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Social Networks as a Didactic Support to Prevent Addictions in Nursing Students

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Abstract

Health professionals and mainly nurses must be kept updated on context conditions where populations they have in charge, since this is the only way to maintain communication with those vulnerable groups avoiding barriers, there are topics of difficult approach such as the use and abuse of substances in adolescents, and currently adolescents communicate through social networks. We aimed to determine the influence of social networks as a pedagogic strategy in adolescents' health education. Method: Qualitative and descriptive study with phenomenological design. Fifteen informants from nursing career participated, and selected by convenience. Data collection was through a semi-structured interview composed of 5 questions directed to informants, regarding their experience to make an informative video about use and abuse in adolescents; questions were about their experiences, found difficulties and any other element related with the making of the video, its spread, the login and acceptance that the audiovisual material had in social networks by students and the management of information with preventive goals. All final products were incorporated to a link where group members, as well as the student community, could revise the video and make comments, maintain a chat with others, and so on, a dynamic session of presentations on questions and comments was done. An informed consent was signed. Collected qualitative data were analyzed according to De Souza Minayo. Results: Three categories emerged with nine sub-categories, Category 1: Influence of social networks on students, sub-categories: 1.1) Perception about addictions, 1.2) Expectation on attention to addictions, 1.3) As educational strategy. Category 2: Experiences of students with social networks, sub-categories: 2.1) Motivates creativity, 2.2) Rescue learned skills and add others, 2.3) Motivates empathy. Category 3: Use of social networks by nurse students, sub-categories: 3.1) Constraint in videos production, 3.2) Advantage for spread in social networks, 3.3) Favors health education. Conclusion: Social networks are ac-

cepted and used by adolescents, they represent a recommendable pedagogic strategy as a way to inform, health education and prevention of use and abuse of legal and illegal substances in vulnerable groups, it is easy to access and is a good working tool for health professionals to help in prevent of this public health issue, and to keep and reach wider coverage in health education.

Keywords

Social Networks, Addiction Prevention, Adolescents

1. Introduction

Nurses under training must have innovative aspects, context update and answers to population's concerns [1], one worrying step in life that represents a public health problem due to the use and abuse of legal and illegal substances, in the nation and worldwide, is a challenge for health professionals [2]; the theoretical as well as pedagogic approach to capture adolescents' attention, is a goal to achieve in training for human resources in health area [3] [4]. World's social panorama provoked the Web's digital revolution, and the expanse of many social networks or virtual communities; it has been quite spread in the population, particularly among adolescents that use them as their common way to communicate, get information, buy and sale of products, establish contacts, play and execute collaborative professional activities, as well as to chat and share diverse hobbies; then, assuming that youngsters belong to the digital age, the use of digital tools, didactic materials of easy spread through electronic media, the reliance on information, and attractive elements suitable for children and adolescents [5], with the scope on health education and prevention of risk behaviors, *i.e.*, addictions, in the new generations.

After COVID-19 pandemic, confinement sequels tagged health detriment in an important way, *i.e.*, the promotion of mental and physical health in different life steps is an essential objective to reach in the whole country, self-care is a fundamental part of the strategies, and informed persons could make decisions to engage in their self-care, when they have quality health education, such as nurses are [6] [7]. Adolescence is a vulnerable step since it represents many challenges and opportunities, these years are burdened of many significant changes, from physical transformation to psychological and social growth, such as increase in self-consciousness and a better concept of self, as well as the need to emancipate and the belonging to a friends' social group [8] [9]. Risk behaviors appear as a great hazard, currently adolescents know a great deal of information about toxic substances consumption, like alcohol and tobacco that are the first gateway drugs, then marijuana represents the illegal substance most consumed in early and mid-adolescence, and is regrettable that crystal meth is now appearing for consumption, among others [10] [11].

The international Narcotics Control Board (INCB) warned that every day are

more data relating social networks exposure and illegal drugs consumption, mainly among youngsters who are the main users of those media, and belong to the age with high ingestion of those substances [12]. This is alarming and demands opportune interventions to face this public health problem, such that effective strategic measures must be implemented, so it is worth to leverage this adolescents' prone activity to social networks, and remind that information and communication technologies (ICTs) triggered an unprecedented model in education, and in teaching-learning process in the early 1990s; ICTs use audible, video and technological resources to process, store and synthesize the presented information through a different perspective [4] [7] [13]. Social networks represent an essential communication media for adolescents. One of the platforms that revolutionized and got great popularity along the pandemic was Tik Tok, since a great amount of users from any age, but mainly adolescents searched to adapt to the new normality after COVID-19; they started to participate through this application and to upload diverse contents, including beneficial topics that help facilitate current communications, *i.e.*, a study reported that 945 users claim they learned new things thanks to Tik Tok [14]. Facing this scenario, we aimed to determine the influence of social networks as a pedagogic strategy in health education for adolescents.

2. Methods

Qualitative and descriptive study with a phenomenological design to approach subjectivity, regarding what the informant thinks, values and feels about the social networks influence on health education [15]. Fifteen nurse students selected by convenience participated in the study. Data collection was obtained by means of semi-structured interview, containing 5 questions to students respect their experience to make an informative video on the use, consumption and abuse on drugs addressed towards adolescents. Questions on nurse students experiences, found difficulties or any other element related with the construction of the activity, its divulgation, the adolescents' queries and consent of the audiovisual material in the social networks and their usage with preventive purposes [7] [16]. All final products were stored in a link available to all participants, as well as the educational community, to view the video and make comments, kept a chat among them, etc.; in addition, a session of speeches using question and comment dynamics. Krueger's method was used to obtain the best comprehension of the research with the objective to listen the participants and collect information [17]. The interviews lasted 90 min in school classrooms, after the signed informed consent. Information was recorded, qualitative data were read, transcribed and shown to informants for approval, then analyzed according to De Souza Minayo methodology [18].

2.1. Inclusion Criteria

Nursing students from a public university that were studying the fourth and fifth

semesters of their career, both men and women. They must be familiar with and use social networks, read, accepted and signed the informed consent, and that were willing to participate.

2.2. Information Collection

Information was collected from 15 students along eight sessions through a semi-structured interview and participant observation; interviews lasted around 1.5 hours, then a session showing the videos and with questions and comments dynamics before students, sessions were recorded with informants' authorization.

2.3. Ethics and Legal Aspects

The ethics and legal aspects were based in the principles of the Declaration of Helsinki, under the principle "It is the duty of physicians who are involved in medical research to protect the life, health, dignity, integrity, right to self determination, privacy, and confidentiality of personal information of research subjects" [19]. Each nurse student signed the informed consent according with the Nüremberg code and the local law. A written authorization from the Nursing career and the university were obtained to conduct this investigation.

2.4. Data Analysis

Qualitative data analysis was under De Souza Minayo methodology, which were recorded, transcribed, speeches were read, and re-read, they were showed to participants for confirmation, and emerged categories and sub-categories were formed [18] [20].

3. Results

Informants' characteristics are shown in Table 1, anonymity was kept for each participant by assigning jewels names since proper information to preserve health is a gain; 73.3% of informants were female and 36.6% were male between 19 and 21 years old. After the analysis of qualitative data three categories emerged with nine sub-categories supported by speeches, as shown in Table 2.

4. Discussion

Human beings are social par excellence, and everything that favors communication with others is attractive and well accepted. During and after COVID-19 pandemic social networks were the most used to communicate between family members, friends and society in general, and in the new normality they represent a relevant media. One of the big problems between the social networks and health is that nobody controls what is said in them, which makes prone that through this media any kind of inaccurate or erroneous information spread, and especially serious regarding sanitary information such as health counseling [13]. However, when social networks are used as media for precise, scientific,

Table 1. Informants' characteristics.

Student	Age	Gender
Aquamarine	20 years	Female
Alexandrine	20 years	Female
Amethyst	19 years	Female
Amber	20 years	Female
Quartz	21 years	Female
Diamond	20 years	Male
Emerald	20 years	Female
Fluorite	20 years	Female
Garnet	19 years	Female
Hematite	20 years	Female
Jade	20 years	Male
Malachite	20 years	Male
Pearl	20 years	Female
Ruby	21 years	Female
Turquoise	20 years	Male
Total	**15**	

Source: students from fourth and fifth semesters of nursing career, State of Mexico, 2022.

Table 2. Emerging categories.

Category	Sub-category
1) Influence of social networks on students	1.1) Perception about addictions
	1.2) Expectation on attention to addictions
	1.3) As educational strategy
2) Experiences of students with social networks	2.1) Motivates creativity
	2.2) Rescue learned skills and add others
	2.3) Motivates empathy
3) Use of social networks by nurse students	3.1) Constraint in videos production
	3.2) Advantage for spread in social networks
	3.3) Favors health education

informative, and for prevention purposes it is a reliable and fast way to do [7]. In the case to promote health care and widen information on specific themes, as to prevent the use and abuse of substances by children and adolescents, as well as their consequences social networks represent a fast media, that is consulted very often and is easy to access for everybody. As shown in Category 1. Influence of social networks on students, with sub-categories 1.1) Perception about addictions, 1.2) Expectation on attention to addictions, and 1.3) As educational strat-

egy, which emerged from the following speeches:

[ ] *Something that changed in myself was the fact to treat addict persons as sick, since they are sick persons, that changed my perspective a lot and really think that I got better to be licensed as nurse.* **Garnet**

[ ] *My expectation changed since the videos helped us, as nurses, to have a wider knowledge about possible complications in our patients, to know how they feel, think and act, not to judge them but try to help in an optimal way.* **Pearl**

[ ] *It is a good educational strategy, with these videos we can spread fast and easy, through social networks, what are the consequences to use and abuse of substances, to give truthful information, care and better assistance.* **Diamond**

Health care is a way to be for individuals in their world, this originates the relationships to be established with others and with things; in that living the individual feels, thinks, knows, desires and relates ranking by its interests. Health represents something essential for the human being and its care favors life preservation, which should leverage for self-care through health education [16].

To be proficient in technology is a challenge, as well as to gather theoretically reasoned dialogues to make digital materials, that promote the prevention of addictions and to make closer scientific information to the most vulnerable, is a nursing challenge and throughout their curriculum ICTs and social networks are being incorporated to spread the respective valuable information [6] [8], as shown in Category 2. Experiences of students with social networks and its sub-categories 2.1) Motivates creativity, 2.2) Rescue learned skills and add others, 2.3) Motivates empathy, which emerged from the following speeches:

[ ] *It was a great experience that motivated my creative self, I got out my comfort zone since I had never done a video for tik tok and I liked the experience, it is incredible that many people like this content and never imagined its scope.* **Aquamarine**

[ ] *My experience was good, I had never made a video like this on a specific subject, and is a good idea that in a platform that spreads information we made something beneficial, I focused my knowledge on adolescents to reach communication.* **Turquoise**

[ ] *It was a good experience, it helped me to be empathic and to have more elements for make decisions in care and prevention of addictions, and how to approach adolescents through this media.* **Emerald**

Social networks have consolidated as communication tools within society, through them individuals and companies had reached projection, information and spread them with public or specific groups [21]. Properly guided they may represent a form to spread with wider coverage to target population. One of these social networks that have strongly impacted throughout lockdown is Tik Tok, according to numbers of the operative responsible of this social media, Tik Tok during 2022 exceeded 1 billion active users each month around the world. The average age of users of this social network is between 16 to 24 years old,

which favors spread of relevant information in this age range, and could be used as an educational tool due to its outreach [22]. As shown in **Category 3**. Use of social networks by nurse students, with its sub-categories 3.1) Constraint in videos production, 3.2) Advantage for spread in social networks, 3.3) Favors health education, as supported by the speeches:

[ ] *At the beginning I was ashamed, I have never recorded anything for homework but after the constructive criticisms and pleased opinions of my peers, I felt confident and trust the reach of our material.* **Hematite**

[ ] *It is a communication media for any person, since currently most people owns a cell phone and everything could be shared fast and agile.* **Amber**

[ ] *It is possible to share information to many people that need it or to leave a new knowledge about situations that are real and constant in our daily lives, and that could be prevented with proper information.* **Malachite**

Several studies highlight the use of Tik Tok as an efficient tool for learning in higher education [14] [21]. New technologies, such as Tik Tok and the other social networks may represent a support and progress in interest subjects on health education, since they are of easy access, handling and wide coverage [23].

5. Conclusion

Social networks are widely accepted and used by adolescents, they represent a recommendable pedagogic strategy as a method for information, health education and prevention for the use and abuse of legal and illegal substances in vulnerable groups, they are of easy access and a good tool that offers a great amount and variety of information, in a practical and simple way to understand. Nurses, as health educators, divulge relevant information about risk factors for use and abuse of drugs, as well as addictions' complications, and the handling of protection factors facing this problem allowing intervention alternatives. This comes along with several benefits for adolescents and students in decision making. The use of these new technologies facilitates health professionals work to help prevent this health public issue, to in this way keep and reach wider coverage in health education.

Authors Contributions

Authors collaborated in the research. DCTP designed the protocol, wrote the manuscript. DCTP and RVM collected and analyzed data, and edited the manuscript for publication. Authors read and approved the final manuscript.

Conflicts of Interest

Authors declare no conflict of interest.

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