

Music as an expression of the reality of socially vulnerable adolescents**A música como forma expressão da realidade de adolescentes em vulnerabilidade social****La música como forma de expresión de la realidad de adolescentes en vulnerabilidad social****Received: 28/02/2018****Approved: 30/08/2018****Published: 27/09/2018****Andrea Ruzzi-Pereira¹**
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This study aims to describe the experience from an occupational therapy internship with female adolescents being treated for problems related to the use of alcohol and other drugs in the collective construction of a rap song. The methodology was based on expanded clinical practice concepts, mental health, psychosocial attention and life projects. The group was made up of six female users, with 28 interventions from March to July 2013, with the mediation of a professor and two interns. The musical production highlighted: violence against women; the use of drugs; criminality; and the need for a protective factor, namely, spirituality/religiosity. The actions of the occupational therapist with these adolescents transformed the meetings in spaces for affective exchanges and positive experiences.

Descriptors: Adolescent; Social vulnerability; Music.

Este trabalho tem como objetivo descrever a experiência em estágio de terapia ocupacional com adolescentes do sexo feminino em tratamento para problemas relacionados ao uso de álcool e outras drogas, na construção coletiva de um *rap*. A metodologia foi pautada nos preceitos da clínica ampliada, saúde mental, atenção psicossocial, e projeto de vida. O grupo foi composto por seis usuárias, com 28 intervenções, entre março e julho de 2013 mediadas por uma docente, e duas estagiárias. A produção musical destacou a violência contra a mulher; o uso de drogas; a criminalidade; e, a necessidade de um fator de proteção, a espiritualidade/religiosidade. A atuação da terapia ocupacional com estas adolescentes propiciou um espaço de trocas afetivas e de experiências positivas.

Descritores: Adolescente; Vulnerabilidade social; Música.

Este trabajo tiene como objetivo describir la experiencia en prácticas de terapia ocupacional con adolescentes del sexo femenino en tratamiento para problemas relacionados al uso de alcohol y otras drogas, en la construcción colectiva de un *rap*. La metodología fue pautada a partir de los preceptos de la clínica ampliada, salud mental, atención psicossocial y proyecto de vida. El grupo fue compuesto por seis usuarias, con 28 intervenciones, entre marzo y julio de 2013 mediadas por una docente y dos practicantes. La producción musical destacó la violencia contra la mujer; el uso de drogas; la criminalidad y la necesidad de un factor de protección, la espiritualidad/religiosidad. La actuación de la terapia ocupacional con estas adolescentes propició un espacio de intercambios afectivos y de experiencias positivas.

Descriptores: Adolescente; Vulnerabilidad social; Música.

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INTRODUCTION

According to the Child and Adolescent Statute¹, adolescence is the age group from 12 to 18 years of age, a period in which many physiological, psychosocial, physical and sexual changes take place, marking the transition from childhood to adulthood². In this stage the formation of a social identity is formed. It is determined by the culture and the social context in which the adolescent is inserted².

However, when adolescence is permeated by contradictions and conflicts or is filled with violent experiences, the negative repercussions of these factors to the physical and mental health of the individual are worrisome, since they compromise the construction of life projects.

This stage can be one full of doubts, insecurities and internal conflict, and therefore, adolescents and young adults are seen as a vulnerable segment in all societies throughout the globalized world. Small changes can impact them for life³. It is also a period of discovery and new experiences, in which many people experiment with alcohol and other drugs for the first time⁴, possibly continuing the use of these substances throughout their lives.

Adolescents may be exposed to many factors that make them more vulnerable to diseases and to the use of drugs. Vulnerability means the susceptibility of an individual or family of developing a disorder or to become non-adapted when confronted with risk indicators⁵. As vulnerability factors that influence adolescents, stand out the risks inherent to family dynamics, such as problems related to alcoholism and violence; the place in which they live; the availability of places for leisure; the risks regarding police repression; activities regarding drug traffic and urban violence⁶.

Preoccupations with drug use has been growing since the 1960's, due to the way in which people started consuming these substances and the increased consumption by adolescents⁷. The use of alcohol and other drugs has been a worldwide health problem, especially due to the indistinct use by people from all ages, sexes and social classes.

For some specific groups, such as adolescents, the need for care is greater due to the potential years of life lost and the risks to which they expose themselves⁸. It has been mentioned as one of the main causes that lead to vulnerability situations during adolescence, such as suicide, violence, unplanned pregnancy, prostitution and the transmission of diseases through sex. That is why studies and interventions about this theme with people from this age group are necessary.

This study aims to describe the experience from an occupational therapy internship with female adolescents being treated for problems related to the use of alcohol and other drugs in the collective construction of a rap song.

METHOD

The work developed with the teenagers was based on expanded clinic concepts, mental health and psychosocial attention. The actions it presents were developed during a supervised internship in the 8th semester of the occupational therapy course at the Universidade Federal do Triângulo Mineiro (UFTM), conducted from March to July 2013, in the Uberaba Municipal Institute about Drugs, which, at the time, cared for female adolescents from 12 and 18 years of age, who had problems related to alcohol and other drugs and were in a state of social vulnerability.

The interventions took place twice a week and were mediated by a professor and two interns. The group of adolescents were made up, on average, by six users. The commentaries of the participants about the group were transcribed by the interns into a notebook and, later, discussed with the supervisor. Here, they are represented through a qualitative and descriptive analysis.

The development of this study followed all guiding ethical norms of works involving human beings. It was approved by the Research Ethics Committee of the Universidade Federal do Triângulo Mineiro, under protocol 2303/2013.

RESULTS

During the activity with the adolescents, themes discussed included: sexuality; life projects; self-care and caring for others; family; types of violence and ways to face it. The occupational therapy process used strategies such as theater, ludic games, movies, music, poster creation, activities of beauty care and handcrafting of female accessories using low-cost materials.

The best ways with which to group these themes together as to represent the reality of these adolescents were discussed with them. They decided to write the lyrics for a rap song, which they called "Brother's from the hood", also naming their own group "The Fighters".

All participants got intensely involved in the collective creation of the song throughout six week. They reflected on the context of each of them, which was found to be a collective one. After the lyrics were created, they elaborated the melody and produced a music video in which they were the protagonists and singers. The song produced is below.

The rap song *Brothers from the hood*

*Nowadays, brothers from the hood
They're running from the police
Trading all their dreams for nothing
In the world of crime for guns
Drugs, show, women, easy bucks
Until death, there's just a step, step, step...*

*They're running from the police
Entering this world of crime and violence
God, what is this life worth?
Where are our beliefs?*

*It all starts with a marijuana cigarette
And then cocaine, crack, theft, misery, stealing money
Too young giving their lives for crack
Killing people, armed robbery all the time.
So many episodes of our lives pass by
Stealing, killing, crime, violence
Life seems to be beautiful
But my man, look out the window
And an image of suffering will come to you, you, you...*

*They're running from the police
Entering this world of crime and violence
God, what is this life worth?
Where are our beliefs?*

*A lot of men think women are punch bags
Punch their stomach, kick their heads,
God, how sad!!!*

I remember when he locked me in the bathroom, pulled my hair and kicked me like he was beating another man. Many times my little girl saw him hitting me and asked him to stop: Dad don't do that to my mommy.

*They're running from the police
Entering this world of crime and violence
God, what is this life worth?
Where are our beliefs?
We can't accept this situation
What's important is having God in our hearts!*

DISCUSSION

In rap song lyrics, the writers narrate their life experiences and the daily lives of their communities, making it possible for those who live in the same reality to see themselves in these lyrics, where themes such as financial restrictions, as well as social and racial prejudice. It is an important form of expression, divulging the voice of the reality this population experiences⁹.

As it happened in another study¹⁰, the lyrics of the song of the "Fighters" had similarities to their daily experiences. When, in "The brothers from the hood", they talked about others, it became clear that the girls had difficulties to talk about themselves. In an excerpt, they mentioned a connection between adolescence and criminality, while being themselves responsible for some legal infractions and involvement with drug trafficking.

Some adolescents break the law to escape their invisibility, seeking to reach a place where they are respected in their communities⁹. Despite the increase in the number of adolescents involved in illicit activities, this population continues to be more victims than perpetrators of violence.

Due to the particular developmental stage they are in, adolescents are more vulnerable to several risk situations, whose severity is proportional to their exposure to social inequality¹¹.

The excerpt " *In the world of crime for guns [...] easy bucks*" mentions the reasons why adolescents would commit illegal actions. Studies point out that the greatest risks in this case are drug consumption, types of leisure, groups of friends, self-esteem, recognition of limits between right and wrong, being the victims of violence, and bonds to the school^{12,13}.

The line between being or not the author of illegal actions is thin and may be crossed at any time by an adolescent, considering the vulnerability that characterize this stage of life. In addition, bad socioeconomic conditions are important risk factors for the use of drugs in adolescence¹⁴. The teenagers also expressed some negative consequences of criminality, such as the impossibility of reaching their dreams and early death, in excerpts such as: "*Trading all their dreams for nothing*" and "*Until death, there's just a step*".

In "*It all starts with a marijuana cigarette / And then cocaine, crack*", the idea of an increase in drug consumption is suggested. They start the use with the drugs they consider to be the lightest, and then, go to cocaine, crack. Adolescents in a certain stage of drug consumption will not necessarily use other drugs, which shows that there is not a specific sequence of substance use according to severity, from the less to the more dangerous ones¹⁵. However, in our culture there is a perception that there are less dangerous and weaker drugs, and, especially among adolescents, the idea that alcohol is not a drug, being its consumption seen as something normal and acceptable¹⁵.

A research¹⁷ reiterates the need for existing public policies, especially regarding alcohol, to be effectively enforced, with political efforts to aid the population to understand that alcohol is a drug, and therefore, its abuse may lead to damaging consequences; that there is no safe amount of use of alcohol for adolescents and that it is the

drug that leads to the access to other substances. Not only that, but it is, itself, the very drug that brings the most physical, social and psychic prejudices.

The participants addressed the consequences of their drug use, which can lead them to commit robberies and murder, also moving away from study and family. The use of drugs can negatively influence the social life of the adolescent, prejudicing their development in school, relationships, and oftentimes, their relation with the law¹⁶. All participants of this study had stopped studying in the first years of elementary school, with no plans to go back.

The music also points out at an ambiguous relationship of these adolescents with the violence. Sometimes they are in the role of victims, highlighting the violence against women, and sometimes they are the aggressors. The theme of violence against women was highlighted during the creation of the lyrics, since it was a part of the reality of all participants. The group decided that the part of the song dedicated to this theme should be made from the real testimony of one of them, who at the time of the study was pregnant for the third time. This can be seen in the part of the song that reads: "*I remember when he locked me in the bathroom [up to] Dad don't do that to my mommy*".

Physical violence from partners in adulthood affects from 20% to 50% of women throughout the world at least once in their lives, and these violent episodes are often repeated, tending to become increasingly serious, taking place even during pregnancy¹⁷. This fact was exemplified by the situation found in this study, since some of these adolescents went through miscarriages after being assaulted.

The rap's chorus brings the word "*God*" and the need for a belief, showing the protective factor religiosity (or spirituality). Religiosity improves the odds of recovery of people going through drug treatments and diminishes the chances of relapses. It promotes abstinence from drugs and offers social restructuring resources, valuing individual potentialities and group cohesion¹⁸.

During the interventions, the adolescents were very participative, expressing their opinions and ideas. The occupational therapist is a professional that makes possible the construction of spaces that are potent as channels for the adolescents to express themselves, offering them alternative ways to express their anguishes, when faced with the suffering caused by the process of social exclusion. Thus, once an individual starts seeing the intervention space as a space where it is possible to (re)construct their existence in the world, they open themselves, learning new strategies to act and express themselves¹⁹.

CONCLUSION

The composition of the rap song lyrics by the adolescents is representative of the reality they live in, but they positioned themselves as observers of the facts, opting for a narration in the 3rd person. The rap highlights the violence against women, the use of alcohol and other drugs and the criminality. The protective effect of spirituality or religiosity is also highlighted.

The actions of the occupational therapist with the adolescents allowed for a space of exchange that optimized the relation within the group. In addition, resorting to music allowed the adolescents to freely express their own reality. Despite that, this population can no longer be attended in institutions such as the one in which the internship was developed due to public policies of attention to adolescent users of psychoactive substances.

Adolescents are the group with the least adherence to outpatient treatment for alcohol and other drugs, and possibly, the use of significant efforts in their reality, helps in the adherence to treatment, and in reaching better results.

The limit of this report is the fact that only one strategy used during the internship was mentioned. Therefore, it is necessary to turn one's eye to adolescents going through the same problem, but who live in rural communities or bigger urban centers and share this reality.

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CONTRIBUTIONS

Andrea Ruzzi Pereira contributed in the internship interventions, as well as in the conception, writing and revision of the study. **Larissa Nascimento Marques** took part in the internship interventions, as well as in the conception and writing of the study. **Mariana Melo Parreira** took part in the internship interventions, as well as in the conception and writing of the study.

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