

The Catholic-identified College Students' Lived Experience of Spiritual Development

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Abstract

This research sought to find out how the Catholic-identified college students in Taiwan perceive and experience their spirituality, as well as how these meaning-making experiences contributed to their spiritual development. Spirituality is an inherent aspect of human development, intertwined with and unifying all other developmental elements within the personality. It gives rise to human quest for meaning, purpose, self-transcending knowledge, meaningful relationships, the Sacred, and rooting one's identity within a tradition or stream of thought. Spiritual development is the process of growing the inherent human capacity for self-transcendence, seeking personal genuineness and wholeness, searching for connectedness, meaning, purpose, and contribution, recognising and increasingly open to the influences of powers that exist beyond oneself. It is shaped through a reciprocal interaction between the individual and the context both within and outside of religious traditions, beliefs, and practices. It is also a life-shaping force, a potential powerful resource for or a hampering factor affecting healthy development. From a social constructivist epistemological perspective, holding that knowledge is co-created through a process of intersubjective meaning-making, this study employs an interpretative phenomenological approach to the research. Seven in-depth, semi-structured interviews are conducted with seven college students aged 23 to 25; their accounts are analysed using interpretative phenomenological analysis. By making visible these emerging adults' lived experiences of spiritual development in a Christian-minority society, this study may help counselling professionals acknowledge the role of the spiritual dimension in college students' holistic development and integrate this into their healing practices.

Keywords: emerging adults, interpretative phenomenological analysis, spiritual development, spirituality, university students