

Life Skills and Autonomy in Adolescence: Implementation of a Didactic Strategy in Moderate Intellectual Disability

Habilidades para la Vida y Autonomía en la Adolescencia: Implementación de una Estrategia Didáctica en Discapacidad Intelectual Moderada

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Abstract

This work was developed with the objective of promoting skills to improve the quality of life of a teenager with moderate intellectual disability. The research sought to evaluate the implementation of educational materials in relation to the degree of independence of a 14-year-old patient with Moderate Intellectual Disability (MID), recognizing the importance of an autonomous life in her daily routine. To achieve these objectives, a pedagogical proposal called “Booklet Towards Self-Sufficiency” was developed. This booklet consists of five units designed to foster reflective thinking about independence and autonomy through the understanding of basic mathematics and money management. The study was developed under an interpretive-comprehensive methodological paradigm, with a qualitative approach and employing a case study design, which allowed for an in-depth and contextualized analysis of the development of life skills in the teenager. The results showed that through close support and a focus on developing skills, the patient was able to function with greater autonomy, make conscious decisions, and build healthier relationships in her family, school, and social environment.

Keywords: Moderate intellectual disability, skills, emotional regulation, strategies, adolescent, currency

1. Introduction

The concept of quality of life is not only polysemic, but varies according to the culture, era, and social group to which the individual belongs. The different approaches to quality of life highlight the importance of recognizing the biopsychosocial nature of the human being and the complexity of relationships established with the context (Córdoba et al., 2016). Despite international developments and publications on the results of quality-of-life assessments in people with intellectual disabilities, they remain scarce, especially in the Latin American context.

In the Colombian context, the inclusion of people with disabilities is based on ensuring and fulfilling their rights, guaranteeing them the same opportunities to participate fully in all aspects of life. Consequently, the intention arises to advocate for the rights of people with moderate intellectual disability and provide opportunities to improve their quality of life, especially for adolescents who have been marginalized.

The study focuses on a 14-year-old adolescent with Moderate Intellectual Disability, referred to hereafter as (MID), whose adaptive skills have been affected, requiring family support to carry out daily activities and acquire new learning. People with intellectual disabilities experience impaired functioning, which limits their ability to carry out activities of daily living. Each individual, regardless of their intellectual capacity, has the innate right to live with dignity and to participate fully in society (Garzón, 2011). This includes the right to make decisions and exercise control

over important aspects of their life, such as personal finances. Personal autonomy is considered "an unavoidable requirement to facilitate the social integration, well-being, and health of any person" (Ferrerías et al., 2009). Therefore, the development of an institutional booklet is proposed as an important step toward the adolescent's economic independence, based on principles of basic mathematics for handling Colombian currency.

Therefore, the justification of this work focuses on the use of didactic material as a fundamental support for curricular adaptations, guaranteeing the elimination of educational barriers, providing equitable opportunities through experimentation and the development of quality learning (Colorado and Mendoza, 2021).

2. Methodology

The project is framed within the interpretive-comprehensive paradigm, which is characterized by the situational analysis of the matter under study (Miranda and Ortiz, 2020). It seeks the deep and contextualized understanding of the phenomena, desires, and values of those who participate in the project.

A qualitative approach was adopted, which focuses on the description and interpretation of lived experiences, favoring detailed exposition and seeking to understand the meanings that individuals give to their own lives and experiences (Anadón, 2008). This, in turn, is adapted to the methodological design of the case study, which allows for an in-depth, holistic, and contextualized

analysis of the particular situation of life skills development in the adolescent with MID.

3. Results

The analysis revealed that the adolescent's level of personal autonomy is in development. Although she assists with minimal household tasks, she requires constant supervision for personal hygiene and the management of her belongings. Her functional skills reflect adaptive behavior developed with intermittent and constant support from her family members (Schalock et al., 2010).

In functional cognitive skills, she presents low attention capacity and short-term memory, becoming easily distracted. She requires structured and brief activities with visual supports to enhance her cognitive performance. The use of structured supports, modeling, and visual stimuli makes it possible to extend attention spans and promote logical thinking (Feuerstein, 1990, as cited in Parada and Avendaño, 2013). In communication, she uses simple sentences (2-3 words). Limitations in language affect the fluency of her social interactions, which aligns with the theory that language is a mediating tool for cognitive and emotional development (Vygotsky, 1978, as cited in Carrera and Mazzarella, 2001).

The application of the didactic strategy succeeded in implementing environmental modification techniques,

such as the reduction of distracting stimuli and the use of visual and auditory resources. It was evident that the adolescent finds gross motor skills easier than fine motor skills. Therefore, it was demonstrated that constant sensorimotor stimulation improves neurological organization and motor planning (Ayres, 1972, as cited in Benito and Yagüe, 2017).

The adolescent needs alternative strategies to work on emotional regulation. Consequently, emotion management strategies were implemented and a safe space was provided for expressing them, such as didactic activities to help her identify and express her emotional states. Regarding the social level, the adolescent shows limited social initiative. For this reason, the learning of social behaviors occurs through observation and modeling (Bandura, 1986, as cited in Ocadiz, 2015). Therefore, it is essential to strengthen self-confidence through positive reinforcement and guided participation spaces. The overall result of the intervention demonstrated that close and adapted support allowed the patient to function with greater autonomy and make conscious decisions.

4. Conclusions

It was identified that the adolescent with MID presents a level of autonomy in development, with the need for constant support, especially to strengthen functional cognitive skills (attention and short-term memory) and social skills (social initiative). On the other hand, the application of the

didactic strategy, integrated into the teaching methodology, strengthened the development of life skills by promoting the handling of Colombian currency and enhancing the development of gross motor skills.

The impact of the case study demonstrated that personalized pedagogical support and adapted didactic material are crucial for the adolescent to achieve greater independence, improving her quality of life and fostering her full social participation (Garzón, 2011).

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