



BRIEF COMMUNICATION

System of activities for family guidance of adolescents with suicidal behavior

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ABSTRACT

Introduction: families' knowledge and skills for preventing suicidal behavior are insufficient, accompanied by ineffective intra- and extra-family relationships and a lack of personal resources to seek help when necessary.

Objective: to implement a system of family guidance activities for the prevention of suicidal behavior in adolescents.

Methods: a pre-experimental, longitudinal, and prospective study was conducted in the Consejo Popular Parque of the Municipality of Sancti Spíritus during 2023. It included six families of adolescents with a history of suicidal behavior, intentionally selected according to inclusion criteria. The variable of interest was defined as the level of family guidance for the prevention of suicidal behavior in adolescents, assessed through cognitive and procedural dimensions, with indicators evaluated before and after implementing the activity system.

Results: before the development of the family guidance activity system, inadequate evaluations predominated in each indicator of both cognitive and procedural dimensions. At the end of the intervention, a positive evolution was observed in the cognitive performance of participants in the post-test, suggesting a substantial improvement in understanding and applying the evaluated contents, reflecting the formative process's impact on initial cognitive capacities.

Conclusions: the activity system proved effective, increasing families' knowledge and modifying their behavioral approaches toward the prevention of suicidal behavior.

Keywords: Self-Injurious Behavior; Family; Suicide, Attempted; Suicide Prevention.

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INTRODUCTION

The concept and image of suicide has not been the same throughout history, being a modifiable social construct, subject to the social and, above all, cultural influences of each historical period. Suicide is a vital emergency situated not only in a biographical context of loss of health, but also of weakening of the person's affective and social networks.⁽¹⁾

The World Health Organization (WHO) defines "suicide" as any action by which an individual causes harm to themselves, regardless of the degree of lethal intent and whether or not the true motives are known. In this context, Knowledge of the historical dimension of suicide contributes to a holistic understanding of this highly complex phenomenon.

Although there are forty centuries of history of suicide, only in the last two and a half centuries has medicine claimed its study for itself.⁽²⁾

Even though it is known that analyzing only the educational function of the family does not encompass the full immensity of its leading role in the formation of new generations, it seems to us that it outlines aspects that in themselves clarify why this role corresponds to the family.⁽³⁾

The first educational context in which a child develops is the family. The father and mother are their first teachers, their first guides and companions, the people who are always with them, stimulating them, empowering them, teaching them, and facilitating their journey through praise and positive reinforcement, and why not, also negative reinforcement. But the most noteworthy aspect of this statement is that the first social relationships, with their consequent influences, that a human being establishes are within a family.⁽⁴⁾

The family is an educational institution, but its members have not received specific training for this role. Therefore, the educational influences exerted within it can be problematic. Family educational influences are enormously complex and multifaceted. Considering this analysis, the present research aims to implement a system of family guidance activities for the prevention of suicidal behavior in adolescents.

METHODS

A pre-experimental, longitudinal and prospective study was conducted in the Parque Popular Council of the Municipality of Sancti Spíritus, with the objective of implementing a system of family guidance activities for the prevention of suicidal behavior in adolescents.

The sample was intentionally selected and consisted of six families of adolescents with a history of suicidal behavior. Two fundamental criteria were established for inclusion: that the adolescents belonged to the same educational institution and that they presented documented recurrence of suicidal behavior episodes.

Regarding the study variables, the level of family guidance for suicide prevention in adolescents was defined as the variable of interest. Two main dimensions were established to assess this level. The cognitive dimension refers to the knowledge families should possess about suicide prevention, while the procedural dimension encompasses the practical application of preventive experiences and strategies within the family setting. These dimensions allow for a comprehensive evaluation of both the theoretical knowledge and the capacity for action of families in relation to prevention.

The indicators were evaluated using an ordinal scale with four categories: Advanced (A), Intermediate (INT), Basic (B), and Inadequate (IND). This scale is analytical-synthetic: analytical because it allows for the evaluation of each indicator within each dimension, and synthetic because it allows for the integration of results to determine the overall level of preparedness achieved by the family.

Activity system program

A system of activities aimed at families was developed with the title: "System of activities on family guidance for the Prevention of suicidal behavior in adolescents." Part-time with group activities twice a week for three hours. The topics were developed through the creation of a participatory and collaborative space, open and trusting, which allowed for reflection, analysis, argumentation, as well as the confrontation of knowledge and experiences in relation to family dynamics.

Topics covered:

- Topic I. Exchange of experiences related to educational methods for the prevention of CS.
- Topic II: Educational methods in the prevention of CS.
- Topic III. Open, flexible, and dialogic communication. An alternative for establishing empathetic relationships between adolescents and their families.
- Topic IV. Risk factors that affect the introduction of CS and behavior in its prevention.
- Topic V. Strengthening family cohesion and harmony in the prevention of CS.

The activities provided consisted of several parts:

- Opening: The members who will participate in the group dynamic are introduced; the topic and the fundamental ideas for its development are presented; criteria about the activities carried out are collected; the expectations of the participants are taken into account; the rules of the group dynamic are made known; among others.
- Development: Extensive critical and creative group debate. Best practices and experiences, the best proposals, and innovative solutions are shared. A reflective dynamic is followed, moving from individual experiences of previous creative work to collaborative group reflection, and from there to individual reflection enriched by the contributions of collaborative family work.
- Closing: The best successes, proposals and solutions are valued and recovered; the satisfaction of expectations is addressed and the next activity is guided.

The evaluation sThe application of techniques was carried out through observation in a systematic way based on the knowledge, skills, attitudes and values shown by each participant.

RESULTS

In the study, families were given a pre-test related to their prior knowledge of family functioning and basic aspects of suicide prevention. It was found that 100 % of the families had an inadequate level of knowledge. After the intervention, the post-test showed a high level of knowledge.

By performing the comparative-descriptive analysis between the pre-test and the post-test, the effectiveness of family guidance activities system for the prevention of suicidal behavior in adolescents, observing in each of the indicators significant advances that demonstrate this, both in the cognitive dimension (Fig. 1) and in the procedural dimension (Fig. 2).

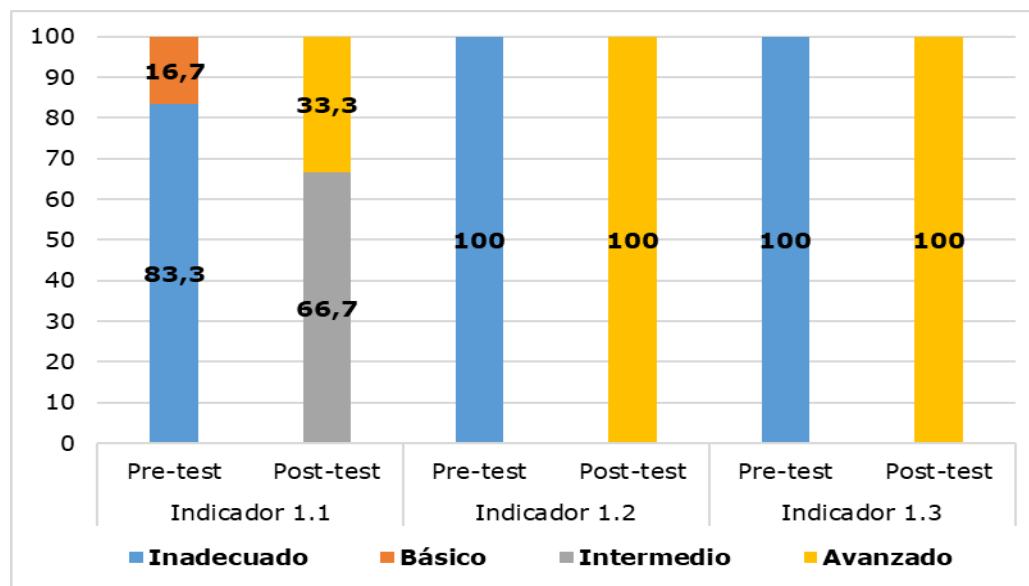


Fig. 1 Results of the cognitive dimension.

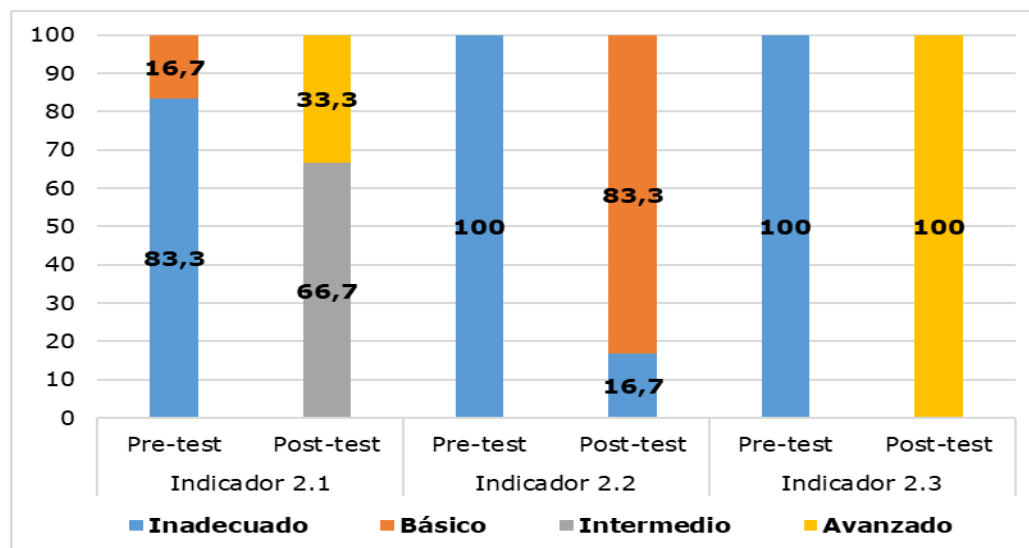


Fig. 2 Results of the procedural dimension.

DISCUSSION

From a psychological point of view Ares Muzio,⁽⁵⁾ It posits that the family is the union of people who share a life project of common existence that is intended to be lasting, in which strong feelings of belonging to said group are generated, there is a personal commitment among its members and intense relationships of intimacy, reciprocity and dependence are established. Becoming a service of help and support to families who encounter difficulties within their life cycle, whose objective is to enhance their resources and skills, serving as prevention against possible more serious psychosocial disorders.⁽⁶⁾

In the cognitive dimension, when comparing the pre-test results with the post-test results, it can be seen that most families were at the "Basic" and "Inadequate" levels; the two indicators with the best results were those related to family functioning and Basic knowledge for the prevention of suicidal behavior, after the implementation of the system of activities, all the families progressed to higher levels in all indicators with favorable results, taking into account how difficult it is to modify and implement changes in lifestyles and habits in families, the results are considered favorable in the prevention of suicidal behavior in adolescents with the six families, the indicator with the highest result was the recognition of the personality characteristics of the adolescents, achieving an "advanced" level of recognition of the adolescents on the main aspects in the management of their impulses.

The emancipatory conception of the family that guides the transformation of Cuban socialist society intertwines social and personal interests, promotes its development, contributes to the formation of new generations, and satisfies deep human, affective, and social interests of the individual.

Bravo-Andrade et al.,⁽⁷⁾ argue that the approach to the suicidal phenomenon is multifactorial, because individual, family and social aspects are involved; however, they consider that studies on suicide addressed from the perspective of family resilience are practically nonexistent.

The behavior of the indicators in the procedural dimension significantly exceeded the results obtained in the post-test stage in relation to the pre-test stage. The 6 families reached a higher level than they had before participating in the activity systems, achieving high indices, taking into account the particularities of each family group, interests and levels of development of the same, structuring family dynamics, with their functionality predominating.

In its broadest sense, family counseling is understood as a helping process; it is also a means of fostering understanding between the psychiatrist and the family. It has been interpreted as a set of professional techniques and practices aimed at strengthening the capacities and bonds that unite the members of a family system, with the goal of making these bonds healthy, effective, and capable of promoting the personal growth of each family member and their affective and emotional ties.

CONCLUSIONS

The system of family guidance activities proved effective because families increased their knowledge and methods of acting in the prevention of suicidal behavior; therefore, it is possible to consider the system of activities as a tool that facilitates the incorporation of cognitive, procedural and affective-attitudinal aspects in order to improve their family role.

Conflict of interest

The authors declare that they have no conflict of interest.

Authorship contribution

CRAB: conceptualization, data curation, formal analysis, research, methodology, supervision, visualization, original writing/draft, review and editing.

MAN: research, methodology, supervision, visualization, writing / original draft, review and editing.

IDCR: supervision, visualization, writing/original draft, review and editing.

ILB: supervision, visualization, writing/original draft, review and editing.

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