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Looking (also) at the other side of the story. Resilience processes in migrants

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Abstract

Studies on migration have focused on obstacles and barriers encountered by migrants when they arrive in a new country. Recognizing that there are difficulties, it is also important to know the resources used by migrants to overcome adversity. This study springs from a theoretical perspective of resilience, based on a culturally significant ecological model (Ungar 2008) to analyze the processes of cultural adjustment to the host country in migratory movements. Thus, it seeks to understand the various dynamics in adversity and in resources experienced by migrants in Portugal originated from Portuguese-speaking countries (Guinea, Cape Verde, Brazil, Angola, Mozambique). To this end, seven focus groups (N = 35) bringing to discussion the dimensions of resilience processes were created. The thematic analysis revealed five main themes in the Adversity dimension: Some of the topics are further grouped in specific sub-topics. In the Resources dimension, four salient themes have emerged. Data was discussed in an articulated perspective of themes, illustrating some of the difficulties and resources of migrants in the specificity of the Portuguese context. Implications of research on resilience are also highlighted and some bridges are built in the context of intervention in migrant integration.

Short title: Resilience processes in migrants

Keywords: resilience; ecological model; migrants; focus groups;

Word count: 6328 (without references)

Introduction

Psychology studies on migration have paid special attention to the difficulties, obstacles and conditions of suffering associated with migration processes (Atkin, Bradby and Harding 2010; Schwartz, Unger, Zamboanga and Szapocznik 2010). The significant change to these approaches happened with the development of the notion that migration is not a problem *per se* (Desjarlais et al. 1995) Moreover, the ability to migrate is, first and foremost, a set of new and different opportunities for those who migrate, despite the difficulties posed by leaving the country of origin and upon arrival at the host country (Mirsky and Peretz 2006). However, the model focused on the *deficit* remained in place and was associated with migration, with few investigations outside the scope of this approach (Utsey et al. 2008).

The resilience approach, originally developed by Positive Psychology, has provided valuable contributions that laid the ground for a change in the adversity focus (Seligman, Steen, Park and Peterson 2005). This perspective, simultaneously with the recognition of sensitivity's importance to cultural diversity studies (Lopez et al. 2005), established another logical approach to migration. Research on resilience processes and migration attempted to understand the strategies and resources used by migrants to achieve well-being.

In similarity of the general literature on migration, there is a lack of knowledge about what resources are driven by migrants to overcome adversity associated with cultural adjustment in Portugal. Studies on migration intensified from the 90s allowing a greater knowledge of this reality, one of the fields of Portuguese social area that most progress over the last two decades (Malheiros et al, 2013), but very few studies looking for this approach.

This article starts with a critical analysis of the concept of resilience, referring to the different theoretical approaches that have been used in the literature. Then underlines the conceptual definition used in this study based on the ecological model. Finally, the context of Portuguese migration is described to locate the goal of this study. Methodologically were

conducted focus groups with migrants from countries with Portuguese as an official language. Data were analyzed using thematic analysis, allowing discussion of the main themes generated by this analysis.

Theoretical foundations on resilience

The designation used in this study - resilience processes - assumes a reflective summarizing character of the literature produced in the broader area of resilience and highlights the conceptual choice with respect to the various approach possibilities to this issue. In general, resilience occurs in a "counter-movement" response to the interest in the knowledge of human being problems (e.g., stress, psychopathology) (Richardson 2002). The concept of resilience (integrated in positive psychology) was gradually built based on the finding that people, though subject to great pressure processes, can resist "without breaking", leaving open the possibility of returning to the state preceding this impact (concept originated in Physics of material's properties) (Luthar, Cicchetti and Becker 2000).

Based on this initial conceptualization the need to question and clarify the concept in its various understandings and practical applications arose (Kaplan 1999; 2013). Resilience has been addressed, essentially and in general, from 3 perspectives or approaches: 1) as a personality trait ("resilient people"), leading to the creation of instruments to assess and measure this trait - referred to, for example, in the scope of the concept "ego resilience" (Block and Block 1980; Connor and Davidson 2003); 2) as a result, it is understood as a positive manifestation of the action of protective factors in the context of adversity (Campbell-Sills, Cohan and Stein 2006; Rutter 1987); 3) as a process, dynamic and circumstantial, observed in an adjustment or positive adaptation when faced with the action of protective factors or promoters in adverse circumstances or conditions (Davydov, Stewart,

Ritchie and Chaudieu 2010; Luthar, Cicchetti and Becker 2000b; Luthar, Sawyer and Brown 2006).

Some authors (e.g. Luthar, Cicchetti and Becker 2000) have mentioned a certain urgency and the need to find a general unification or consensus regarding the conceptual definition of resilience. In this sense, the mobilization arises, on the one hand, associated with a dispersive character, at the level of theoretical output, which has, in the last decades, produced over twelve theories (Fletcher and Sarkar 2013). On the other hand, some inconsistencies and differences in the theoretical and conceptual foundations led to the questioning, by some authors (e.g., Tarter and Vanyukov 1999), of the scientific importance of the study and concept of resilience.

Given the argument of this need (as highlighted by other authors, e.g., Luthar, Cicchetti and Becker 2000), it appears to be important that research produced on resilience clarifies the starting point of the theoretical and epistemological assumptions, as well as the conceptual perspective, given the various existing possibilities. It is possible that the existence of several theories is not detrimental, as long as this general framework is clarified and contextualized.

To that extent, the present study attempts to approach the possibility of understanding the resilience processes, thus assuming an initial positioning in a comprehensive paradigm, thereby exempting the potential explanatory interest of the concept, as well as the predictive power of the factors.

Among the various theoretical possibilities of approach to the concept, Ungar (2008b) adds more layers to the definition, and highlights the cultural context importance. Therefore, he alerts to the assumption foundations of Western culture on individual and social functioning in the usual definitions of the concept, something that is not universally shared by the different cultures. This constitutes a transversal and shared concern in the generic

literature on ethnic minorities and cultural diversity (e.g. Sue, Arredondo and McDavis 1992).

The definition developed by Ungar (2008) adds the described above conceptual reflections on resilience, integrates them in a culturally meaningful way and discusses them according to a logic of social ecology. Resilience is defined as: “In the context of exposure to significant adversity, resilience is both the capacity of individuals to navigate their way into psychological, social, cultural, and physical resources that sustain their well-being and their individual and collective capacity to negotiate for these resources to be provided and experienced in culturally meaningful ways” (Ungar 2008, p. 225).

The use of navigation and negotiation concepts emphasizes an understanding of resilience as a dynamic process, emphasizing the interaction between adversity and resources. On the other hand, increases the dependency on the context in these two dimensions, which provides a specific direction, introducing a cultural variability component, against a tendency to homogenize and standardize the elements of this process.

Navigation refers to the ability of people to seek the resources they need but also the availability they present. Since resources are limited at various levels, they may be used only to the extent that they are available and easily accessible. The negotiation logic points to the way people can appropriate resources, individually significant and culturally relevant, in compliance with the adverse conditions to which they are exposed (Ungar 2008).

Finally, this definition emphasizes the importance of contextualizing the results of the resilience process, as part of the interaction between the ecological context in which the person moves and interacts. In the background, the author points out, similar to what is mentioned on resources, the need to avoid a certain hegemony in what we consider to be a "successful" outcome to the resilience process.

The proposed conceptual framing is particularly significant given the subject of this study. Understanding the processes of resilience in migrant benefits from the approach of an ecological model, reframing the constituent dimensions in a cultural context perspective. Moreover, given the specificity of the population under study, we consider the cultural adjustment to be a product of resilience. The cultural adjustment refers to the process of adaptation of migrants to a new and different culture (Sonderegger and Barrett 2004).

Portuguese context and migration characteristics

Within the European Union, Portugal is both the country of destination and country of origin of international migration. With regard to the arrival of migrants, the process of decolonization and the subsequent independence of the Portuguese colonies in the 1970s led to the return of Portuguese citizens. The relations with the African origin from the colonies, which continues to this day, had an important impact on the makeup of the Portuguese population. This period, as mentioned by Royo (2005), marked the end of a traditional and homogeneous Portuguese society. Later, in the '90s, a new wave of migrants reception rendered the migration in Portugal more dramatic (Sardinha 2009).

This processes of democratization and the European integration in the 1970s and 1980s transformed political, social, and economic conditions, which promoted the investment in infrastructure and the increase of tourism (Pires et al, 2010). At the end of the 80s, Portugal began to receive EU funding, which drove several public works which resulted in a growing need for hand labor, significantly increasing the number of migrants from the Portuguese speaking African countries and Brazil (Gomes & Baptista, 2003).

At a later stage dating back to the late 90s, started the arrival of a large number of migrants from the East European countries, with which Portugal had no historical and linguistic relations. At this stage, Portugal witnessed an increase in the migrant population coming from the East (Chinese, Indian, Pakistani, Bangladeshi). Finally, it can be found the phase that begins in

the previous decade and run-up to today, where it was notorious for slowing migration from Eastern Europe and the stabilization of migration from the Portuguese-speaking African countries. The only exception is the renewed entry of Brazilian migrants (Pires, 2003).

Currently, Portugal has been significantly reduced the number of migrants, reflecting a depressed country in terms economic, social and even political but foreign people still represents 5.7% of the residents. Migrants had contributed in a fundamental way to the population growth of the past decade, generating a positive migration balance and through the birth rate - about 11% of births occurred in Portugal in 2011 were staged by a foreign mother (ACIDI, 2013). Also on the labor market, migrants continue to have a significant presence, especially in unskilled and low-skilled segments: construction, domestic services, transportation and manufacture Industry (Royo 2005).

The most significant number of migrants corresponds mostly (except for Ukraine), to that of Portuguese-speaking countries – Brazil (25.3%), Cape Verde (10.3%), Angola (4.9%) and Guinea Bissau (4.3%) (SEF Data, 2012). These migrants are characterized by residing in major urban areas along the coast, mainly in Lisbon (over 55% of total migrants)

Study purpose

This empirical study sought to understand the resilience processes in migrants from countries with Portuguese as official language, namely: Guinea, Cape Verde, Brazil, Angola, and Mozambique. The choice of migrants from Portuguese-speaking countries relates to the fact that they are statistically the most significant number and those who historically already have a long tradition of migratory relationship with Portugal, but little is known about their resources, prevailing the focus on deficit. In similarity of the general literature on migration, there is a lack of knowledge about what resources are driven by those migrants to overcome adversity associated with cultural adjustment in Portugal. So, from an ecological model

perspective, what is considered by migrants as adversity and resources in their migration processes?

Method

With the described purpose we developed a qualitative study, simultaneously based on the needs of conceptual development and thinking in resilience research, as well as in the particular need to understand the dimensions of this concept in the migration processes. Regarding this subject, Ungar (2003) mentions the importance of qualitative methodologies, emphasizing that these enable: a) to take into account social and cultural contexts of the cases under review; b) to find processes that have not yet been identified and that are relevant to people or groups in a study; c) to give voice to minorities responsible for defining what they consider to be positive results and the contours of its framing, d) contextualize the data in its provenance and avoid generalizations (Ungar 2003).

Participants

This study involved a total of 35 participants over 7 focus groups with different dimensions (as specified below). The vast majority of participants were female (N = 26), and in total, the most represented countries of origin were: Guinea-Bissau (24.3%), Brazil (21.6%), Cape Verde (18, 9%) and Angola (9.3%). Participants were aged between 18 and 54, with an average age of 32.43 years (DP = 7.35), and a residence period in Portugal of 1 to 4 years (27%), and 8 to 16 years (27 %), with all the participants residing in the District of Lisbon.

Participants pointed out as the main reason to migrate the pursuit of further education (29.7%), followed by the need of access to medical assistance due to health problems (16.2%) and processes of family reunification (12%).

Informed consent was obtained through an informative paper on the research project given to the participants who, after acquiring knowledge about it and approving the

information, have signed it. Herein have been described: the purposes of the study; the people in charge; and the voluntary nature of participation and commitment to the ethical principles of confidentiality in the collection and analysis of data.

Procedure: Data collection and analysis

The participants were recruited mainly through two distinct processes. The first one was through the psychology lab of a University, giving access to migrant college students who voluntarily participated in the study, having these (total of 3) focus groups been installed in the premises of the University laboratory. The second recruitment process was through formal contacts with various associations of migrants in Portugal, where the purposes of the study and the collaboration request were explained. Due to this process, it was possible to form four focus groups, taking place in the facilities provided by each institution.

In a total of 7 focus groups, three in a university context and four in an association context, the dimension criterion was established, with a minimum of 4 participants and a maximum of 12 participants (Bloor, Frankand, Thomas and Robson 2001; Hennink 2007; Sim 1998). This threshold was established in order to provide enough stimuli to encourage and sustain a discussion. On the other hand, the maximum number of allowed participants prevented leakage of information or leader training among the group that could inhibit the participation of several members of the group (Halcomb, Gholizadeh, DiGiacomo, Phillips, and Davidson 2007). The total number of focus groups was achieved by data saturation, that is, from the moment new information stopped emerging in subsequent groups' discussions (Bloor et al. 2001; Hennink 2007; Sim 1998).

Each discussion group was conducted by the first author in collaboration with another investigator, ranging from 50 minutes to 2h30m, and two fundamental issues were addressed: 1) the challenges and difficulties encountered by them when they arrived and during the time spent in the host country; 2) the resources and strategies used to cope with these difficulties.

Participants received a participation bonus, by assigning a small-amount individual voucher in purchases.

The discussion promoted in each group was recorded in audio format and was later transcribed by a research assistant, and was revised by the first author, with subsequent listenings of the transcripts. Data were analysed using thematic analysis, following the epistemological assumptions of the study and the theoretical and practical guidelines on the use of this method. A thematic analysis allows identifying, analyzing and describing data standards, in some detail, and linking them to the research topic. This method was established as a differentiated method and delimited by other methods such as content analysis or *grounded theory* (Braun and Clarke 2006). The choice of thematic analysis was deemed quite appropriate by us, as well as consistent with the epistemological foundations of this study, taking into account that we intend to explore and understand the experiences and realities of migrant participants through an inductive approach.

One of the properties and advantages of using thematic analysis is flexibility (not necessarily suggesting lack of clarity) in the definition of the themes (Braun and Clarke 2006). To make this process clear, it becomes necessary to mention previous considerations and criteria used. In this process, potential subjects were considered, all information initiated by one of the participants whose continuity was assured by one or more other participants within each group. I.e., all the information was shared and discussed by more than one element of streamlined groups. This procedure was adopted in the dimensions analysis: Adversity and Resources. In this contact with the data, semantic analysis was used, in the sense that the explicit meanings of language used by the participants were mentioned, rather than a search for the latent meaning (Braun and Clarke 2006).

The analysis followed the steps suggested by Braun and Clarke (2006). The data *corpus* was constituted by the all the transcribed information from focus groups, and a six

step analysis was carried: 1) familiarization with the data; 2) initial creation of codes 3) search for themes; 4) review of themes; 5) defining and naming them; 6) drafting the report.

Familiarization with the data occurred through the streamlining of focus groups conducted by the first author, who also systematized the thematic analysis. Despite not having transcribed audio data, concern was given to a careful reading of the transcription, accompanied by listening to the recordings. The initial creation of codes started with the assignment of an initial general code consisting of one or two words, in order to aggregate the corresponding meaningful information. Then, using graphic schemes, codes with the same thematic relation were grouped. Arising from the literature on resilience and the constitution of the focus groups script, the data was divided into two dimensions: Adversity and Resources. Through new and systematic readings of the material, themes were outlined. Much of this process included the merger of initially created codes, generating more general topics but that are indicative of the attributed meaning.

In the stages of naming and renaming of topics, we benefited from the participation of two researchers not directly linked to this project, but integrated in research projects in the area of cultural diversity and mental health. These elements formed the group of peer review, carrying out the analysis of the transcript and corresponding created themes. The considerations of these investigators enabled, subsequently, the theme reformulation and the integration of observations and comments pertaining to the analysis.

Results

As mentioned, the formation of the analysis *corpus* was completed through the saturation of data taken from focus groups. As it can be seen in Table1, the emerging themes and sub-themes were distributed in the dimensions: Adversity and Resources. The first

dimension was composed of five main themes.. Some of these topics are further grouped in specific sub-topics. In the second dimension data was divided into four themes.

Insert table 1

Adversity

The relative dimension of adversity aggregated the set of themes and sub-themes from the focus groups analysis explored below individually. In addition to the various themes in this dimension, we also tried to find interactions and trends in the relationship between contents.

Socio-economic changes

The migration process containing the expectation of better living conditions and new opportunities brought on the confrontation with a reality marked by the difficulty of maintaining the occupation of the country of origin, thus, the change in employment status. The characterization of the employment context was marked by low-skill jobs, long working hours and reduced earnings. In many cases, this or other accesses to the labour market were not possible.

Unemployment. The lack of opportunities in the labour market integration was a significant sub-theme. Linked with fragile labour relations and the precarious professional status, situations of dismissal were ultimately facilitated by employers. One participant said, "I leave home early to find work, but it is very difficult. *I also haven't found work and I think that is the greatest difficulty. I can see it in almost every house, my family and friends. They work for a while and then they are left with nothing again*" (Manuel, Cape Verde)

Change in occupational status. This theme appeared in the continued reduction of opportunities in the host society, the difficulty in maintaining the occupation, imposing a relationship with work via a low occupational status. As pointed out by a participant, "I am a primary school teacher in Guinea, but here I'm not working in my field, I am a cleaning lady. *I go to work at 6am and leave at 9pm. It's complicated ...* "(Sónia, Guinea).

Difficulties in relating with structures of social organization

Migrants in this study also mentioned the difficulty in understanding the functioning and requirements of formal bodies. The most significant in this domain is SEF (Foreigners and Borders Service), the regulator entity of entry and permanence of migrants in Portugal. At this level, it addressed the difficulties in understanding the overall functioning of the body and the legal implications of the legal figure assigned to each migrant individually.

Legal recognition. The situation of legal regularity in their immigrant condition became a transversal actor of other existing difficulties, such as access to the labour market and to educational environments. The lack of information on the procedures and necessary documentation in the regularization process was pointed out as the main issue in preventing these accesses. One participant said, "*One difficulty was the documents. I would always talk to the SEF to get the documents. They asked me for a document, which I then would obtain and when I arrived with it, it wasn't the right document. And I would come back with everything again*" (Mine, Guinea).

Insufficient proficiency of language

The difficulty in understanding and speaking the language (even though they are migrants from countries that have Portuguese as the official language) translated into a

limitation of personal interactions, as well as limitation of mobility, or navigation in larger structures, such as the possibility of academic success or better opportunities in the labour market. *“Language was one of the difficulties. Angola is a Portuguese-speaking country, but other languages are also spoken, due to ethnic groups, many different social groups, etc. I have always spoken Portuguese, but I have always also spoken English. So when I got here, I spoke Portuguese, but I had a bit of difficulty sometimes, (...) because I did not speak Portuguese very well, perhaps it was a bit stupid, I don't know ... sometimes, that's how I understood it”* (Mauro, Angola).

Culture Shock

The perception of differences in habits, customs and cultural codes, more or less implicit between the origin and the host culture gave rise to feelings of fear and uncertainty as to how to interact with others. As mentioned, *“My class was all Portuguese students, and, well, I had to adapt to the group, I had to close my eyes because there are certain things that were not compatible and it is what it is (...) In terms of the way of speaking, the way of reacting, of what to say, people with a much, much more narrow mentality ... I guess it's always like that, because others see us as a stranger who arrives and wants to invade their space”* (Vanda, Brazil).

Rejection and devaluation

These feelings arose as a primary obstacle to the establishment of relations with individuals in the host country, as well as in accessing essential structures, namely, the labour market.

Discrimination. This experience was highlighted by participants, both in the sense of a certain inequality of opportunity as well as regarding, for example, access to work,

home rental or, in a broader perspective, interpersonal relationships. As stated, "*All emigrants have the same difficulty (...) when we go to a job interview, it has to be to get a job, but people look at the person, whether it is Angolan, Cape Verdean, Guinean, and then we don't get the job. Sometimes we make a call and then they realize that it is not a local citizen and they hang up the telephone*" (Valter, Cape Verde)

Racism. Meetings in the host society were punctuated by experiences of racism, confirming the perception, sometimes systematically, of a hostile environment. The story of the contacts of these migrants with people of the host society was marked, above all, by a certain aggressiveness, translated into these micro-aggressions. As one participant shared, "*I remember a very striking episode when I arrived in Portugal. My primary teacher said my name could not be Carla, because that was a white name and I was black*" (Carla, Angola).

Resources

Analyzed in a similar logic regarding the previous dimension, on the Resources, four main themes were mentioned. These were not divided into sub-topics, trying to understand the more meaningful interactions and trends.

Community associations

Community associations included migrant associations and religious spaces. These associations were formed mostly by migrants from the same country and fulfilled a facilitating function and a favourable context for the origin country's cultural practices. These associations contributed with effective support, e.g., financial or legal support in irregular situations. On this point, one participant noted, "*I believe I owe much to my church, I received a great social support in the church I attend. I'm Protestant, and I found this*

support... I meet with people from my church every weekend and we talk about our difficulties in the same language. We are all Brazilians and, therefore, we understand each other... " (Kacia, Brazil).

Family/Friends

The familiar elements of the same country residing in Portugal were also important, because they enabled that difficulties experienced in the migration process to be shared. Regarding friendships, friends from the country of origin were highlighted, because of their role in contributing to deciphering cultural and linguistic symbolic codes. As one participant said, *"I had a Guinean friend who had been living here for a long time and I asked him all the slang words I didn't understand. He would explain everything to me and when I returned to school I would already be using slang. The rest of my friends didn't understand how I could already be talking like that"* (Kelton, Guinea).

Valorization of cultural practices

The constitution of a space of real and symbolic interactions, usually by relatives that can be more or less close, enabled the maintenance and enhancement of the habits and traditions of the host country, and in some cases, of the language itself. *"I think it is the family that keeps us all together. We get together and prepare one big cooking pan. One arrives after the other and we laugh and dance. Towards the end of the day everyone is dancing and it is such joy. "* (Mara, Cape Verde).

Chance of returning

The possibility of returning to the country of origin appeared to be kept open, in some cases, as a promise, to be able to withstand the daily demands. In other cases, this possibility

was placed as an alternative plan in case it was not possible the continuity in the host country.

“And what makes me fight harder is the desire to return to my land one day. Thinking about it is what helps me and makes me want to keep going.” (Nené, Brazil)

Discussion

The information concerning the dynamics of focus groups contributed to the understanding of the dimensions of adversity and resources regarding the cultural adjustment process of migrants. The proposal of resilience, supported in an ecological model, suggests the identification and interaction through levels of analysis of those dimensions.

The analysis of the emerging themes allowed the structuring and systematization of what appears to be more evident, as summarised in these two major areas: a dimension of losses and a dimension of impossibilities. The losses appear to be linked to social status, through the occupational (un)employment and economic status, and simultaneously, through the lack of cultural references of the country of origin. The size of impossibilities is highlighted by the aggregation of areas that are intertwined. Examples were the inability to communicate through language, the impossibility of understanding the functioning of social structures or the impossibility that is formed in relations and people-to-people contacts with the individuals of the host country.

From an ecological perspective, the broader context of social structures seemed to affect cultural adjustment and well-being of migrants (Ungar 2008). The difficulty in regulating the legal status led to possible processes of social exclusion, associated with poverty (Bruto da Costa 2003). The absence of a legal bond was also linked to the relationship with the labour market which promoted situations of exploitation and lack of social protection (Nerukar and Carballo 2001). This situation, coupled with the lack of knowledge about legal procedures, made migrants more vulnerable and with limited opportunities to defend their rights (Wolffers et al. 2003). At this level, we found socio-

economic changes through the differences in occupational status between the host and country of origin, as well as unemployment (Boyd and Grieco 2003). Indeed, migrants tend to suffer a special risk of becoming unemployed when there is a slowdown or crisis in the host country's economy, such as the period that Portugal is currently facing (Portes 1999).

The participants mentioned the cultural shock as a constituent of adversity, referring to the existence of a gap between cultures that prevents the relationship. In fact, as it is pointed out by several authors (Bhugra and Gupta 2011; Bhugra et al. 2011), the extent of the anguish caused by the uprooting process, through the comparison with a language that has other specificities and by the evidence of cultural differences, accentuates the difficulties of adjustment to the host country. The cultural shock is assumed as the ascertainment of a weak dominance of the codes of social interaction and the difficulty in decoding them to reduce the distance and rejection.

Regarding the impact of the linguistic differences in the proximity of migrants to the host countries, some authors (e.g. Chiswick and Miller 2005; Esser 2006; Isphording and Otten 2011) have reported that these differences hinder the interpersonal relations, increase the feelings of isolation and enhance discrimination experiences (Esser 2006), as well as decrease the possibility of access to the labour market or educational achievement (Portes 1999). In this study, we observed that, despite the language being formally the same, migrants point to linguistic barriers that compromise relationships. Effectively, there are Portuguese variations, in particular on Brazilian migrants, with lexical differences and accent, as well as the presence of Creole (Cape Verdean and Guinean) spoken by these migrants. However, this seems like a distinct case of conflict between two different languages, like in other migratory contexts. The feelings of rejection and devaluation seem to have an impact on how migrants stand in relation to the linguistic differences, reinforcing distances.

Further on this adverse context, we highlight the discrimination and racism experiences when in contact with the host society, which tend to be cumulative and translate into feelings of rejection and devaluation by these migrants in Portugal. This seems to be the central theme emerged from the thematic analysis which suggests interconnections to the remaining topics. The frequent experience by acts of discrimination is perceived by them as unfair, remitting them to a minority migrant status (Branscombe, Ellemers, Spears and Doosje 1999; Branscombe, Schmitt and Harvey 1999). This rejection process has an impact on social identity, which is an integral part of individual identity, with consequences on the psychological well-being, expressed through feelings of anger and disappointment (Vega and Rumbaut 1991). On the other hand, the perception of rejection leads to the search for support within the community of migrants of the same origin, where they can find an aggression and victimization-free environment, which further hinders the contact with the host society (Noh et al. 1999).

Still within this dimension, the impact of micro-aggressions related to racism is addressed. In the first place, this question leads us to mentioning the relationship between the Portuguese and migrants and ethnic minorities. European studies conducted by Vala et al. (1999 and 2008), placed Portugal as an exception in regards to the demonstration of explicit negative attitudes towards migrants, based largely on the past history of the decolonization movement. The authors consider that there is an ideology of "Luso-tropicalism" in the Portuguese people, as they consider that they have an innate ability to relate to different cultures. For this reason, they are a nation that tends to inhibit the display of negative attitudes towards migrants (including blatant or explicit expressions of racism) from the former Portuguese colonies. This historical relationship may lead, in part, to the manifestation of micro-aggressions experienced by migrants in this study, in the sense that the expression of racism is "camouflaged" (subtle racism) this way. As suggested by Pierce

(1988), this form of offensive mechanisms contains, above all, a certain psychological violence with negative impact on migrants.

Despite the pronounced difficulties, the participants in this study identified the resources used to deal with the context of adversity in the migration process. The cultural adjustment and well-being depends on the ability to navigate the resources of the wider social and cultural context as well as the possibility of negotiating them (Ungar 2008).

The community associations, divided between religious institutions and non-governmental organizations, seem to be an important resource, at two levels, for these migrants. In the first place, they provide a support of a more pragmatic nature, like financial or legal one, and allow the decoding of bureaucratic procedures in the approach to the host society. These associations are mainly composed of people of the same origin already established in this country and play an important role in maintaining and evolving migratory flows and cycles in Portugal (Bracalenti, Braham, Gorla, Blaschke and Gall 2004; Fonseca et al 2005). Secondly, with regard to the religious or spiritual institutions and in the way they can enable the exercise of faith and beliefs, they ensure this element of continuity between origin and host countries, while maintaining a sense of coherence and cohesion (P. Connor 2012; Hagan and Ebaugh 2006). Even with different objectives and functions, both types of associations are of extreme importance to the formation of social networks, by decreasing the isolation (Bush, Bohon and Kim 2005) shown and felt by these migrants.

The role of family and friends was emphasized as significant resources, in the way they allow the decoding of how some dimensions of the host country are organized and operated (Barwick, Beiser and Edwards 2002), while, at the same time, enabling to fix the sense of cultural rootlessness, preventing more serious problems in mental health, such as depression and anxiety (Bhugra and Gupta 2011; Bhugra et al. 2011). Family networks of

these migrants tend to be broadened to include more distant members, with whom the economic, social and emotional hardships are shared (Creese et al. 1999).

The associations, as well as family and friends, are important vehicles for the enhancement of the cultural practices of origin. This feature provides a less unfamiliar common environment and the feeling of familiarity in everyday routines (Pires 2003). Deep down, family and friends keep making use of their cultural and ethnic roots while at the same time adapting them to the new context (Walsh 2003). This support network can provide a safe environment which will allow these migrants to make incursions in the interactions with the host society, protecting them from attacks and troubles (Wildschut, Routledge, Arndt and Zhou 2006).

Finally, we stress the open possibility of returning to the host country. This issue relates in different ways with the migratory experience. On the one hand, this theme is connected with the initial reason of migration being focused on the purpose of improving the economic conditions, with this being the main purpose (almost exclusively) of residence in the host country, eventually turning the difficulties and the adverse environment less visible, by focusing on this objective (Dustmann 1999). On the other hand, even for migrants less centred on the logic of improving their economic conditions, maintaining the possibility of returning appears to be important as an emergency plan (Cassarino 2004). In other words, if life in the host country becomes too hard or unsustainable, it will not be the end of life opportunities, as they can return to their country of origin. Possibly, this approach can make these migrants more tolerant and with increased resistance to an adverse environment, which they face on a daily basis.

Conclusion

This study contributed to understanding the resilience processes in regards to the cultural adjustment of immigrants in Portugal that come from countries with Portuguese as its official language, allowing the identification of adverse contexts and used resources. Despite the cultural specificities of each country, it seems important to identify what is common to these migrants in their migration processes.

The cultural adjustment can also be thought of as a process, in the way it relates to the adapting movement to a new and different culture. We know from these migrants that there is an adverse context on their arrival and stay in Portugal, marked, over time, by losses and impossibilities or difficulties in contacts and interactions with the Portuguese people. However, we can understand the possibility of navigating certain resources and their negotiation, when seeking an adjustment process (applying Ungar, 2008, designation). It seems, that these resources are markedly originated from persons or services belonging to the culture of origin in the host country and are intended to preserve the culture of origin. Simultaneously, these resources enable to smooth the impact of difficulties encountered by migrants in interactions with the host society, and allow a progressive simplification and decoding of specific codes of life in the new country. Therefore, this study contributed to move beyond the focus on *deficit* used in research on migration (Seaton, Caldwell, Sellers, & Jackson, 2010; Utsey et al., 2008).

Although this study allowed describing these processes in these migrants, one of its limitations is that it is important to specify how do these resources act in the context of adversity, including its effectiveness in cultural adjustment (although, as mentioned in the introduction, this was not the purpose of the study). Another limitation it is the fact that we have sought an understanding of these processes, in what there is in common between this group of migrants from different countries. However it will be undoubtedly important to conduct a meaningful analysis by groups of migrants, highlighting the cultural specificity of

each group, according to their country of origin. A further limitation of this study concerns the definition of resilience, in that it refers to a dynamic and circumstantial process and, as such, to the idea that it can be transformed over time and with the individuals' internal and/or contextual changes implied. This study does not allow the understanding of the dynamic of interactions across time, i.e. in a longitudinal approach. The temporal dimension is necessarily a significant aspect of the migration processes, since its influence and its impact have been studied, particularly the cultural adjustment to the host country.

Understanding and knowing the resources within the resilience process cannot have, as practical implications or consequences, the dismissal of social stakeholders and policy makers, at the level of migration politic. The central question remains, to the extent that there is an adverse context associated with migratory processes (Seccombe 2002) with the existence of many migrants that, although they navigate and negotiate some resources, these are clearly insufficient, leading to fragility and social exclusion situations (Arbaci and Malheiros 2009). As Gillian declares, "while resilience may previously have been seen as residing in the person as a fixed trait, it is now more usefully considered as a variable quality that derives from a process of repeated interactions between a person and favourable resources of the surrounding context in a person's life. The degree of resilience displayed by a person in a certain context may be said to be related to the extent to which that context has elements that nurture this resilience" (Gilligan 2004, p.94). Thus, the intervention from the perspective of resilience cannot focus only on individual factors but on the structural weaknesses in society, in order to make people in adverse situations stronger, more competent and more functional.

The intervention perspective of resilience should be based on an ecological approach, focusing on various contexts mentioned herein, through the major highlighted themes, requiring the ability to intervene in the administrative and political bodies, in the familiar

context and of individual counselling or psychotherapy. This intervention is intended to assist migrants in navigating and negotiating for resources that enable the adjustment and cultural well-being, solving tensions arising from the adverse environment. The approach of the counselling or psychotherapy process may encompass addressing the process of creating mourning for the real and symbolic losses of migrants in the context of their migration process.

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