

Meeting of generations, an intergenerational experience, through community outreach

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Abstract

This article presents a study and practice on community outreach, an interdisciplinary process that takes place between educational institutions and the community and seeks to promote health and social transformation, knowledge, information and culture. Nowadays, community outreach aimed at serving the community can, through health promotion, subsidize the development of public policies in line with the references advocated by the World Health Organization and international conferences. Therefore, this study presents the development of a community outreach project whose purpose was to rescue intergenerational dialogicity, having as a starting and ending point the learning that transforms and promotes solidarity between generations.

Keywords: Quality of life, elderly community, university extension, health promotion.

1. INTRODUCTION

The World Health Organization (WHO) defines quality of life as an individual's perception of their position in life, in the context of the culture and values in which they live, in relation to their goals, expectations, standards and concerns (WHO, 2021, FLECK, 2008). In this context, there is intense concern with people's quality of life (QoL), especially with integration and participation in the community, so that they have good physical and psychological conditions in the exercise of their functions. This performance is strongly associated with quality of life (Pedroso; Pillati, 2010).

For Minayo (2000), quality of life is determined by factors such as health status, longevity, leisure, family relationships, mood, pleasure and spirituality, assuming the fulfillment of fundamental human needs. The quality of life must be defined through the distance between individual expectations and the daily reality in which the human being is inserted, that is, the experience in the sociocultural and economic context, and the smaller the distance, the better the quality of life. life (Martin; Stockler, 1998).

With the worldwide growth of the elderly population, it appears that aging is a phenomenon that has a perspective that involves psychological, biological and social aspects. There is a growing effort in the literature to identify the nature/origin and extent of suffering and illness in the elderly community (Cabral, 2016). Violence strongly affects health, with mental and emotional disorders, reducing the quality of life (Carvalho, 2005; Carvalho, 2013).

Dealing with the challenge of population aging in the current context raises concerns. However, aging can be considered an opportunity for society, if there is appreciation of the elderly and their contributions. For this, it is necessary to train individuals and communities, through the provision of services that promote autonomy for the elderly. In this sense, Service Learning, with a multidisciplinary approach, can be a way for intergenerational relationships to be beneficial for all (Pereira et. al. 2015; Imperatore, 2019).

Under the intergenerational perspective, there is the question of the existing succession between one generation and another. Quality intergenerational relationships would be the result of lived experiences and coexistence between generations. In this regard, areas such as health, education, culture, among others, must rethink their strategies, in the sense of formulating them based on solidary thinking, according to visions of social management (Fleuri, 2019; Huidobro, 2016).

Intergenerational relationships are relationships that occur between individuals belonging to different generations who share the same historical, social and cultural events, such as: wars, political moment, revolutions, fashion, hippies, television and that determine different trajectories and lifestyles and when meet, come together, provide opportunities for exchanges with different contents and attributions, be it conflict, competition, indifference, authoritarianism or cooperation, affectivity and egalitarianism (Lima, 2007, p. 54).

In this way, the involvement between generations can awaken new meanings (Nogueira, 2004). In this sense, this study was developed with a view to how intergenerational relationships can be beneficial for young and old. Thus, a project was proposed through community extension that used participatory and flexible models, including the university community (young students) and the external community (elderly women) (Fleuri, 2019; Huidobro, 2016).

The involvement of the university community (microenvironment) with the external community (macroenvironment) goes beyond a simple academic-social activity (Nogueira, 2004) since it can become a space for intergenerational exchanges that promote health.

2. METHODOLOGY

This study was based on a qualitative research approach with exploratory objectives with the intention of bringing together the internal (higher education students) and external (elderly) community, through the development of the community extension project as a tool for human (trans)formation and social aging, which occurred among university students and the elderly community of Maringá-Pr. In addition to university students, we had the participation of professors, researchers with educational support.

The theoretical-methodological approach of working with the group of elderly women was based on Psychodrama. The socio-educational line mediated by the psychodramatic reference in the group is of an experiential nature that seeks to provide participants with the recovery of creativity and spontaneity of each one and of the group as a whole in the search for greater sociability and quality of social relationships (Wechesler; Monteiro, 2014).

The study was divided into two phases:

Phase 1 began with the participation of students in the teaching project called "Introduction to Psychodrama". This project has been running for five years and seeks to provide students with an introduction to the theories and method of psychodrama. It seeks to foster conditions for the development of spontaneity-creativity. It served as a motto so that, later, young people could think about experiences with the elderly. From this, students who were interested in the extension project began specific training on extension and service learning for later planning and application in Phase 2.

Based on the knowledge gathered in Phase 1, organized access was promoted between the internal community (young people) and the external community (elderly women) in order to encourage participants to act and react to the situations proposed by young people in the search for better sociability and quality of life.

The invitation for the elderly women was made from a group of women who attended a social entity and performed water aerobics twice a week. Those who agreed to participate in the project signed the Free and Informed Consent Form.

Before the beginning and at the end of the cycle of dialogic encounters, questionnaires were applied to the elderly and young people for data collection. Before the meetings, the questionnaires focused on the perception of social interaction and interactive activities with young and old people. And in the end, the focus was on the contributions of experience: motivation for learning, production of knowledge through extension, implication in solidarity practice (educational partner), health promotion referred to by actions on the social conditions of health as quality of life, health education and behavioral aspects.

For data analysis, Content Analysis was used (Bardin, 2016). During the meetings, spontaneous reports occurred and were recorded in a field diary. From the questionnaires, two categories of analysis emerged: intergenerational relationships and relationship with life and quality of life.

There were 6 meetings with the elderly women and they took place in the three weeks of May 2023. Activities were developed in them that focused on developing relationships between generations in order to develop greater sociability and quality of life. In total, 44 elderly women and 20 students participated.

The project was forwarded in advance to the Research Ethics Committee (CEP) of the Cesumar University - UNICESUMAR, with release under Opinion number 65644522.9.0000.5539. It is noteworthy that the responses provided were anonymous and confidential, respecting ethical aspects with human beings in accordance with the aforementioned resolutions, 466/2012 and 510/2016 of the National Health Council.

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

3.1 Intergenerational Relations

The aging process happens gradually, and the individual is transformed in a dynamic and global way. The most visible signs of aging are revealed in physical and bodily appearance, in a society that imposes many challenges of beauty stereotypes. Aging can imply sadness and suffering, generating mental disorders, configuring health problems (BENNEMANN et. al, 2017). During the meetings with the elderly, intergenerational rapprochement took place and it became evident that it was favorable for both groups. The exchange of experiences, activities and affections can be perceived by the elderly women's reports below.

In those days of living with young people, I learned that
I shouldn't close and think I'm old, there's a wonderful world,
I loved it.
I learned that life is beautiful like young people.
Group coexistence.

Being elderly cannot mean distancing, diminishing and marginalization. According to Oliveira, 2010, one of the criteria by which the humanization index of a society can be measured is the place and treatment reserved for the elderly, as aging is an inevitability of human beings.

Through the reports, the vulnerability of the elderly community is perceived, in this case, centered on the inability to be socially inserted, that is, actively participating and feeling empowered.

Living with other people, socializing through games and interactive games.
Communion, knowledge of people.

With regard to what university students reported, there is.

It was a coexistence of much learning in relation to the differences in reality between us, members of the group, and the elderly ladies. They were welcoming. It made me rethink about acting on projects is very important for growth as a student.

It was wonderful to see the smile on the faces, the sharing of life. It brought a lot of reflection on what life is like and how to live life.

The different universities present many differences, between objectives and characteristics. They also present lines of study and interventions that adopt new forms of priority in relation to teaching, teaching and extension (Barnett, 2008).

With the increase in the world population, consequently aging has become a fact, the longevity characterized by demographic and socioeconomic changes, have cooperated for the increase of the elderly population. Aiming at this increase, it is observed that society and/or younger communities are increasingly distancing themselves from the elderly population and/or community (Cabral, 2016).

3.2 Relationship with life and quality of life

In the era of globalization, aging is a universal process, and although current society superficially lives its culture emphasizing prejudices and behaviors, the growth of this age group has suffered from social indifference and/or social exclusion (Ferrigno, 2013). In this way, it is fundamental to deconstruct mistaken representations about old age, prejudices and indifference related to age. One of the important factors to break with these representations or prejudices is the investment in promoting spaces and time for approximation between the elderly population and young people through intergenerational intervention actions in an educational way that develops social humanization.

Individualization has been a trend that generates isolation between people and that does not favor interaction, approximation and solidarity. From this perspective, it has been shown that the relationships between young people and the elderly cause different types of intergenerational conflicts. The extensionist community approach can be a device that helps to combat prejudice and enhance solidarity intergenerational approaches (Barnett, 2008).

The following reports about life and quality of life, especially after the period of the COVID_19 pandemic, present an important dimension to be recognized in the speech of the elderly women.

It is necessary to leave the house more, now that I see that I really have to leave, just the fact of being together, happy and happy is a great thing, socialization through games and interactive activities.

Living with other people, the importance of being in contact with other people, to exchange experiences.

Current times have been full of uncertainties. The pandemic period was unexpected and suffered, especially with regard to health issues. Health professionals had to face the unknown in the face of the Covid-19 virus. The population had to isolate themselves, loneliness, inequality and exclusion from social life generated, in addition to physical, mental illnesses (Brasil, 2020).

An important mechanism for rescuing healthy post-pandemic social interaction has associativism as an enabler. According to Mendes (2005), “associative movements are spaces for conviviality, sociability and non-formal education without equal”, which can influence conviviality and group actions.”

According to Etienne (1988),

“individuals must be in interaction or maintain social relationships that obey pre-established rules, objective criteria. They must define themselves as members of the group and be considered by others as being equally, subjective criteria”).

Service learning, is also a tool that helps bring the university and community closer together through actions aimed at the community. It builds bridges between educational institutions and society, allowing teaching, research and extension to assume social roles and responsibilities when developing projects and solutions to emerging real-life problems (Resch, 2021).

The practical experience of university students with service learning, through which they could learn in service, can be observed in the following reports.

Learning in the human aspects, listening, understanding and understanding.

I learned the value of being together, of listening, of offering and receiving affection in the face of the great difference in generations.

As a conclusion to the analysis of this category, in addition to the discomfort due to advancing age, there is the emptiness that often generates anguish, leading the elderly to a feeling of incapacity. understanding with the elderly (Cabral, 2016).

The results found during the project suggest development and the importance of the set of knowledge related to construction and extensionist praxis.

4. FINAL CONSIDERATIONS

Finally, one should not forget that the functions of service learning that operate in socio-educational contexts, through the use of tools that enable perception and connection with the members involved and better understand and understand social relations as a whole to mobilize and promote actions intergenerational projects, which can develop new skills for young university students and elderly women, the awakening of social isolation.

In associations, the participation of people in groups, how they relate and live together, generates the promotion of values that rescue elements linked to human happiness such as mutual help, cooperation, solidarity, sharing, generosity and humanism. Values that are present in associativism and that guide associations as learning spaces that promote culture and social development.

By developing socio-educational actions that include community outreach projects, it allows the expression of “feeling” and “thinking” to the participants. Service learning cannot be associated only with training, but empowering young people in educational, cultural and personal matters.

With this project, it was possible to bring together the internal (microenvironment) and external (macroenvironment) community, fostering new knowledge for health promotion from the perspective of intergenerational relationships. It is reaffirmed by reports from both groups that participated in the project, university students and the elderly community.

Thus, by way of conclusion, there is still a long way to go, both in the sense of coherent public policies and health promotion actions, such as extension projects that bring academia and the community closer and closer, in favor of information, teamwork, practical experience, empathy, respect for others, social coexistence in the cycles of life.

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