



Extension activities with school adolescents: experiences of undergraduate Nursing students

Ações de extensão com adolescentes escolares: experiência de graduandos em Enfermagem

Acciones de extensión con adolescentes escolares: experiencia de alumnos de grado de Enfermería

Aline Cammarano Ribeiro 

Federal University of Santa Maria (*Universidade Federal de Santa Maria*) - Santa Maria (RS) - Brazil

Fabiano Ritta Malagues lanzer 

Federal University of Santa Maria (*Universidade Federal de Santa Maria*) - Santa Maria (RS) - Brazil

Gabriela Coden Polletti 

Federal University of Santa Maria (*Universidade Federal de Santa Maria*) - Santa Maria (RS) - Brazil

Érika Eberlline Pacheco dos Santos 

Federal University of Santa Maria (*Universidade Federal de Santa Maria*) - Santa Maria (RS) - Brazil

Marcelo Ribeiro Primeira 

Federal University of Santa Maria (*Universidade Federal de Santa Maria*) - Santa Maria (RS) - Brazil

Victória de Quadros Severo Maciel 

Federal University of Santa Maria (*Universidade Federal de Santa Maria*) - Santa Maria (RS) - Brazil

Nathalia Kaspary Boff 

Federal University of Santa Maria (*Universidade Federal de Santa Maria*) - Santa Maria (RS) - Brazil

Graciela Dutra Senhem 

Federal University of Santa Maria (*Universidade Federal de Santa Maria*) - Santa Maria (RS) - Brazil

ABSTRACT

Objective: To share the experience of undergraduate Nursing students in extension activities carried out with school adolescents.

Data synthesis: This is an experience report of extension actions that took place in 2019 in a state-run primary school in a municipality in Rio Grande do Sul, Brazil. There was a meeting with the board of directors and the teachers to explain the proposal and indicate classes composed of adolescents. Based on activities scheduled throughout the year, the topics chosen by the students were discussed. Before carrying out the extension actions, the undergraduate students studied and organized the task to be carried out on the day. Conversation circles and playful activities were held, which helped to promote health and deepen the discussions, becoming essential for meetings and for the development of trust between undergraduate students and school adolescents. **Conclusion:** The actions carried out made it possible for undergraduate students to expand their knowledge on the topic of adolescent health and provided greater practical experience.

Descriptors: Adolescent; Health Personnel; Nursing; Community-Institutional Relations.

RESUMO

Objetivo: Compartilhar a experiência de acadêmicos de um curso de graduação em Enfermagem em atividades extensionistas realizadas com adolescentes escolares. **Síntese dos dados:** Relato de experiência sobre ações de extensão que ocorreram no ano de 2019, em uma escola estadual de ensino fundamental, em um município do Rio Grande do Sul, Brasil. Houve um encontro com a direção e os professores para explanação da proposta e indicação de turmas compostas de adolescentes. A partir de atividades agendadas no decorrer do ano, discutiram-se os temas escolhidos pelos alunos. Antes da realização das ações de extensão, os acadêmicos estudavam e organizavam a tarefa a ser feita no dia. Eram realizadas rodas de conversa e dinâmicas as quais auxiliavam na promoção da saúde e no aprofundamento das discussões, tornando-se imprescindíveis para



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os encontros e para o desenvolvimento da confiança entre os graduandos e os estudantes da escola. **Conclusão:** As ações realizadas possibilitaram aos acadêmicos a ampliação do conhecimento sobre a temática da saúde dos adolescentes, bem como oportunizaram maior vivência prática.

Descritores: Adolescente; Pessoal de Saúde; Enfermagem; Relações Comunidade-Instituição.

RESUMEN

Objetivo: Compartir la experiencia de académicos de un curso de grado de Enfermería en actividades de extensión realizadas con adolescentes escolares. **Síntesis de los datos:** Relato de experiencia de las acciones de extensión que se dieron en el año de 2019, en una escuela estadual de educación básica de un municipio de Rio Grande do Sul, Brasil. Hubo un encuentro con la dirección y los maestros para la explicación de la propuesta y la indicación de los grupos de adolescentes. A partir de las actividades apuntadas para el año, se ha discutido los temas elegidos por los alumnos. Antes de las acciones de extensión, los académicos estudiaban y organizaban las tareas del día. Eran realizadas ruedas de conversación y dinámicas que ayudaban para la promoción de la salud y la profundización de las discusiones las cuales eran imprescindibles para los encuentros y para el desarrollo de la confianza entre los alumnos de grado y los estudiantes de la escuela. **Conclusión:** Las acciones realizadas han permitido la ampliación del conocimiento de los académicos sobre la temática de la salud de los adolescentes, así como permitieron más vivencia práctica.

Descriptores: Adolescente; Personal de Salud; Enfermería; Relaciones Comunidad-Institución.

INTRODUCTION

The chronological criterion set by the World Health Organization (WHO) defines adolescence as the phase of life that corresponds to the ages between 10 and 19 years⁽¹⁾. This phase comprises a period between childhood and adulthood, characterized by important bodily and behavioral changes. Such changes are associated with sociocultural factors, which can influence the exploration of identity, making it an essential component in the development of adolescents⁽²⁾.

The formation of their identity can be influenced by the posture and behavior of other adolescents from the interaction between peers, which relate to their individual and collective self-fulfillment⁽³⁾. Thus, approaching this population group requires creativity in order to disseminate the promotion of care through health education. In that regard, adolescents' low search for Primary Health Care (PHC) centers has been observed and is combined with low adherence to and low involvement with the actions developed by the services, which denotes the professionals' difficulties in caring for them⁽⁴⁾.

In Brazil, the Health at School Program (*Programa Saúde na Escola – PSE*), established by Decree No. 6.286, of 5 December 2007, has as its main purpose to contribute to the comprehensive training of students in the public basic education network through disease prevention and health promotion and care actions⁽⁵⁾. It recommends that the measures carried out be based on the most emerging issues and on the context in which the adolescents are involved, taking into account biological, psychological and social aspects⁽⁵⁾.

The construction of spaces for discussion about health care within schools is a strategy to bring the health service closer to adolescents, since the school environment is one of the places that adolescents generally recognize as favorable to social coexistence. This facilitates the dissemination of values and the formation of ideas and intellects, especially when combined with the work promoted by educators⁽⁶⁾.

In that regard, extension actions, as recommended by the National Education Directives and Bases Law (*Lei de Diretrizes e Bases da Educação Nacional – LDB*), mark the university's commitment to the community and institutions⁽⁷⁾, which favors the development of practices with transformative social impact for the promotion of health and citizenship. Such actions provide undergraduate nursing students with experiences in the field of adolescent health, facilitating the development of skills and competences that go beyond technical knowledge. Also, extension activities make it possible to create and strengthen spaces, enabling adolescent health practices based on public policies. In addressing this theme, this text aims to share the experience of Nursing students in extension activities carried out with school adolescents.

DATA SYNTHESIS

This is a descriptive experience report of extension practices carried out by four undergraduate Nursing students of the Federal University of Santa Maria (*Universidade Federal de Santa Maria – UFSM*), Brazil. The actions took

place in 2019 through a project aimed at adolescents, with funding from the promoting institution. The extension proposal focused on disease prevention and health promotion based on collective actions at school, seeking to motivate adolescents to adhere to nursing consultations offered by the Primary Health Care (PHC) center in the area covered by the education institution.

The practices took place in a state-run primary school located in the Northern area of the municipality of Santa Maria, a city located in the Midwest region of the state of Rio Grande do Sul, Brazil. It is understood that this school faces social vulnerability, and its link, already established with the undergraduate Nursing program, resulted from the development of curricular activities of the program, which made it possible to carry out these extension actions within the scope of the Culture Circle, which promotes dialogic activities in social contexts from a critical perspective with the understanding of life situations and self-awareness⁽⁶⁾.

The paths for the execution of this extension proposal began with the approximation of the students and the teacher coordinating the project with the school. In a meeting with the board of directors and the teachers, the proposal was explained, and potential groups of adolescent students were suggested for the development of the practices. Considering the need to discuss topics related to adolescence, four groups were indicated: two from the seventh grade, one from the eighth grade, and one from the ninth grade.

Based on the selection of these groups, meetings were scheduled on Monday afternoons and Friday mornings during class hours and throughout the school year. These meetings took place in the classrooms of the chosen groups, enabling the participation of all adolescents present at the time. Support from the student council of the education institution was also sought – it is a non-profit organization that represents the interest of students and is composed of two students from each class in order to provide a link between Nursing students and students at the school.

In order to improve everyone's knowledge, in the first meetings with each class there was a reception and introduction of the Nursing students, the supervisor and the adolescents for the explanation, by the undergraduate students, of the objective of the interaction with the students of the school at that time. Based on "pacts" of secrecy about what would be discussed in the meetings, the extension of the conversation circles was limited, and so was the duration (something around an hour) so as not to prolong the meetings or make them tiring. In addition, there was also a free proposition of themes to be worked on in more dialogic circles and in horizontal and approximation discussions. Thus, considering the themes chosen by the adolescents regarding uncertainties or curiosity, the following themes were presented: depression, drugs, anxiety, sexuality, bullying and self-mutilation.

Before carrying out each activity, the undergraduate students studied the possible topic that would be addressed on the day based on adolescents' selection, thus organizing how they would conduct the conversation circle and the dynamics. All this care is justified by understanding that extension actions help in the construction of critical subjects, with redefinitions of practices based on social reality. In addition, they are important for the expansion of academic scientific knowledge⁽⁹⁾ and for the personal and professional training of the undergraduate students through experiences that relate theory and practice⁽¹⁰⁾, thus achieving different learning experiences.

Based on this planning, conversation circles were held⁽⁸⁾ and one topic was discussed per meeting. The importance of access to the health service for monitoring this phase of life was also discussed. The experience of carrying out conversation circles with adolescents was something challenging until the moment when a relationship of trust between school students and undergraduate students began to be established. It should be noted that the specific characteristics of adolescence can represent challenges for health promotion. Therefore, a deep understanding of these young people is essential for the improvement of care skills targeted at this population group⁽¹¹⁾.

The development of trust is an important factor for the adolescent and, when it happens, it results in effective relationships. This feeling grows over time and through the adolescents' interactions, depending, however, on how the young person feels about the actions of the people who interact with them. In this context, a horizontal, welcoming, empathetic interaction aligned with the empowerment of adolescents often allows them to open up to receive support and share ideas⁽¹²⁾.

At first, some adolescents were shy to talk and ask questions, while others were more participatory. However, as the conversation circles were held, even the shyest adolescents became more relaxed. Everyone participated in the discussion in a fun way, but without losing seriousness and curiosity. Nursing students were surprised that the individual doubts, in fact, were collective, which made the conversation circle more interactive and dynamic. Thus, even with the "pact" about the time for carrying out the activities, the meetings always took a little longer due to the participation and involvement of all the students.

In addition to the conversation circles, playful activities were developed by using stories on the topic to be discussed on the day and question boxes, writings, drawings and collages on posters, playful methods that helped

to promote and deepen the discussions based on the adolescents' knowledge. These playful activities also favored welcoming, making them indispensable for meetings and for the development of trust.

The use of recreational resources in extension actions is effective and low cost. In addition, such use provides socialization, development of critical thinking and reflections on the topic addressed, arousing greater interest compared to the use of expository practices, which often do not speak to the reality of those involved^(13,14). Such resources, in the development of health education, enable the effectiveness of extension actions since they constitute a simple and horizontal approach⁽¹⁵⁾.

The experience of undergraduate students in the mediation of conversation circles and playful activities favored the broadening of perspective regarding the adolescence phase and the recognition of the potentialities, vulnerabilities, characteristics and demands of adolescents. Also, the awakening of an integral look at the adolescent from the extension action contributes to the approach to the different realities faced by these young people, qualifying undergraduate students for education and health actions. Thus, the importance of carrying out practices with the involvement of the adolescent and the school is noticeable^(16,17). These activities are investments in health and education that can not only transform the lives of adolescents but also provide social and economic paybacks⁽¹⁸⁾.

The extension action developed with the adolescents showed relevance and impact as confirmed by the feedback from the group. The undergraduate students shared their perceptions about the adolescence phase (which was understood as something complex because it was little addressed in curricular practices) and highlighted the transformation of this concept through extension practices. Thus, the importance of promoting different training spaces for undergraduate students should be highlighted in order to provide potential learning resulting from unique university experiences⁽¹⁹⁾. Extension activities show, in this sense, the advancement of higher education co-responsibility with the community by promoting the evolution of responses to society's problems and demands⁽²⁰⁾.

CONCLUSION

The experience of extension actions with adolescent students enabled Nursing students to expand their respective perceptions on the theme of adolescent health based on greater practical experience. Through extension actions at school, undergraduate students reported the possibility of understanding the peculiarities that involve adolescence, the construction of a professional attitude towards the actions undertaken and the deepening of knowledge about the topics discussed and the playful activities carried out. In addition, they were able to develop fundamental skills and competences for the integral health care of adolescents considering the biological, psychological, sociocultural, spiritual and ethical aspects of these young people.

CONFLICTS OF INTEREST

There are no conflicts of interest in the manuscript.

CONTRIBUTIONS

Aline Cammarano Ribeiro and **Graciela Dutra Senhem** contributed to the study conception and design, acquisition, analysis and interpretation of data; writing and/or revision of the manuscript. **Fabiano Ritta Malagues Ianzer** and **Gabriela Coden Polletti** contributed to the study conception and design, acquisition, analysis and interpretation of data. **Érika Eberlline Pacheco dos Santos** and **Marcelo Ribeiro Primeira** contributed to the writing and/or revision of the manuscript. **Victória de Quadros Severo Maciel** and **Nathalia Kaspary Boff** contributed to the acquisition, analysis and interpretation of data. All authors have approved the final version of the manuscript to be published and are responsible for all aspects of it, including ensuring its accuracy and integrity.

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Mailing address:

Aline Cammarano Ribeiro
Universidade Federal de Santa Maria
Av. Roraima, 1000
Bairro: Camobi
CEP: 97105-900 - Santa Maria - RS - Brasil
E-mail: aline.cammarano-ribeiro@ufsm.br

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