



Development of social skills versus depression: a psychosocial look

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ABSTRACT

Introduction: depression affects indiscriminately, with young adults being especially vulnerable due to their limited experience, family responsibilities, and interpersonal problems, aggravated by poor social skills in their daily environments, which highlights the need to develop social skills for proper coping.

Objective: to reflect on the importance of developing social skills to prevent depression in young adults.

Development: preventing depression requires fostering social skills in young adults, which in turn become effective psychological protective mechanisms against adverse circumstances. The analysis carried out allows us to affirm that, although the correlation between social skills and depression is not highly significant, it does exert an influence on the onset of depressive episodes. Therefore, it is recommended that mental rehabilitation professionals implement psychotherapy aimed at improving these skills in individuals seeking psychological help.

Conclusions: this reflection provides valuable information to mental health professionals regarding the prevention of depression in young adults through the development of social skills. This contributes to improving current psychotherapeutic protocols; the use of systematized knowledge will help these professionals carry out intervention tasks more effectively; and for the realization of this dialogue, it was necessary to rely on the philosophical paradigm of hermeneutics.

Keywords: Depression; Social Skills; Behavioral Medicine; Psychotherapy.

INTRODUCTION

The social environment is the space where individuals develop in the economic, political, and cultural spheres; these individuals, in their personological development, link to groups as a social entity.⁽¹⁾ This environment becomes increasingly demanding every day due to the excessive demands of the medium toward people from the family, work, and personal planes. An example of this was COVID-19, which constituted an unprecedented global health emergency for Latin America,⁽²⁾ and brought as a consequence a considerable increase in the rates of mental disorders, among them depression. This nosological entity is a global health problem,⁽³⁾ where new interdisciplinary treatment approaches with an urgent character are necessary.^(4,5)

Various studies indicate that depression can be prevented,⁽⁶⁾ even when there are circumstances that accentuate it, such as economic crises, bereavement, and unmet expectations.⁽⁷⁾ Depression makes no distinction among the human beings it affects, with one of the most vulnerable groups being young adults, who, without much life experience, assume responsibilities within the family, worsening when there are problems in interpersonal relationships within the spaces in which they operate,⁽⁸⁾ due to presenting scarce social skills.

Some factors such as difficulties in establishing adequate social relationships, the perception of being alone, and disappointment in the face of failures can lead to a depressive picture, which may be an indication of a dependency relationship between depression and social skills. Taking the above into account, questions emerge: To what extent are insufficient social skills related to the appearance of a depressive disorder? If these social skills are perfected, could depression be prevented? What has been written regarding this?

Within the wide range of social skills that could be taught to young adults are assertive communication, the adoption of agreements beneficial to all parties, and conflict resolution from an empathetic position,⁽⁹⁾ which allow the solution of problems that originate the depressive picture and thus prevent its appearance. Being so, in the present study, the objective is proposed to reflect on the importance of developing social skills to prevent depression in young adults.

DEVELOPMENT

Torres e Hidalgo,⁽¹⁰⁾ define social skills as the set of capacities and/or interpersonal skills that allow the human being an optimal relationship with their peers, and furthermore that they are capable of expressing opinions, feelings, needs, and desires. The lack of social skills can lead to difficulties in establishing and maintaining healthy interpersonal relationships, which can be a contributing factor to depressive disorders.⁽¹¹⁾ According to Vergara,⁽¹²⁾ each person develops their skills through a combination of factors: including their upbringing, sociocultural environments, and personal experiences.

Herrera et al.,⁽¹³⁾ linked the categories: depression and addiction to social networks (specifically Facebook), affirming that people who present addiction to this service tend to present a higher level of depression than those not addicted to this network. It is noteworthy that people who experience addiction tend to present a considerable level of social isolation, since in their daily lives there are few activities of relationship with peers, their interests are limited, and there is a high dependence on the consumption of content from this platform, limiting the social development of the subject, which justifies the increase in depression levels.

Through the development of social skills, it has been possible to decrease intolerance to frustration,⁽¹⁴⁾ which is a component that is very difficult to address in depressed subjects due to the rigid thinking that some patients have that "things must be this way," and they do not accept other alternatives than the one they desire. That is why reflecting with the subject and achieving the assimilation of other options that allow solving a given problem could provide better adaptation to the circumstances of the environment and avoid the depressive picture.

Campos et al.,⁽¹⁵⁾ affirmed that skills associated with empathy and self-control were protection factors in depressed subjects. These social skills turn out to be of vital importance in young adults; where generally, it is commonly believed that by the fact of being adults they already have them developed or that they use them effectively, being a generalized acritical familiarity within the scientific bibliography. Regarding this section, there are scarce investigations that address the topic within this age; since in their entirety they concentrated on adolescents and older adults, which results in an epistemic void.

The family functioning around depressed subjects is extremely important; in fact, family life and the dynamics that develop in this medium result as important support networks or as one of the main stressors, as the case may be. By developing social skills in this space, healthy behaviors, better interpersonal relationships, tolerance, empathy are achieved, and the unity of the family is reinforced. Furthermore, an important social skill is that of asking for help, and if it is achieved that family members support each other, there are more probabilities of avoiding the depression of one of its members; where Silva et al.,⁽¹⁶⁾ showed as a result that social skills are associated with greater family functionality.

In a study conducted by Chora,⁽¹⁷⁾ with a universe of 125 subjects, it was concluded that those who have greater development of social skills mostly do not present depression, which represented 62 % of the total. This is because they can find solutions to everyday problems in a more assertive way, communicate adequately in order to solve moments of crisis, which allows the management of contradictions through a range of resources and strategies, which facilitate adaptive coping in the face of various personal complexities.⁽¹⁸⁾

For their part, in a comparative study conducted by Gómez et al.,⁽¹⁹⁾ it was found that adolescents exhibit higher levels of depression and emotional dysregulation compared to older adults, which suggests a greater difficulty in managing their emotions and possibly their social skills. In contrast, older adult women showed greater emotional stability and a lower prevalence of depression, which indicates a better capacity for emotional regulation and development of social skills.

Álvarez,⁽²⁰⁾ conducted a study where there was a positive as well as weak relationship between depression and social skills in third-grade secondary school students, sustained in a bilateral significance of (0,05) and its Pearson coefficient of (0,349); likewise, linear regression evidenced that depression influences 12 % of students' skills. It is interpreted as a discrete result but that marks a trend of positive relationship between the two variables, where a greater number of investigations are needed due to the practical value that is observed from the clinical field, so that from this study contributes to that purpose.

CONCLUSIONS

To prevent depression, it is necessary to develop social skills in young adults, which in turn become adequate psychological protection mechanisms in adverse circumstances. Upon carrying out the analysis, it can be affirmed that although the correlation between social skills is not very significant, it does exert an influence on the appearance of a depressive picture, so it is recommended that mental rehabilitation professionals address psychotherapy to improve these skills in subjects requesting psychological help.

Conflicts of Interest

The authors of this manuscript present no conflicts of interest.

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