30	,70	,12
	Tourists	196	5,89	1,06	,07
Engagement	Erasmus	30	5,80	1,32	,24
	Tourists	196	5,72	1,15	,08
Spirituality	Erasmus	30	5,13	1,33	,24
	Tourists	196	5,29	1,56	,11
Positive Relationships	Erasmus	30	6,20	,76	,13
	Tourists	195	5,54	1,13	,08
Accomplishment	Erasmus	30	5,70	1,08	,19
	Tourists	195	5,43	1,20	,08
Well-being	Erasmus	30	46,40	3,30	,60
	Tourists	196	44,29	5,91	,42

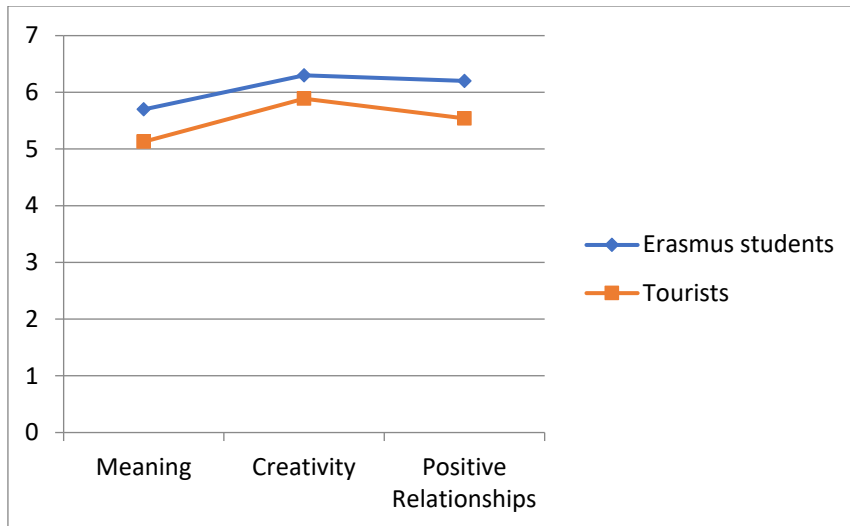


Figure 2 .Significant differences between Erasmus students and tourists

In summary the well-being in the whole sample is high ($M=44,57$, $SD=5.68$) what can mean that the experience of visiting Madeira Island had an impact for the well-being of both groups even if the Erasmus students tend to have slightly higher well-being.

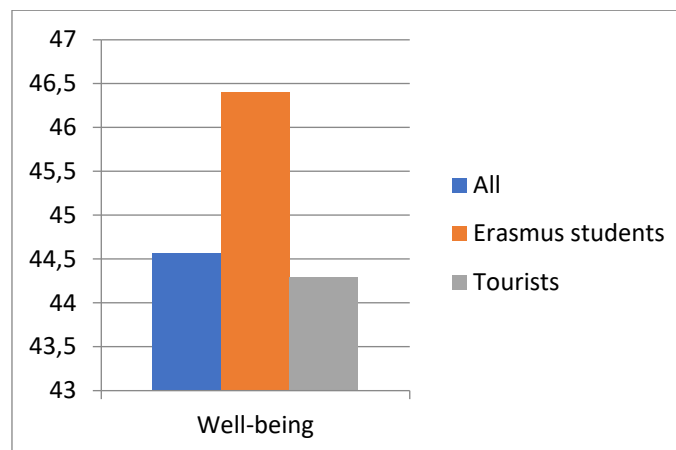


Figure 3. Differences in global well-being between Erasmus students and tourist

Additionally the correlation between the variables were made (Table 3).

- *Meaning* is significantly correlated with *Optimism* (0.398), *Creativity* (0.304), *Engagement* (0.282), *Accomplishment* (0.438), *Spirituality* (0.449), *Positive Relationships* (0.411) and *Well-being* (0.702)
- *Positive Emotions* are significantly correlated with *Creativity* (0.184), *Accomplishment* (0.136), *Well-being* (0.259)
- *Optimism* is significantly correlated with *Creativity* (0.272), *Engagement* (0.222), *Accomplishment* (0.206), *Spirituality* (0.310), *Positive Relationships* (0.292), *Well-being* (0.532)
- *Creativity* is significantly correlated with *Engagement* (0.340), *Accomplishment* (0.377), *Spirituality* (0.394), *Positive Relationships* (0.304), *Well-being* (0.635)
- *Engagement* is significantly correlated with *Accomplishment* (0.299), *Spirituality* (0.372), *Positive Relationships* (0.359) and *Well-being* (0.606)
- *Accomplishment* is significantly correlated with *Spirituality* (0.428), *Positive Relationships* (0.313), and *Well-being* (0.666)
- *Spirituality* is significantly correlated with *Positive Relationships* (0.467) and *Well-being*(0.747)
- *Positive Relationship* is significantly correlated with *Well-being* (0.673)

In conclusion, well-being is correlated with all the variables. The strongest positive correlations it has with Spirituality and Meaning, the weakest with Positive Emotions. These results can be used in the future as a guideline in improving tourists well-being, knowing which aspects of the experience are the most significant.

Table 3

Correlation between variables and well-being.

Variables	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	TWS
1.Meaning	1	,109	,398**	,304**	,282**	,438**	,449**	,411**	,702**
2.Positive Emotions		1	-,026	,184**	,056	,136*	-,029	,121	,259**
3.Optimism			1	,272**	,222**	,206**	,310**	,292**	,532**
4.Creativity				1	,340**	,377**	,394**	,304**	,635**
5.Engagement					1	,299**	,372**	,359**	,606**
6.Spirituality						1	,428**	,313**	,666**
7.Relationships							1	,467**	,747**
8.Achievement								1	,673**
TWS									1
M	5.42	6.04	5.40	6.10	5.76	5.21	5.87	5.57	44,57
SD	1.12	.80	1.01	.54	1.24	1.44	.94	1.14	5.68
Range	1-7	1-7	1-7	1-7	1-7	1-7	1-7	1-7	14-45

Note. TWS – Tourism Wellbeing Scale

** $p < .001$

Source. Own elaboration

Discussion

In this research Erasmus students turned out to have higher well-being than the tourists due to the experience of living on Madeira Island. It can be explained by the fact that living abroad for few months is a different experience than visiting the place for holidays. It gives better opportunity to meet the culture, make new relationships with the people and feel like a part of the community. Living abroad is also more challenging because it requires from us to adapt to the new environment, find new friends etc. It means the experiences is more difficult but at the same time is important for us – it makes us feeling more self-confident, feel better with ourselves, develop and teach us. Erasmus experience

also influences Meaning, Creativity and Positive Relationships which are the highest correlated variables with Well-being.

The research gave us the answer for our question about influence of the context on the well-being. The results show us that in the travel experience, having roles in visited place (e.g. student, friend) and being more than just a tourist is crucial for the well-being.

In the future research it is important to have more equinumerous groups than in this research. One of our problems was very small number of Erasmus students on Madeira this semester, relatedly the tourist group was much bigger. It could have influenced the results of our research. Due to that the research should be repeated on a larger sample of Erasmus students to make us able to generalize the results on the society.

Other thing what should be considered is the collection of data. Many tourists did not want to participate in the research (lack of time, mistaking the researcher with sellers) so that would be important to find another way of collecting the data. If the collection of data was in another place, the answers maybe would be more deliberative and honest.

All of all these results can be used as a guideline for the future researches and be the food for thought in tourism industry as well as for tourists. The psychology of tourism is fledgling, but we believe that it will change the view and the way of travelling in the future.

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