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The impact of the absence of musical practice in a group of older people

Abstract

The work that is presented collects a small sample of older people who participated in a choral group, whose activity was interrupted by covid19. The activities of this group gradually recovered, as the contagions decreased. A series of tests were carried out on a small sample after having resumed musical activity, during the month of March 2022. After the significant increase in infections at the end of December 2022, musical activities were paralyzed and it was measured again with the same tests to the small participating sample in January 2022. The results pointed to the relevant need for musical practice, since the evaluations were much lower in the post test.

Keywords: covid19, older people, mental health

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Introduction

During the pandemic caused by covid-19 and at a time when infections were increasing, the quality of life was affected. Different studies, as well as statements by doctors and experts, also expressed the relationship with mental, physical and psychological health, such as the one provided by Gómez Conesa¹ or the report of the World Health Organization.² Some of the data collected by the CIS (Center for Sociological Research), the population has seen how the pandemic affected their mental health, highlighting fatigue, apathy and demotivation.³ Older people especially, point out Buitrago Ramírez, Ciurana Misol, Fernández Alonso and Tizón García,⁴ have seen their physical and mental health affected by covid-19. Although the cognitive repercussions produced by social and affective isolation are not yet known, the lack of social contact has had a negative impact on health.

An alternative to improve quality of life and mental health is music therapy, as shown in the study by Centella-Centeno,⁵ restoring psychological, emotional and social health in people with some type of dementia, anxiety, schizophrenia and depression. In this line, research such as that of Duharte Gómez et al.,⁶ Teixeira-Machado, Mario and Mari⁷ show that dance is a resource for improving the quality of life of the elderly. Likewise, Vernia,⁸ in her research work, combines music and corporal expression to improve the quality of life.

In the work that is presented, it was verified how music and musicians and artists in general, played a determining role in this quality of life and health. This study is based on the experience of a group of older people who saw how their musical practice activity was paralyzed at times, due to the pandemic. Although the sessions could be resumed when the infections dropped, they had to be radically paralyzed when they increased drastically in their town. The research was carried out on a small sample in which the impact of active musical practice on some variables was assessed and during a period of instability in the restrictions caused by the pandemic. To collect the information, the WHOQOL-B (World Health Organization Quality of Life Test), the HADS (Hospital Anxiety and Depression Scale) and the EAR (Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale) were used. The results showed that the group of participants returned to musical activities with relatively high parameters that influence quality of life. The return to confinement meant a decrease in the values analyzed, which concludes in the need to plan alternatives that allow the elderly to continue their routine activities and, on the other hand, the importance

of this type of activity to not only maintain, but improve the quality of life.

Hypothesis

H1. Musical activity generates quality of life, self-esteem and improves situations of stress or depression.

H2. When musical activities are stopped in a group of older people, during complicated periods, the quality of life decreases.

Theoretical framework

We already find a history of musical projects that combine body and music to improve the quality of life of the elderly. Works such as that of Duharte Gómez, et al.,⁶ show the impact of dance, through the Saanabanda project, which combines Cuban dance steps with physical education exercises. In this research it was shown that the participants, that the program of musical activities improved the health of the participants.

In a similar vein, Teixeira-Machado, Mario and Mari,⁷ examined 1071 studies and of these eight studies were included in the review. Of the selected studies, all demonstrated positive structural and/or functional changes. Structural changes included increased hippocampal volume, gray matter volume in the left precentral and parahippocampal gyrus, and white matter integrity. Functional changes included alterations in cognitive function such as a significant improvement in memory, attention, and body balance, among others. The study concludes by showing that the practice of dance improves neuroplasticity.

Like the previous study, Pizón and Moreno,⁹ show that physical activity is effective in promoting brain plasticity in aging. Conclusions reached by these authors, through a documentary review, are that physical exercise can have a positive impact on brain function.

Evaluations for quality of life

The evaluation of the quality of life has been gaining importance as a measure to evaluate the results in medicine. Considering the absence of a quality of life instrument with a cross-cultural approach, the World Health Organization developed a unique methodology to create it. Initially, the World Health Organization Quality of Life instrument (WHOQOL-100) was developed, with one hundred questions. The need for a short instrument, explains Pido de Almeida Fleck,¹⁰ to be used in extensive epidemiological studies led the WHO to develop a short version of 26 questions (WHOQOL-bref).

Although the Hospital Anxiety and Depression Scale (HAD) is a widely used instrument to measure psychological disorders in cancer patients, it can be applied in other contexts or complicated situations, such as pandemic situations. Terol-Cantero, Cabrera-Perona, and Martín-Aragón,¹¹ assure that this scale is a very common instrument, endorsing its psychometric properties. The research carried out by these authors concluded that the HAD scale is adequate in different groups.

To globally measure self-esteem, the Rosenberg scale¹² is the most widely used. With ten items aimed at knowing the feelings of respect and acceptance of oneself, this instrument proposes half of the questions with positive statements and the other half with negative statements.¹³

Methodology

Different tools were used to assess quality of life, anxiety and depression, as well as self-esteem.

I. Procedure

The evaluation tests were passed in March (2021), after starting the music sessions. 6 participants of the “Music for Life” project were selected randomly. The tests were passed again in January (year?), after a complicated situation for the project since all activities had to be suspended at the end of December (year?), due to the large increase in covid-19 infections in the population where the project will be developed.

II. Sample

The sample consisted of 6 participants who were receiving artistic activities but had to stop due to the increase in covid-19 cases in their community. It is a small sample, but significant to respond to the objectives and the hypothesis raised.

Results and discussion

The data have shown the significant deterioration in terms of quality of life, taking into account mental health and interpersonal relationships. The self-esteem scale also reflects a decrease in this parameter.

Conclusions

The conclusions lead us to consider the importance of active musical practice in a group of older people. Stopping artistic activities means worsening the quality of life in parameters related to self-esteem and the perception of well-being especially.

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Conflicts of interest

The authors declare they have no conflicts of interest that are directly or indirectly related to the research.

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