

Suicide Conceptualization in Adolescents through Semantic Networks

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Abstract : Suicide is a global, multidimensional and dynamic problem of mental health, which requires a constant study for its understanding and prevention. When research of this phenomenon is done, it is necessary to consider the different characteristics it may have because of the individual and sociocultural variables, the importance of this consideration is related to the generation of effective treatments and interventions. Adolescents are a vulnerable population due to the characteristics of the development stage. The investigation was carried out with the objective of identifying and describing the conceptualization of adolescents of suicide, and in this process, we find possible differences between men and women. The study was carried out in Saltillo, Coahuila, Mexico. The sample was composed of 418 volunteer students aged between 11 and 18 years. The ethical aspects of the research were reviewed and considered in all the processes of the investigation with the participants, their parents and the schools to which they belonged, psychological attention was offered to the participants and preventive workshops were carried in the educational institutions. Natural semantic networks were the instrument used, since this hybrid method allows to find and analyze the social concept of a phenomenon; in this case, the word suicide was used as an evocative stimulus and participants were asked to evoke at least five words and a maximum 10 that they thought were related to suicide, and then hierarchize them according to the closeness with the construct. The subsequent analysis was carried with Excel, yielding the semantic weights, affective loads and the distances between each of the semantic fields established according to the words reported by the subjects. The results showed similarities in the conceptualization of suicide in adolescents, men and women. Seven semantic fields were generated; the words were related in the discourse analysis: 1) death, 2) possible triggering factors, 3) associated moods, 4) methods used to carry it out, 5) psychological symptomatology that could affect, 6) words associated with a rejection of suicide, and finally, 7) specific objects to carry it out. One of the necessary aspects to consider in the investigations of complex issues such as suicide is to have a diversity of instruments and techniques that adjust to the characteristics of the population and that allow to understand the phenomena from the social constructs and not only theoretical. The constant study of suicide is a pressing need, the loss of a life from emotional difficulties that can be solved through psychiatry and psychological methods requires governments and professionals to pay attention and work with the risk population.

Keywords : adolescents, psychological construct, semantic networks, suicide

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