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MENTAL HEALTH EDUCATION: REPORT OF INTERNSHIP EXPERIENCE IN SCHOOL PSYCHOLOGY

Giovana de Barros Lima

Graduation Student in Psychology

``Faculdade dos Carajás``

Marabá-PA

<https://orcid.org/0009-0002-8708-6021>

Paula Danielle Souza Monteiro

``Instituto Federal do Pará`` (IFPA-

Federal Institute of Pará)

Marabá-PA

<https://orcid.org/0009-0000-1723-6042>

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Abstract: Yellow September is an awareness campaign about suicide prevention, which arises as a response to a public health problem. The study sought to analyze the experience of a curricular internship in psychology in the context of the Yellow September campaign, detailing the activities carried out, the strategies implemented and the results obtained, with a focus on promoting mental health and preventing suicide among adolescents in a school environment. The intervention was carried out at the Marabá Industrial Campus of ``*Instituto Federal do Pará*`` (IFPA), under the supervision of the institution's psychologist. 282 students from 9 high school classes participated, as part of a set of actions carried out in 2023. The activities included publishing cards and informative texts on digital media, decorating the school environment, leafleting booklets and holding a workshop. The results highlight: 1) that the workshop created a space for open dialogue that played a relevant role in identifying warning signs; 2) the relevance of the school psychologist's role in suicide prevention; 3) the intern had the opportunity to apply theory to practice. Promoting mental health at school is an essential educational commitment for the provision of primary care and integral development in adolescence.

Keywords: Suicide prevention, adolescence, school environment, Brazilian Amazon.

INTRODUCTION

The school plays an important role in promoting mental health in childhood and adolescence. Prevention programs and actions that promote well-being at school contribute to development and learning (Moura; Costa, 2019).

Currently, the promotion of mental health is seen as one of the components of quality education. Various programs and initiatives are implemented in schools around the world.

In 2005, the World Health Organization (W.H.O.) launched the School Mental Health Framework for Action, a guide on how to promote mental health in schools.

Regarding the distribution of suicide cases in the states of the Northern Region, between 2010 and 2013, Pará stood out as having the second highest rate of suicides among children and adolescents, behind only Amazonas (Batista et al., 2016). Between 2000 and 2015, the North region recorded a 72.81% increase in suicide mortality rates (Cicogna; Hillesheim; Hallal, 2019).

Yellow September is a suicide prevention campaign that was adopted in Brazil in 2014, with the proposal that during the month of September, actions be carried out that open space for debates about valuing life and preventing suicide, alerting the population about the importance of these discussions (Court of Justice of the Federal District and Territories, 2019).

In the context of the campaign, the role of the school psychologist becomes essential in preventing suicide and promoting mental health. Furthermore, research in the area is essential to improve prevention strategies and increase the effectiveness of interventions. School psychology can contribute to raising awareness in society about the importance of preventing suicide, combating stigma and promoting the search for help (Costa, 2013).

Carrying out an internship in psychology with a focus on mental health promotion and prevention, including the topic of suicide, allows a critical analysis of the role of the school psychologist. The specific supervised internship is a stage designed to provide students with practical experience (Federal Council of Psychology, 2018).

The intervention is justified in view of the frequent demands for psychological support at the Marabá Industrial Campus of ``*Instituto Federal do Pará*`` (IFPA). It is also based on the

need for continuous and specific interventions for the local reality, the insufficient resources allocated to mental health in schools in the Amazon region, the positive impact of early intervention and mental health promotion on improving academic performance and well-being, general well-being of the students.

Therefore, the action and practice of effective interventions to help individuals facing emotional and behavioral difficulties, including the risk of suicide, becomes crucial. Thus, the objective was to analyze the experience of a curricular internship in psychology in the context of the Yellow September campaign, detailing the activities carried out, the strategies implemented and the results obtained, with a focus on promoting mental health and preventing suicide among adolescents in an environment school.

THEORETICAL REFERENCE

School Psychology is a professional field that operates within schools or related areas. Among its objectives, it actively collaborates in the development of the school community, including the use of collective mental health care strategies, promoting the emotional and social well-being of students, creating an environment conducive to learning and the integral formation of citizens. (Antunes, 2008).

The National Curricular Guidelines (DCNs) for undergraduate courses in Psychology, in the field of school psychology, define the principles and foundations of professional training. The work of the school psychologist is guided by a critical and interdisciplinary vision, considering human development in its entirety and the various variables that influence the learning process (Sousa; Facci; Silva, 2018).

The DCNs are pillars in the training of qualified professionals and define the skills and abilities that the school psychologist

must develop, such as understanding the role of Psychology in the educational context, developing assessment skills, carrying out psychological interventions, acting collaboratively, carrying out research and maintaining if updated (Sousa; Facci; Silva, 2018).

The reality of the school psychologist's work is very broad and complex and their practice is based on collective interventions, covering groups and systems in which the subject is inserted. This approach recognizes that individual development is influenced by several factors, from family dynamics to the social and cultural context (Viana, 2016).

The school psychologist works in different fields promoting the well-being and development of the school community. Through prevention and promotion of mental health, a positive environment for learning is ensured. In crisis situations, the psychologist offers support and help to deal with bullying, violence, grief and other challenges (Silva; Merlo, 2009).

According to Dias, Patias and Abaid (2014), collective care strategies, such as dialogue circles, mentoring programs and awareness campaigns are essential tools to strengthen the school community and promote the well-being of its members. The psychologist acts as an agent of transformation promoting the mental health and development of students.

School is the central stage of a teenager's life and plays an important role in the promotion and prevention of mental health. Vieira et al. (2014) emphasize that the school environment is a unique space for the dissemination of knowledge and practices that contribute to mental well-being.

Over the past two decades, the importance of mental health in education has gained increasing recognition globally. In 2000 there was an increase in investment in programs focusing on mental health in schools. In

the following decade, several international guidelines and documents were published, boosting the engagement of the government, international organizations and civil society in the cause (W.H.O., 2018).

Law number 13,935, sanctioned in December 2019, provides for the provision of services by psychologists and social workers in public schools, but a lack of professionals is identified. The national average is one psychologist for every 1,910 students, but the situation in the Brazilian Amazon is worse (Associação Paulista de Medicina, 2023).

To face this challenge, Law number 14,819 of January 2024 represented a historic milestone for Brazilian education by establishing the National Policy for Psychosocial Care in School Communities. It aims to promote the mental health and well-being of students, teachers and other education professionals, recognizing the importance of the school environment for the integral development of individuals.

School is an ideal space to promote the mental health of young people. When implemented effectively, it can bring long-term benefits, such as better emotional and social functioning, performance and sustainability of such programs (Matos, 2014). When participants are given a voice, the intervention makes them proactive agents in the transformation process, boosting their empowerment and independence (Mondardo; Piovesan; Mantovani, 2009)

The omission of mental health care in the educational environment creates fertile ground for the emergence of various problems, especially for students, with adolescence being a particularly challenging period for students, and the lack of attention to mental health can trigger disorders such as anxiety and depression (André, 2017).

Yellow September is an awareness campaign about suicide prevention, which arises as a

response to a global public health problem. Each year, thousands of lives are lost to suicide. Brazil occupies the 8th position in the world ranking of suicide among young people aged 15 to 29, according to the WHO (Ministry of Health, 2015).

In Brazil, suicide is the third leading cause of death among young people, behind only homicides and traffic accidents (Pan American Health Organization - OPAS, 2019). According to Cassorla (2017), suicide was more prevalent in older people, a reality that has been changing and the young population, including adolescents, is increasingly vulnerable.

Suicide is influenced by several factors such as previous attempts, LGBTQIA+ population, family history, genetic predisposition, psychological problems and lack of social support (Bilsen, 2018; Brás; Jesus; Carmo, 2016). On the other hand, there are protective factors against suicide, such as healthy family ties, social support, self-esteem, practicing positive coping strategies, access to mental health services and preventing Bullying (Brás; Jesus; Carmo, 2016).

Adolescence is marked by several changes and challenges, such as the construction of identity, pressure for results and uncertainty about the future, factors that can contribute to mental illness, such as anxiety, depression and suicidal ideation. When schools address Yellow September, they can create a more welcoming and safer environment for students to express their feelings and seek help (OPAS, 2013).

The school plays an important role in preventing suicide by promoting mental health education, disseminating accurate information on the topic and creating a welcoming and inclusive environment, providing opportunities for students to learn about the importance of mental health, identify warning signs and develop strategies for dealing with life's difficulties and socio-emotional skills (Ministry of Health, 2015).

Therefore, by developing suicide awareness and prevention actions in schools, it contributes to promoting the mental health and well-being of students. The participation of the entire school community is essential for the success of the campaign and for building a culture of mental health care (Botega; Scavacini, 2023).

METHODOLOGY

The study is a descriptive experience report of the specific curricular internship of the Psychology degree, outlining an overview of the experience in the school context. According to Stake (2011), he weaves a narrative, with critical reflections on the learning and challenges encountered along the journey.

The experience report describes an action carried out at IFPA's Marabá Industrial Campus, located in the city of Marabá in the southeast of the State of Pará, under the supervision of the institution's psychologist. 282 high school students participated, aged between 15 and 24 years old, as part of a set of 48 actions carried out with 9 classes during the year 2023. The workshop addressed the theme "Yellow September: If You Need Help!", seeking to promote mental health and suicide prevention among adolescents in a school environment.

The planning of actions related to the campaign took place through face-to-face meetings with interns from the 10th period of the Psychology course at a higher education institution, to align ideas, suggestions, exchange experiences and prepare materials such as slides, booklets and cards for dissemination in digital media.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

In Table 1, 05 meetings held are described, informing the activities with the aim of presenting an overview of the actions developed, highlighting the experiences that occurred in each meeting.

ACTION 1: MEETINGS TO READ AND PREPARE MATERIALS

The interns dedicated themselves to intense learning, seeking theoretical knowledge, aiming to create materials that would raise awareness among the school community about suicide prevention. Through in-depth studies, the team mastered the main information about suicide and its prevention. Statistics, risk factors, warning signs and supporting resources were carefully analyzed, building a solid foundation for campaign creation. With the knowledge acquired, the team improved their practical skills in producing informative and awareness-raising materials.

ACTION 2: DISSEMINATION OF CARDS AND INFORMATIVE TEXTS IN DIGITAL MEDIA

Digital media were used to disseminate cards with information about Yellow September and suicide prevention to the public inside and outside the school environment. Cards with informative texts with supporting data and resources were created and shared on different social platforms.

The campaign had a wide reach, raising awareness about the importance of suicide prevention. The initiative generated community engagement, promoting a culture of mental health care, corroborating Vieira et al. (2014) who propose that informative actions can generate changes in behavior regarding the promotion of mental health.

Image is a powerful tool in promoting adolescent health (Bernardes et al., 2016), it facilitates reflection on the topic,

MEETINGS	PERFORMED ACTIVITIES	GOAL
1	Meetings to read and prepare materials (slides, booklets and cards).	Deepen theoretical knowledge, improve practical skills and prepare materials.
2	Disclosure of cards and informative texts in digital media.	Disseminate information based on scientific literature about suicide and the Yellow September campaign in digital media.
3	Decoration of the school environment.	Build a warm and inviting space to encourage dialogue about suicide prevention and help-seeking.
4	Booklet leaflet: "Yellow September: if you need it, ask for help!"	Disseminate information focused on suicide prevention through leafleting.
5	Workshops: "Don't suffer in silence: talking is the best solution!"	Raise awareness and encourage the search for help in situations of emotional suffering, encouraging dialogue and appreciation of life.

Table 1: Description of activities carried out

Source: Prepared by the authors

influencing young people's understanding and interpretation. For Araújo (2014), images can influence readers' understanding and interpretation, building meanings that can go beyond what the author originally intended.

The use of digital media to promote awareness campaigns and suicide prevention during Yellow September reveals the potential of these platforms as tools for social engagement and public education. The intersection between the use of digital media to promote campaigns and the ideas expressed by Diniz (2023) illustrates the transformative capacity of digital media in mental health and suicide prevention. By creating and disseminating informative cards about mental health on widely used social networks, the campaign managed to go beyond the school environment, reaching a diverse audience.

ACTION 3: DECORATION OF THE SCHOOL ENVIRONMENT

The campus was decorated with yellow balloons, posters with impactful phrases and an informative mural on the topic. More than decorating the physical space, ornamentation transcends mere aesthetics, becoming a fundamental component in the construction of a meaningful and transformative learning space (Freire, 2011).

Through the decoration of the school environment, it was possible to promote dialogue about suicide and the search for help, cultivating a culture of prevention and awareness about the importance of mental health, confirming Perkins (2001), who states that decoration with elements that stimulate the Questioning provides analysis and argumentation.

ACTION 4: BOOKLET LEAFLET: "YELLOW SEPTEMBER: IF YOU NEED IT, ASK FOR HELP!"

In line with the release of the cards, an awareness campaign was carried out on suicide prevention and the appreciation of life. The initiative consisted of preparing and distributing a small printed booklet with informative content prepared by the interns, yellow ribbons and messages alluding to the campaign. Through the action, we sought to expand the reach of the campaign, combating stigma and promoting the search for help. According to Rocha, Galvão and Domingues (2019), the booklet is an educational product and can serve as an effective pedagogical support for health teaching.

ACTION 5: WORKSHOP “DON’T SUFFER IN SILENCE: TALKING IS THE BEST SOLUTION!”

The workshops were held with the aim of promoting mental health and suicide prevention among adolescents. Through informative, theoretically based discussions, adolescents were informed about the risk factors for suicide, the importance of recognizing warning signs in oneself and others, and the need to seek support. Emphasis was placed on building a support network, preventative strategies and how to effectively help those facing emotional crises, in addition to providing information about the resources available for assistance.

This way, a space for open dialogue was created that played a relevant role in identifying early warning signs and promoting a robust support network. Also, we sought to demystify taboos associated with mental health, fostering a culture of awareness and acceptance, which allows people to seek help without fear of stigmatization (Petter, 2021).

At the end, the Anchor of Feelings dynamic was held, where the group created “anchors” to be read in times of crisis, messages written by the group, motivating those who read them, if someone was discouraged they could go to the Anchor of Feelings to renew their motivation and gather strength not to give up. Everyone participated, writing sentences, excerpts from songs, poems, drawings or words that brought them comfort in a moment of anguish. The initiative aimed to encourage open dialogue about emotional distress and empower teens to make positive change in their communities.

The dynamic represents an empathetic methodology, as it involved the collective creation of emotional “anchors”, highlighting the importance of participatory strategies in strengthening individual and collective resilience (Oliveira, 2021). By allowing participants to express their feelings and share

messages of hope and support, the dynamic facilitated emotional expression and promoted the construction of a support network, reiterating the message that people are not alone in their struggles (Pennebaker, 2000).

In this context, the school environment encourages the promotion of mental health when using accessible strategies (Kutcher; Wei; Estanislau, 2014) such as workshops with active participation of students. Furthermore, it achieves one of the principles of health-promoting schools - the active participation of students (Vieira et al., 2014). And the expository activity is considered one of the strategies for effective socio-emotional education actions (Tecla et al., 2014).

Considering that School Psychology uses collective mental health care strategies (Antunes, 2008), another important aspect to be highlighted is the type of strategy used to promote mental health, collectively, which makes social support more effective (Polejack; Seidl, 2015).

Addressing mental health with students is a challenge, the bodily, social and emotional changes during this phase can be intense and, at times, challenging, and it is important to create safe and welcoming spaces. Schools, by promoting debates on the topic and developing socio-emotional skills in students, create an environment conducive to suicide prevention, highlighting the effectiveness of socio-emotional intervention programs in reducing suicidal behaviors in adolescents (Durlak et al., 2011)

During the development of the actions, students demonstrated engagement, from searching for information cards to actively participating in the lecture and dynamics. The environment remained welcoming and receptive during the activities, demonstrating the success of the initiative, confirming Mondardo, Piovesan and Mantovani (2009), who emphasize that the participants’ comments

and statements serve as indicators of the effectiveness of the activities carried out.

Finally, the specific stage of the internship provided the opportunity to explore essential topics for the mental health and integral development of adolescents. Through immersion in the school environment, the intern has the opportunity to actively observe and collaborate in the activities of the psychology professional and build solid foundations between theory and practice, applying the principles and foundations of professional training in accordance with the DCNs, highlighting the relevance of internship in the development of professionals (Federal Council of Psychology, 2018; Ministry of Education, 2004; Pereira; Monteiro, 2024).

CONCLUSION

School plays an important role in adolescents' lives, influencing their experiences and development. The above reflects the role

of the school as a space that promotes mental health, an essential educational commitment for integral development.

The execution of the actions provided the opportunity to address issues such as suicide prevention, demystifying taboos and promoting the search for help. It covered other social contexts, such as the family and educational context of the target audience, allowing it to reach those who face difficulties such as adaptation and family problems.

The actions aim to prevent mental illness through psychoeducation, awareness campaigns and early intervention strategies. Thus, the research contributes to critical reflection on social commitment and the role of the professional practice of school psychologists, strengthening their performance and expanding their impacts on the educational community. Furthermore, the results strengthen the argument in favor of the inclusion of psychologists in schools in the Amazon region.

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