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EFFICACY OF A MULTIMEDIA PROGRAM BASED ON SUPER SKILLS FOR LIFE IN ECUADORIAN CHILDREN

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Abstract: Despite the high prevalence of anxiety and depression in the child population, and having some protocolized programs that have shown their effectiveness, a high percentage of Ecuadorian children do not have access to psychological treatment. Waiting lists for mental health services and excessive time between sessions make it difficult for children and adolescents to receive the psychological treatment they need in a timely and effective manner. An alternative that can provide a solution to the difficulties in accessing psychological treatment is the application of online treatment. The objective of this work is to determine the effectiveness of a cognitive-behavioral multimedia program, based on the Super Skills for Life program, in Ecuadorian children from 8 to 12 years old with internalizing problems. In addition, the aim is to analyze the most prevalent internalized problems, know the variables that can influence the effectiveness of the program, and compare the internalized problems. The program consists of 8 sessions that are carried out autonomously by the child, under the supervision of parents and the guidance of previously trained psychologists.

In each session the child learns skills that help him face everyday and difficult life situations. Among the components of the program, emotional education, social skills, problem-solving training, and relaxation stand out. Among the results found, it is determined: decreased interference of anxiety in the lives of parents and subjects, improved internalizing problems: decreased behavioral and peer problems, increased social skills and self-esteem.

Keywords: multimedia program, Super Skills for Life program, anxiety, depression, social skills, problem solving, relaxation.

TEXT

Cognitive behavioral therapy is considered the treatment of choice for childhood anxiety; However, it is estimated to be effective for a range between 50 and 70% of children (Barrett, Dadds & Rapee, 1996; Barrett & Turney, 2001; Essau, Conradt, Sasagawa & Ollendick, 2012; Kendall et al, 1997; Seligman & Ollendick, 2011; Stallard, Simpson, Anderson, Hibbert & Osborn, 2007). The moderate effectiveness of the treatment has been attributed mainly to two reasons. The first is that most interventions have been designed specifically for the treatment of anxiety disorders, and have not taken into account the high comorbidity between anxiety and other internalizing problems such as depression (Essau, 2008). Studies show a lower effectiveness of treatment for anxiety when the child also presents depressive symptoms (Brent et al., 1998; O'Neil & Kendall, 2012), with the rates of co-occurrence of both disorders being very high, being between 30% and 75% (Essau, 2008; Last, Perrins, Hersen & Kazdin, 1992).

In a Spanish sample with more than 1,500 children aged 8 to 12 years, 82% of those who had depressive symptoms had some anxiety disorder and 20% of children with anxiety had depressive symptoms (Romero et al., 2010). These data warn of the need to address depressive symptoms in the treatment of anxiety disorders and vice versa.

A second reason for the moderate effectiveness of cognitive behavioral therapy for childhood anxiety is that young children may have difficulty understanding basic concepts, such as the association between thoughts, feelings, and behaviors (Essau et al., 2004). For example, children who cannot understand the cognitive restructuring technique show low compliance in doing tasks related to that area during treatment, which can affect the effectiveness of the therapy (Essau et al., 2014).

Taking into account previous research, Dr. Cecilia Essau from the University of Roehampton (United Kingdom) and Dr. Thomas Ollendick from the Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University (United States) developed the Super Skills for Life treatment protocol in 2013. for children with internalized problems (anxiety and/or depression). The Super Skills for Life program has been shown to be effective in the Anglo-Saxon population (Essau, Olaya, Sasagawa, Pithia, Bray & Ollendick, 2014) in reducing childhood anxiety and comorbid problems, especially depression, self-esteem problems and behavioral problems, both in post-treatment and in follow-up. Additionally, after treatment, participants show an improvement in their social skills, problem solving, and conflict and stress management. Given its innovative nature and clinical interest, the program is being translated and validated in countries such as Germany, Cyprus, Portugal, Turkey, South Africa, Greece, Somalia, Australia and Poland.

In Spain, the translation and validation of the program has been carried out by Dr. Mireia Orgilés and Dr. José Pedro Espada with funding from the State Program for the Promotion of Scientific and Technical Research of Excellence of MINECO. The results of the project indicate that the Super Skills program has proven to be effective when applied to 115 Spanish children from 8 to 12 years old, observing a decrease in anxiety, a better mood, better self-esteem, better social skills, and more resources. to face situations that worry them, maintaining the effectiveness of the treatment in the follow-up carried out after 12 months. Furthermore, children who have received the treatment program show fewer symptoms of anxiety and depression after the intervention than children who are part of a control group.

Therefore, the available data support Super Skills as an effective treatment program for internalizing problems in Spanish children aged 8 to 12 years.

There are several studies that have shown that cognitive-behavioral therapy applied through the Internet can be just as effective in the treatment of childhood emotional problems as therapy carried out in a clinical consultation, such as the BRAVE-online program developed with Australian population (Spence et al., 2011). Based on the advantages of the therapy applied online and the difficulty of accessing psychological treatment for a high percentage of Spanish children, the adaptation and evaluation of the effectiveness of the Super Skills for Life transdiagnostic program, which has shown its effectiveness, is considered of interest. for anxiety and depression problems, for online application. Since the program has proven to be effective in the treatment of Spanish children aged 8 to 12 with internalizing problems, testing its effectiveness by applying it online would allow access to a greater number of children, reducing the waiting time to receive treatment, and with a better cost-effectiveness ratio. Once the study is completed, a protocolized treatment program will be available to be applied online with efficacy results for intervention in internalized problems.

The high frequency of childhood anxiety problems and their short and long-term repercussions recommend their treatment. However, there is a high percentage of children and adolescents who cannot access psychological treatment or who do not receive adequate treatment, among other reasons due to the high saturation of children's mental health units. Taking into account the difficulties in receiving the appropriate intervention in an effective way, it is necessary to propose new approaches that facilitate

access to therapy, highlighting the application of online interventions for their optimal cost-benefit ratio. For the treatment of anxiety and depression problems, the Super Skills for Life (SSL; Essau & Ollendick, 2013) program has demonstrated its effectiveness with Spanish children from 8 to 12 years old, being the first program based on cognitive-behavioral therapy. that integrates behavioral activation, social skills training and uses video feedback with cognitive preparation as part of the treatment.

Given the good results achieved by the program in reducing internalizing problems in Spanish children, it is expected that its online implementation will be equally effective, providing treatment to a greater number of children at a lower cost.

GOALS

GENERAL OBJECTIVE

Determine the effectiveness of the Super Skills for Life program applied through the online modality, in Ecuadorian children from 8 to 12 years old with internalized problems.

SPECIFIC OBJECTIVES

- Analyze the internalized problems prevalent in Ecuadorian children from 8 to 12 years old.
- Study the relationship between internalized problems and the online Super Skills for Life program.
- Examine the effectiveness of the online Super Skills for Life program.

METHODOLOGY

The research took place in Ecuador after having obtained the corresponding permits from both the Zonal Health Coordination of the Ministry of Public Health of Ecuador and the Ecuadorian Institute of Social Security and from the legal representatives of the minors who, prior to the application of the Super Skills program, for Life, signed an informed consent, authorizing the intervention in the child/adolescent. An approach was also made with the Ministry of Education of Ecuador, the zonal minister granted the respective permission to approach schools and colleges, the authorities were informed about the program and in turn they replicated it with the parents. of family, letting them know the registration link, which was voluntary.

STUDY DESIGN AND VARIABLES

STUDY DESIGN

A correlational, cross-sectional and retrospective study was carried out, in which the following variables are considered:

- Dependent variable:

- Super Skills for Life Program(Essau & Ollendick, 2013).

- Independent variable:

- Level of symptoms of the different internalized disorders such as depression and anxiety, current diagnosis, sociodemographic variables (sex, age, educational level, socioeconomic situation, core of coexistence, previous family and personal history, intrafamilial and school behavioral history).

PARTICIPANTS

The sample was made up of 250 children aged 8 to 12 years (figure calculated for a study with a power of 0.95 and an expected effect size of at least 0.30) retrospectively among

those who have requested consultation during 2022 and 2023 in the Public Health entities of Ecuador as in the entities of the Ecuadorian Institute of Social Security located in the different cities of the country, provided that the evaluation report carried out by the therapist or professional in charge is available, in which the determine the diagnosis of an internalizing disorder.

PROCEDURE

The medical records of Ecuadorian children from 8 to 12 years old, who were diagnosed with an internalizing disorder, were analyzed. And the program was socialized in schools and colleges in the country.

All children and adolescents participated voluntarily in the study and their legal representatives initially signed the informed consent where the content of the research was explained and registered digitally through the link:<https://bit.ly/3RI6iDQ> where the data collection and the pretest were carried out. Likewise, at the end of the 8 sessions of the program, the participating children and adolescents took the posttest digitally at the following link:<https://forms.gle/SyrPc8i8L5CWmfNi7>

Regarding ethical considerations, the project took place under the supervision of the Ministry of Public Health and the Ministry of Education of Ecuador. Participation did not entail any type of risk for the participants. Informed consent was obtained from the legal representatives of all participants, informing them that the information of their clients will be used in the research. They were informed about the objectives and achievements obtained in other studies of the Super Skills for Life program in other countries and in its different presentations, both in person and online, participation was voluntary since parents registered their children digitally.

INSTRUMENTS

SCALE	PROOF
ANXIETY	-Spence Children's Anxiety Scale (SCAS; Spence, 1997). -Child Anxiety Life Interference Scale Parent Report (CALIS-P; Lyneham et al., 1995).
DEPRESSION	-Mood and Feelings Questionnaire, Parent Version (MFQ-P; Angold et al., 1995).

RESULTS

Within the results of the study with the Ecuadorian population, Super Skills for Life can be considered an effective program with satisfactory results for the prevention and reduction of emotional symptoms in children who present anxiety and/or depression. The benefits of the program also extend to other externalized problems that participating children present, such as behavioral problems and problems in social relationships.

In conclusion, the effectiveness of the Super Skills for Life program with Ecuadorian children is consistent with other studies that support the effectiveness of transdiagnostic interventions to reduce anxiety and depression in the child and adolescent population, and that defend the usefulness of the transdiagnostic approach for prevention. of emotional disorders. In those children who were diagnosed with internalizing disorders, it was determined: improvement in symptoms of anxiety and depression, decrease in symptoms: decrease in the interference of anxiety in the lives of parents and subjects, improvement in internalizing problems: decrease in problems. behavioral and with peers, increased social skills and self-esteem.



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