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BA Outdoor Adventure Education

Module: BMSP5007 Business Inquiry and Research

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Introduction

As described by the Cambridge Dictionary (2021) as ‘never having happened or existed in the past’, the Covid-19 global pandemic to the majority has been seen as an ‘Unprecedented’ time in our lives. With the first known cases of the coronavirus being reported by The World Health Organization (WHO) from Wuhan, China in December 2019, the virus has gone on to effect the lives of almost everyone in the world in some way or another. Local Government restrictions and national lockdowns have forced us all to view the world from the comforts of our own homes as many places that we value the most and pride our lives upon have been temporarily closed for the benefit of our own health and well-being. However, although it may feel like our daily lives have changed tremendously, there is one thing that we have all still been able to access, the great outdoors. In this report a qualitative research study for the following question shall look to present the findings from three participants on their experiences of the outdoors during the global pandemic and how these spaces may or may not have effected their mental health and well-being.

‘Throughout the global Covid-19 pandemic, explain how and in what ways the use of green and outdoor spaces have impacted on your well-being whilst following local government restrictions’

As someone who could perhaps be seen as “one of the lucky ones” in terms of being effected by the global pandemic, as well as studying a module that looks into the health benefits of the outdoors, the idea of exploring the perspectives of others experiences from this pandemic was incredibly intriguing. Luckily, I have not lost anyone dear to me from this virus nor have I been put under extreme financial pressures, however, this is not the case for the majority resulting in a period of huge difficulty and challenges ‘The pandemic will be recorded in their memory as a tragedy, as they have lost either loved ones or their jobs and look forward to the future

with great uncertainty' (Baliou *et al*, 2020, p.2). Data collection was conducted through the medium of three individual twenty-minute semi-structured interviews taken place via video calls. By using this phenomenological approach it would allow myself to understand clearly each individuals experience of the subject matter. As mentioned by Gray (2014, p.386) the use of semi-structured interviews will allow the interviewer to probe for the opinions and views of the interviewee, by doing this it could give the conversation a chance to expand and explore further concepts that might not have been anticipated from the beginning. Deciding upon who the interviewees would be for this research project and why I was choosing them was managed through the use of purposive sampling. Cohen *et al* (2018, p.218) explains that purposive sampling is a popular sampling method within qualitative research and gives the interviewer or researcher the opportunity to select his or her subjects to suit the specific needs of the research project. With the freedom to choose my own subjects, I decided that the idea of interviewing individuals from different governments (England, Wales and France) would give me the opportunity to not only understand the experiences of a broader audience but to also gain a greater perspective over the effects of a global virus. Participants throughout this research project will be referred to by the following identities, Participant A (England), Participant B (Wales) and Participant C (France). Presenting each individual with a specific name will allow the use of anonymity therefore creating a safe, confidential and ethical study, this is something that had to be agreed upon prior to any interviews taken place through a personal agreement form. Analysis of transcripts taken from the recorded video calls shall be presented through a thematic approach. In short, this form of analysis will allow me to identify specific patterns across the interviews giving me the opportunity to highlight common themes from the data collected 'A theme becomes important when it captures something important in relation to the overall research question' (Gray, 2014, p.609).

Procedure

As stated previously, the study was taken place in the form of a qualitative research project. Informal semi-structured interviews were to be taken place over video calls giving me the opportunity to explore the topic question in a holistic approach. This would allow the subjects to feel safe in the comfort of their own homes and to speak

and respond to the interviewer on a personal level giving chance to possible questions and answers that were previously unpredicted. By deciding to give my interviews a semi-structured format I believed it would allow myself to maintain a sense of control over the interview with various prompts and sub questions at the ready to help both the interviewee and myself if the conversation came to a sudden halt. This could have been the case if an unstructured interview was to be taken place. Cottrell (2014) explains that with no apparent structure to the interview, there is a chance that the interviewer may not gain as much valuable information as intended and that it may be difficult to preserve a particular level of interest from the interviewee. Through thematic analysis, data would be collected through an inductive approach. This would allow an organic outcome when putting the pieces together so to speak as opposed to a theoretical thematic analysis approach that may end up presenting a bias outcome. Analysing each individual transcript would allow the opportunity to find specific codes within the conversation that could then be sorted into valuable themes 'Coding allows you to become familiar at an early stage with the issues emerging from the data' (Gray, 2014, p.604). As themes are identified, I would sort these into a separate word document to avoid any confusion, this would then save valuable time by avoiding the use of three different documents.

Data Presentation and Finding

It was clear to see that several revolving themes occurred from the three interviews regarding the participants connection to the outdoors throughout the global pandemic. Each individual had expressed the fact that they weren't new to the experience of being out and about within nature, however, the realisation that stepping outside into the fresh air could give an immediate effect upon their mental state was seen as an enlightening discovery.

Participant A

I had a long day at work, I would think that stress is the worst thing in the world. Whereas you go on a walk and you're surrounded by fields and the beauty of the lakes or waterfalls or whatever it is and you just think wow, why am I stressed about these things?

Participant B

Now that I'm working from home I have that freedom to go out on my lunch break whereas before I was in the middle of the city. It's actually so chill to be able to get some of that countryside fresh air you know, it definitely takes that mental weight off my shoulders.

Participant C

Sometimes I'm like a full day in my room and I don't really have the motivation to go outside. I'm just like doing work on my computer but it's not really efficient because I'm thinking for ages and that's where I'm like "okay maybe I should just like go 10 minutes outside" and I start going "oh why didn't I do that before that's actually cool!"

Reflecting upon these statements, each individual then went on to note that local government restrictions in their areas had taught them that the value of access to outdoor spaces was too much to turn down and that it could almost be seen as toxic to stay inside.

Participant A

I would 100% be someone who would of said "no I'm not going out for a walk today, it's raining, I'll wait until the weather is nice" But now after work, every day on my lunch break rain or shine I will go outdoors.

Participant B

Mate, I genuinely feel like I have to get outside everyday, like I can't just sit at my desk in my bedroom all day working and not you know? Gotta make use of that 1 hour innit!

Participant C

I had to think about what I wanted and take time to observe things and also the walks in the nature help you think more than just staying inside with your own thoughts.

In summary, the participants found that this experience of being left in solitary state for the majority of the pandemic left them with a new found realisation that the outdoors would be key to their mental health and well-being. Each individual expressed the fact that they would make sure the outdoors would remain an important part of their daily lives going forward.

Participant A

I'm so excited to see my friends and to do these great indoor and outdoor things that we couldn't do but I certainly want to make sure that being outside as part of that mental release and physical release is a key aspect of my daily life moving forward.

Participant B

I'm really happy with this new routine I'm in and I don't plan on changing it, it's made me feel a lot better you know.

Participant C

I would say outdoor spaces definitely helped me for my well being as well as the people I was seeing during the pandemic. I hope it continues helping me in future days.

Conclusion

What this study reveals to the reader and myself especially is that the outdoors can be seen as a universal platform to help aid the individual with not only one's mental health and well being but to also provide that sense of freedom during times of solitude and stress. In regards to the process of undertaking this research project, I believe that it is very difficult to identify a consolidated answer to the research question, however, the data collected provides a positive direction towards what could be the start of a potential study as a result of this global pandemic. I believe that in terms of the participant's whom I interviewed, it is easy to identify that the idea of gaining an understanding of experiences in England, Wales and France is incredibly difficult as in theory I have only gained the perspectives of one individual from each country. This leads me to believe that my findings could perhaps be seen as hugely unreliable. Finally, I believe that if I was to undertake this study again, I would make

sure that for each country I have identified, a greater amount of participants must be used in order to gain a credible outcome.

Word Count: 1789

References

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