

Social Work intervention in health conditions and promotion of family integration in a walker in Poza Rica

Intervención de Trabajo Social en las condiciones de salud y promoción de la integración familiar en un andador en Poza Rica

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Abstract

The Social Work intervention strengthens the promotion of health, education and the adoption of self-care practices, for which a professional intervention was carried out in a walker, with the objectives of promoting comprehensive health in families and promoting the training of students. The methodology used was participatory action research: 1) Diagnosis and 2) Intervention. The results of the diagnosis indicated that the age of the attendees between 45 and 71 years, 91% come to exercise for physical health, the main activities carried out are walking and jogging, 50% suffer from some chronic disease; Finally, they expressed interest in conferences, talks, size and weight controls, and activities for the family. The Professional intervention had as results: socio-educational activities that favor family integration, healthy coexistence, strengthening of values and physical activities for the benefit of health, with 150 people; a cycle of conferences on self-esteem, stress management and eating habits with 75 people; Likewise, 6 students participated in the design and execution of the project, developing skills for working with groups and families, as well as in the application of techniques for social intervention, strengthening professional training as social workers in real settings.

Diagnosis, Intervention, Execution

Resumen

La intervención de Trabajo Social fortalece la promoción de la salud, la educación y la adopción de prácticas de autocuidado, para ello se realizó una intervención profesional en un Andador, con los objetivos de Promover la salud integral en las familias e Impulsar la formación de estudiantes. La metodología utilizada fue la investigación acción participativa: 1) Diagnóstico y 2) Intervención. Los resultados del diagnóstico indicaron que la edad de los asistentes entre 45 y 71 años, 91% acuden a hacer ejercicio por salud física, las principales actividades realizadas son caminar y trotar, 50% padece alguna enfermedad crónica; finalmente manifestaron interés en conferencias, pláticas, controles de talla y peso y actividades para la familia. La intervención Profesional tuvo como resultados: actividades socioeducativas que favorecen la integración familiar, sana convivencia, fortalecimiento de valores y actividades físicas en beneficio de la salud, con 150 personas; un ciclo de conferencias sobre autoestima, manejo de estrés y hábitos alimenticios con 75 personas; así mismo 6 estudiantes participaron en el diseño y ejecución del proyecto, desarrollando competencias para el trabajo con grupos y familias, así como en la aplicación de técnicas para la intervención social, fortaleciendo la formación profesional como trabajadores sociales en escenarios reales.

Diagnóstico, Intervención, Ejecución

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Introduction

Integral health "is not the mere absence of alterations and diseases, but a positive concept that implies different degrees of vitality and adaptive functioning" (Vera, 2010).

Participating in health care makes it possible to adopt a healthy lifestyle and to anticipate situations that may damage it. In this sense, the intervention of Social Work professionals strengthens health promotion, education and the adoption of self-care practices, in order to raise awareness among families about the need for care and physical activity to reduce the risk of suffering from chronic degenerative diseases such as diabetes and hypertension, among others.

From the articulation of the analysis of the family structure and the family life cycle with the study of changes in family models, academics and students of the Faculty of Social Work Poza Rica campus developed the Project "Professional Intervention of Social Work with families in the Metropolitan Area of Poza Rica (ZMPR)" which was carried out with people who go walking to a walker in the city of Poza Rica, Veracruz, To promote the professional training of students of Social Work through the promotion of health to families of the walker and the general population and 2. To strengthen the development of skills and attitudes for social intervention with families in the Metropolitan Area of Poza Rica through socio-educational activities in the walker and the general population.

The development of the project involved the participation of academics and students of the educational experiences (or subjects) of Planning for Social Intervention and Social Intervention Techniques, as well as external guests. The application of the theoretical, heuristic and axiological knowledge generated by these educational experiences favoured the professional training of students by carrying out a professional intervention based on real problems and/or needs, demanded by the families participating in the walkway of the 27 de septiembre neighbourhood, also allowing in the process of execution the application of social intervention techniques, to promote integration, participation and development of significant learning to improve the living conditions of the participants.

This project helped to promote the professional training of Social Work students through the development of professional competencies in social intervention in response to a real and high-impact problem, through the interaction of practising social workers, teaching staff and experts, who promoted integral health in the families of the walker.

Considering that, from a critical point of view, social workers can intervene in the social sphere to enable the exercise of a socio-educational action that contributes to the consolidation of an active citizenship, in relation to health awareness and family integration.

1. Development

1.1 Health

Health has been considered as a key point in lifestyle, it is the main condition for human development, it is the state of ideal well-being and it is only achieved when there is a balance between physical, biological, emotional, mental, spiritual and social factors. These factors allow for adequate growth and development in all areas of life. This concept is very similar to that of general health established by the World Health Organisation (1948) which states that "health is the state of physical, emotional and social well-being of an individual".

On the other hand, San Martín (1981) points out that "the concept of health is dynamic, historical, it changes according to the time, the culture and the living conditions of the population. The idea that people have of their health is always limited by the social framework in which they act". Thus, in the society in which we live, health is a fundamental aspect in the life of the human being, the concepts that are handled about it are varied and have considerable repercussions, since it means different visions of one's own life, actions and planning (Sánchez González, 1998).

Therefore, the actions that each person carries out for physical and mental health, such as eating habits, daily routines, exercises, among others, help to favour a better quality of life as one gets older.

These habits and actions are called self-care; In this regard, the World Health Organisation (WHO, 1983) defines for the first time the concept of self-care as "the ability of individuals, families and communities to promote health, prevent disease, maintain health and cope with illness and disability with or without the support of a health care provider", so that self-care is a responsibility of each person with their own physical and mental integrity, of each family and even more, this self-care should be considered as a co-responsible and collaborative work that encourages a community practice that stimulates the promotion of comprehensive health.

In this sense, promoting health from the family context acquires relevance in order to contribute to improving the quality of life of individuals, families and, therefore, society. From a social work perspective, it is important to establish a clear link in the triad of health intervention: doctor-social worker-family.

As mentioned by Rapa, Hanna, Pollar, Santos-Paulo, Gogay, Ambler and Dalton (2023) "Establishing a family's cultural, spiritual and religious understanding of the use of other (traditional) treatment methods alongside Western medicine may help to promote a mutually respectful relationship between the physician and the family. Health professionals need to recognise how, in some cases, stigma can influence family-centred care within a family and its community".

In this context, the social worker, from a holistic vision, articulates the professional intervention of health personnel with families within the framework of public policies and the socio-cultural conditions of the subjects from processes of education, training, management, channelling focused on the promotion of health from an integral perspective.

It is through education and information that one learns to take care of one's health, giving rise to the generation of healthy habits and the prevention of illnesses. This is achieved through non-formal education processes, which involve a practice that promotes processes of reflection on the importance of health and integral wellbeing.

Participating in health care makes it possible to adopt a healthy lifestyle and to anticipate situations that could damage it. In this sense, the intervention of Social Work professionals strengthens health promotion, education and the adoption of self-care practices, by raising awareness among families about the need for care and physical activity to reduce the risk of suffering from chronic degenerative diseases such as diabetes and hypertension, among others, and, if necessary, to contribute to better control of the health conditions of those who already suffer from one or more of these diseases.

1.2 Social work and the health of families

As Donini (2005) points out "... the family is the first and most important agent for the transmission of ethical and social values, habits, customs, norms, roles, relationships and expectations aimed at preserving the cultural heritage for future generations" (p. 23). (p. 23)

In this sense, Social Work from its origins has been linked to work with families, from an approach centred on family relationships, fundamentally because it is this social institution that is difficult to replace as a context that generates identity and models of relationships for people.

For this reason, Social Work with families articulates the analysis of family structure and the family life cycle with the study of changes in family models. It also offers the framework for the evaluation of family structure where the general objective is to understand relationship patterns, taking into account the influence of the family system itself to promote pattern change.

All families, regardless of the structure to which they belong, go through different stages as they grow. This growth brings with it various changes, creating crises and tensions that mobilise all members, not only individually but collectively, to optimise resources in order to contribute to the development of the family nucleus. This whole process of evolution is called the life cycle and consists of different moments experienced by all family members who will share a common history. At each stage, the family must deal effectively with the challenges it faces, applying resilience processes to adapt and grow.

According to WHO (2015) it is important to know the family life cycle because it allows:

- It helps to understand the stages a family goes through and the needs that arise in each of them.
- It allows the identification of risk and protective factors at each stage, which facilitates prevention and addressing family problems.
- It facilitates the planning of interventions and support programmes for families, adapted to their specific needs.
- Promotes understanding and respect for different types of families and their dynamics.

It is in the family context where the foundations of health are formed and good health is the best resource for personal, family and social progress. Health promotion is a global political and social process that encompasses actions aimed at modifying social, environmental and economic conditions in order to favour their positive impact on individual and collective health. Ottawa Charter (WHO, 2019).

The current health promotion mandate for the Americas region, the Strategy and Plan of Action on health promotion in the context of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) 2019-2030 approved at the 57th Directing Council (2019), proposes 4 essential strategic lines of action to promote health:

1. Strengthen healthy environments.
2. Facilitating community participation and empowerment. 3.
3. Strengthen governance and intersectional action and address the social determinants of health. 4.
4. Strengthen health systems and services.

With this frame of reference, it is important to specify that health promotion is a key element in strengthening health systems and their capacity to respond to the health needs of individuals, families and communities, focusing on ensuring health at the highest possible level with solidarity and equity.

Each contact with an individual can be an opportunity not only to provide a clinical service, but also to assess the conditions in which they live and work, learn about their family and social context, and connect with community assets. It also provides an opportunity to coordinate with other services such as social protection and housing to address the identified needs of individuals.

The health sector must achieve more relevant and concrete advocacy in collaboration with communities to create healthy living conditions, based on primary health care.

According to the Pan American Health Federation (PAHO, 2023), health promotion is an essential public health function, which should be included in the processes of evaluation, policy development, resource allocation and in the dimensions of access to health services.

It is precisely social work that is responsible for understanding and interpreting reality in a holistic way, with the implications and complications of different social structures and changes.

From the perspective of the field of health and family care, the social worker takes up the field of community leadership and management, from which social processes of community organisation are influenced, whose primary objective is to make the population aware of the importance of health, in all the dimensions involved.

Therefore, the professional intervention of the social worker is necessary from a multi- and transdisciplinary work, generating synergies that promote the development of the communities and the well-being of the people, in which through their actions it is possible to perceive the ethical sense of the same, that moral values and ethical principles are made visible, which tend to promote family integration.

Family integration is understood as the degree of health, harmony and balance existing in the relationships maintained within the members of a family, including and valuing the person and his or her role within the family nucleus.

Maintaining it requires efforts, activities and actions carried out that allow a strong, structured and coherent relationship and bonding of each and every one of the members of the family nucleus, so that the family functions in an organised and functional way and generates wellbeing for each of its members. The aim is to achieve a healthy family environment that allows the development of the family as a whole, with special interest in generating harmony and relationships of trust and union among its components.

Generally, when we speak of family integration we are referring to efforts to maintain a strong and respectful bond within the family, in which adults can be involved in the lives of their children, allowing all family members to maintain a quality bond and act as reference figures.

Good family integration can foster positive values and ensure quality education by dedicating sufficient time and effort to joint activities and fostering good relationships between family members. For this, it is necessary that the members of the family group share quality time, assertive communication that allows the free expression of ways of thinking, fears, doubts, emotions, joys and values.

Another important aspect is the process of linking the family, society and the environment, which includes work, friendships and leisure activities, among others.

To this end, a social intervention project was developed that involved the participation of academics and students, as well as invited external professionals, who in real scenarios applied the theoretical, heuristic and axiological knowledge that they generated from the subjects of Planning for Social Intervention and Social Intervention Techniques, favouring the professional training of students, by carrying out a professional intervention based on real problems and/or needs, demanded by the participating families in the walkway located in the colonia 27 de septiembre, also allowing in the process of execution the application of social intervention techniques, to promote integration, participation and development of significant learning with the aim of improving the living conditions of the participants.

Methodology

The methodology used was Participatory Action Research (PAR) or also called Action Research (AR), which, according to Zapata, Florencia and Rondán, Vidal (2016) refers to a set of currents and approaches to research that have in common three pillars:

- I. Research: belief in the value and power of knowledge and respect for its different expressions and ways of producing it;
- II. Participation: emphasising democratic values and the right of people to control their own situations and stressing the importance of a horizontal relationship between researchers and the members of a community; and
- III. Action: as the pursuit of change that improves the situation of the community involved (Greenwood and Levin, 1998).

Therefore, the methodological process begins with a diagnosis that allowed us to evaluate the health needs of the people who attend various physical activities on the walkway of Colonia 27 de septiembre in the city of Poza Rica, Veracruz, with which the social intervention was carried out.

With respect to the techniques used for data collection and to be able to carry out the diagnosis, the techniques of observation and interview were used; the latter carried out with a questionnaire applied to the members of the families separately, with the couple or with all the members of the family depending on whether they attended the walker.

Diagnostic results

The results of the diagnosis indicated that the age of those attending the walker is between 45 and 71 years, so it is adults and elderly people who show greater interest in the development of some kind of physical activity to promote mobility and prevent diseases that are accelerated or are caused by sedentary lifestyles, for the elderly physical activity is much more important, since their autonomy and independence depends largely on it.

Of the participants, 91% of them go to exercise for physical health, the main activities being walking and jogging, since the main benefits of walking or jogging are, among others, the reduction of the risks of hypertension, diabetes, cholesterol and heart diseases, walking helps the body to burn calories and therefore can be an ally for weight loss. On the other hand, 50% of the participants stated that they suffer from some chronic illness, so doing physical activities not only helps them to burn calories, but also helps them to maintain a series of variables that allow the body to function optimally, benefiting their physical and mental health. Finally, 90% of the attendees expressed interest in conferences, talks that would motivate them to develop actions beneficial to their health, as well as height and weight controls and activities for the family.

Subsequently, the results of the diagnosis led to the development of a project called Professional Intervention of Social Work with families in the Metropolitan Area of Poza Rica (ZMPR), which was carried out with people who attend the 27 September walkway with the aim of contributing to the integration of families through socio-educational activities, as well as promoting the professional training of Social Work students through the promotion of health to families and the general population, to develop skills and attitudes that favour the social intervention of students through activities that encourage the promotion of health, such as:

Socio-educational activities: Family meetings through recreational activities to promote family integration through playful, educational and recreational activities supporting human rights.

- Promotion of sport.
- Conference on Self-esteem.
- Conference: Stress management.
- Conference: Healthy eating habits.

Results of the intervention

The development of the Project "Professional Intervention of Social Work with families in the Metropolitan Area of Poza Rica (ZMPR)", carried out in the colonia 27 de septiembre generated the participation of 6 students, 8 teachers of the faculty of Social Work, 3 external guests and 3 invited experts in health issues.

As well as 5 members of the patronage of the andador 27 de septiembre of the city of Poza Rica Veracruz during the period of one year, from January 2022 to January 2023.

Socio-educational activities were carried out within the framework of the intervention with families, children, young people, adults and older adults, which favoured family integration and healthy coexistence, as well as the strengthening of values and the development of physical activities that promote health, with the participation of 150 people who took part in the various activities developed, such as: lottery, strengthening of values through games, elaboration of manual activities and physical activation and family integration dynamics. The development of physical and sporting activities was also promoted, encouraging self-care and health.

In order to promote the health of the people participating in the walker and families in the communities of the metropolitan area, a series of conferences were held to promote health. The first conference entitled "Self-esteem" was given by personnel from the Sanitary Jurisdiction No. 3 of the city of Poza Rica. 3 of the city of Poza Rica, Veracruz, by personnel from the Violence Prevention Module, with the participation of 35 people from the "andador", students, academics and guests who developed integration dynamics that allow self-reflection and contribute to the improvement of self-esteem. This enabled them to express actions to improve their own self-perception and their relationship with their families and loved ones who live close to them on a daily basis. It also encouraged a better relationship between those attending the walker and a greater knowledge of their interests and motivations, leading to a better inter-retro-relationship with others to the benefit of the dynamics of the walker.

The conference "Stress management" was held in conjunction with an expert from the psychology department of the Health Jurisdiction Number III, with the participation of 35 people from the walker, students, academics and guests; with the aim of preventing and controlling stress, which can reduce the risk of other medical problems such as heart disease, obesity, high blood pressure and depression, favouring the mental health of families.

The development of the activity was favourable and relaxation and breathing exercises were developed as strategies for the proper management of stress.

Afterwards, a conference was held on the subject of "Healthy eating habits" by a doctor and nutritionist from the National Polytechnic Institute, with the participation of 40 people from the walker, students, academics and guests, allowing them to share information on a complete nutrition that favours feeling healthy and with more energy, There was a very enthusiastic participation through comments to reinforce the theme and questions on the subject of nutrition, eating habits and the importance of proper nutrition in the quality of life of the attendees and their families.

Finally, the project led to the following learning outcomes for the students:

1. To establish contact with practising social workers and learn about the strategies they develop to deal with the different problems presented by the population, enabling them to assess scenarios in the field of professional intervention, in which they can develop their work.
2. Identify possible research topics for future thesis work.
3. To value the importance of the promotion of integral health in the different stages of life.
4. Apply professional intervention techniques.
5. To design and participate in the implementation of a professional intervention project.

As a result of the work carried out, the participating students were able to link the theory and methodology of social project planning, as well as the application of social intervention techniques that responded to the specific problems and needs of the participants, as well as those of their families.

In the educational experience Techniques for Social Intervention: students developed the skills of observing real situations, conducting collaborative processes, exercising leadership with social actors and applying techniques for working with groups, as well as strengthening theoretical knowledge on the proper use of techniques, group work, leadership applied to real situations and attention to specific problems of a sector of the population.

In the educational experience Planning for social intervention: they developed the skills of selecting a problem or real need for the design of a project, drawing up a social project and investigating and analysing the causes and effects of the social problems in which they intervene on the basis of a specific reality. In terms of theoretical knowledge, the project made it possible to establish the structure of a social project at the community level and to develop instruments for planning social actions, determining objectives and strategies for professional intervention, which enabled the participating students to design an intervention project on a problem identified in a community environment based on the methodology of social planning and to participate in the implementation process.

Conclusions

Clearly explain the results obtained and the possibilities for improvement.

From a critical point of view, social workers can intervene in the social sphere to enable the exercise of a socio-educational action contributing to the consolidation of an active citizenship, in relation to health awareness and family integration.

The development of the Project of Professional Intervention of Social Work with families in the Metropolitan Area of Poza Rica (ZMPR) allowed us to establish the following conclusions:

1. The importance of Social Work with families is considered fundamental, as this is a process of social intervention aimed at the individual, family and social dimension of the person in order to achieve better relational and social functioning, as stated by Richard Jolly (2005), who states that: "...families represent much more than mutual care and support. For many of us it is the space in which we realise our most profound human experiences. Intimacy and passion, identity and individuality, connection to the past and belief about the future, all derive from that small nexus. Because the deepest human feelings have their source in the family...", so the Professional Intervention with families through various techniques that allow us to explore feelings, experiences, reinforce behaviours, etc., in order to promote, stimulate and encourage well-being, in this case starting from family integration and promoting health.
2. The professional training of Social Work students was promoted through the development of professional competencies in social intervention in response to a real and high-impact problem, through the interaction of practising social workers, teaching staff and experts, who promoted integral health in the families of the walker.
3. The development of skills and attitudes for social intervention of the students was strengthened.
4. Promotion of collaborative work and awareness-raising among students in relation to this social problem.
5. Management processes were generated, and institutional linkage with the Sanitary Jurisdiction No. III of the city of Poza Rica.
6. The impact of the project made it possible to establish future proposals for intervention with this sector of the population through the continuity of activities with the families who attend the 27 September walkway.

Proposals for improvement

- Elaborate a social intervention project with the older adults who attend the andador based on the needs detected.
- Integrate a multidisciplinary team of advisors to promote a culture of integral health promotion in families.
- To manage governmental resources and the participation of organisations related to the subject in order to give continuity to the integral actions.
- Create an integral health promotion group in various public spaces in the city.

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