

MUSICALIZATION AS A DIDACTIC TOOL FOR TEACHING HYGIENE HABITS IN EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION: AN EXPERIENCE REPORT



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ABSTRACT

Introduction: Studies reveal how hygienic habits are essential at all stages of life, especially in childhood, so that this public begins to understand the relationship between hygiene and health. To consolidate these customs in this age group, music education becomes an effective option, since music stimulates cognitive and sensory skills and reflective critical reasoning. Objective: To describe the experience of medical students from the Faculty of Medical Sciences of Minas Gerais during the extension action proposed in the discipline Collective Health Practice I. Method: The activity was carried out for children aged 1 to 3 years by a group of nine students, with the guidance of the teacher of the discipline Collective Health Practice I in the library of a municipal school in Belo Horizonte. An instructive song was developed by the students on topics related to hygiene, such as toothbrushing, bathing, hair and hand washing. The parody was composed by one of the students of the project and presented to the infants in a playful theater and on the guitar. Results: It was identified, through the teachers, that the children returned to the classrooms singing parts of the song shown. Subsequently, the students were asked to recite the parody again to the students, observing great interest on the part of the children, who sang simultaneously with the students. In addition to the impact on infants, the action also stimulated the students' learning about child behavior and the creative and interaction capacity of different age groups, bringing together the children's playful space and the context of health promotion presented. Conclusion: The use of music as a learning tool in health education proved to be effective, since the child, inserted in a playful dimension, was interested in the information learned in the song. However, a longer period of observation is necessary to consider a possible reproduction of these habits in other environments.

Keywords: Hygiene. Children. Health Education. Music.

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INTRODUCTION

Childhood is a period of life in which habits are learned that define the future state of health of children. Through the acquisition of the necessary knowledge early in life, it is possible to establish practices that will become intuitive in adulthood and that will ensure a good quality of life and health over the years. Thus, it is evident that, in addition to the home environment, the school is one of the most important places where the child should be stimulated to learn such customs. (12)

A habit that plays a crucial role in the individual's health status and that must be acquired as soon as possible is hygiene care. Correct hand, body, hair washing, and proper toothbrushing, in addition to effective food hygiene, are measures to be implemented by the entire population for the prevention and control of diseases(1). Thus, it is essential that these topics are part of the school routine, as it is a simple way to promote health to the new generations.

However, the short attention span that a child can dedicate to a single activity makes the process of teaching about hygiene challenging. To solve this, it is interesting to transform information into playful games, since this allows teaching to be understandable and captivating to children. Thus, means can be used to bring the child's curiosity closer to the topic of interest of the teacher, and a practical way to accomplish this is through music.

To make learning effective, musicalization in early childhood education is a teaching strategy that, through the gamification of knowledge, facilitates the development of new skills in the public in question (2). In this way, music is a tool that should be used in the school environment, since it serves as an intermediary channel between the teacher and the child and arouses interest due to the "fun" factor. In addition, music helps to adapt the transmission of knowledge to the stage of development in which the infant is.

In addition to providing creative development, stimulating the child's hearing, speech, rhythm and sound perception, music also promotes their cognitive growth. Musical elements stimulate concentration, memory and the ability to establish connection (3), which is necessary for the infant's understanding of the importance of hygiene measures in their daily lives. In this way, the solidification and long-term retention of what is exposed to children is facilitated.

Therefore, in order to assist in the teaching of children in a municipal kindergarten school in Belo Horizonte, students from the Medicine course of the Faculty of Medical Sciences of Minas Gerais (FCMMG), in Belo Horizonte, implemented the methodology of

musicalization in actions aimed at learning about hygiene. These interventions occurred through the discipline of Collective Health Practices I, whose objective proposes the development of extension actions aimed at the elaboration of health interventions by students, as a way of promoting health to the population.

Thus, the objective of this work is to report on the process of creation and application of musical tools in the field by the students, in addition to reporting the impacts of the actions observed, aiming at the consolidation of good practices in the field of health care.

METHODOLOGY

The present study is an experience report with a reflective approach, reporting the experience of nine medical students under the guidance of the professor of the discipline of Collective Health Practice I, at the Faculty of Medical Sciences of Minas Gerais, in the second semester of 2022. The students were part of a morning of class at a municipal kindergarten school (EMEI) in the south-central region of Belo Horizonte, and the extension action was carried out with children from one to three years old from this institution.

The approach of the activity aimed to disseminate scientific knowledge in a playful way about important topics for health, with hygiene being the theme chosen to be portrayed by the students. For this, initially a bibliographic review was carried out on the theme to be addressed, in order to acquire a theoretical basis for the foundation and execution of the project.

With the bibliographic research, the action was elaborated and consisted of the realization of a playful theater on subjects related to hygiene, such as toothbrushing, bathing, hair and hand washing. The action took place in stages, the first stage consisted of a theater and the second stage was composed of a song, prepared by the academics.

THE THEATER

The theater was performed by five academics, who characterized themselves as characters in a story set in an enchanted kingdom. The play was divided between two main locations: the "Kingdom of Cleanliness" and the "Grove of Dirt". In the Kingdom of Cleanliness, there was the king, who ruled wisely, and the knight, who was in charge of carrying the message of hygiene to the residents of the Grove of Dirt.

The narrative was organized into three main scenes, each focusing on an essential hygiene habit. The story began with the king instructing the knight to visit the Grove of Dirt to help the villagers learn about personal hygiene in a fun and educational way.

Scene 1: The Householder Who Didn't Bathe

In the first scene, the knight meets a character who avoided bathing. During the dialogue, the rider explains the importance of keeping the body clean to avoid diseases and maintain well-being. With playful language and dynamic interactions, the resident is convinced to adopt the habit of bathing regularly.

Scene 2: The Householder Who Didn't Wash His Hands

In the second scene, the knight meets a villager who never washed his hands, even after activities such as playing in the dirt or before meals. Using practical examples, the rider teaches how to wash your hands correctly, highlighting the most important moments to carry out this habit.

Scene 3: The Resident Who Didn't Brush Her Teeth

In the final scene, the knight meets a resident who was not in the habit of brushing her teeth. He talks to her about how poor oral hygiene can cause cavities and bad breath. Through games and demonstrations, he teaches the correct brushing technique, the importance of flossing and the ideal times to brush your teeth.

At the end of each scene, the residents of Dirt Woods learn from the knight and decide to change their ways. At the end, all the characters gather on stage, celebrating the transformation of residents and the adoption of hygiene practices. The play ends with a message from the king, reinforcing the importance of hygiene for health and inviting the children in the audience to follow the example of the characters.

THE PRODUCTION OF THE SONG ABOUT HYGIENE - "VAMOS LAVAR"

Aiming at the end of the theater, an instructive song was developed by the students on the theme addressed. The song, which was composed by one of the students of the project, is a parody of the song "Vamo Pulá" by the Brazilian duo Sandy and Júnior, released in 1999, on the album "As Quatro Estações". The parody was then presented to the infants through a guitar and the singing of the academics. The lyrics of the parody are described in the following paragraphs.

I'm smelling a smell in the air
It's a soap that wants to dominate me
It's a good thing coming my way

That infects me and even makes my heart race
I think I already know where it comes from
That smell that's on me
The shower makes me like this
Hair I'll wash, hands I'll clean
My whole body is going to get wet
Get ready, you're going to have an amazing trip
When I'm done counting
Attention to the countdown: 5, 4, 3, 2, 1
Let's wash, let's wash (4x)
The bath has to be taken every day
Washing your hands and head with joy
And when you wash, rinse and go clean
And it smells good you will cheer up
Let's wash, let's wash (4x)
Source: Parody of authorial production

RESULTS

THE BENEFITS FOR CHILDREN DURING AND AFTER THE ACTION

The children of the age group approached showed a lot of interest in parody during the action of the academics. Initially, at the time of the theater staged by the students, the infants were attentive and observant, without interacting much with the performance. However, later, with the introduction of the guitar and the lyrics of the song developed, they began to actively participate in the activity, singing together with the students. Some of the children repeated the movements of washing their hands and hair as these actions were mentioned in the song, which demonstrates positive points in terms of child engagement and interaction.

Studies indicate that playfulness should be understood as a feeling, and the various experiences of playfulness are experienced individually by each human being(5). The difference between each child's reactions was noticeable: some were more active, while others were distracted or did not show as much interest. Thus, it is understood that in extension actions, especially those aimed at children, the individuality of each being must be considered, taking into account factors such as age group, social reality, level of cognition and gender.

After the presentation of the musical parody, it was reported by the teachers that the infants, especially those from the older classes, returned to the classrooms humming excerpts of the song, which suggests a significant use of the content. One of the school's classes could not attend at the time of the action, but the teachers requested that the students go to the non-participating classroom to present the parody, which again obtained

a very positive reaction from the students. This behavior illustrates the positivity of the action, which was also noted as advantageous by the teachers.

Image 1: Moment of presentation of the song composed by the students to one of the classes of the school institution. Belo Horizonte (BH), 2022



Source: Authorial image.

Image 2: Theater presented to the children by the students. Belo Horizonte (BH), 2022



Source: Authorial image.

It is not possible to evaluate the long-term impacts of the extension action on the students of this school institution, since the contact with the children was only on this occasion. However, it is known that the use of music can stimulate cognitive and sensory skills in this age group, strengthening learning through repetition associated with playful elements, suggesting a certain fixation of the hygiene habits mentioned and taught in the song. The positive influence of music in the educational environment can be exemplified by Hallam's research (5). The study reported that 78% of schools that integrated music in a

meaningful way into their curricula saw significant improvements in students' overall academic performance. This corroborates the evidence of the effectiveness of music education.

REPRODUCTION OF HYGIENIC HABITS AT SCHOOL AND AT HOME

It was reported by the teachers to the students about the excitement of the infants when they returned to the classrooms after the action. Many repeated excerpts from the song and gestured the movements related to the hygienic habits mentioned in the song. It was possible to notice that the use of music facilitated the transmission of information and engaged children in a way that other didactic methods could not possibly achieve.

It is believed that the presentation of correct hygiene habits in an environment outside the classroom and in a playful and fun way can help children to fix these attitudes and their reproduction in the school environment, where hygiene becomes essential. In addition, the activity also worked as a demonstration of how interdisciplinary and playful actions can be applied to promote health in the school context, encouraging the school to explore new forms of teaching methodology.

The incorporation of hygiene habits in a playful and interactive approach at school can make children reproduce these practices at home, contributing to the family's understanding of the importance of hygiene. Although contact with parents was not the main focus of the action, the indirect impact on them can also be considered, since an institution that addresses health practices with its students gains greater confidence from parents in relation to the quality of teaching.

DIFFICULTIES OBSERVED DURING THE ACTION AND IN ADHERENCE TO HYGIENIC HABITS

Despite the many positive results, some limitations were perceived during the experiment. The short period of contact with the children, which was only one extension action, prevented the long-term evaluation of the students on the evolution of the application of hygiene practices in the school and home environment. In addition, the age group of children, despite being a crucial phase for the formation of habits, can present additional challenges related to the complete understanding of the instructions and the ability to autonomously reproduce the habits taught.

Another challenge was the implementation of an action that would captivate the attention of all children in a similar way. However, due to the difference in age groups, considering children from one to three years old, it is necessary to understand that infants will interact in different ways, according to the neuropsychomotor development associated with age.

Thus, considering the social and family reality of each child is also essential to carry out an action that involves interaction and fixation of the content by the children. Therefore, it was possible to observe that not all students showed great interest during the activity or even were impatient during the parody. It is important to highlight that working with children from different social conditions implies dealing with different customs, and it is necessary to take into account limitations related to housing precariousness, difficulties in accessing health services and basic goods for child well-being (6).

CONTRIBUTION OF THE INTERVENTION TO THE TRAINING OF STUDENTS

The experience promoted significant learning for the students, through the search for information and in-depth knowledge about the hygiene theme, which is often underestimated by the general public and, in some cases, even by health professionals. This experience, therefore, contributed to the professional training of students, by integrating theoretical and practical knowledge for the promotion of health and education.

The development of the musical parody and its presentation worked as a tool for a better understanding of the interaction and comprehension skills of children in the age group addressed by the project. In addition, it added to the students the perception that playful and practical learning can also work as an excellent method of early childhood education.

DISCUSSION

The promotion of hygiene is fundamental for the health of the population, playing a crucial role in the prevention of diseases and infections. Children, in particular, are one of the most vulnerable groups to lack of hygienic habits, as they depend on the support of parents, teachers or guardians to carry out these practices properly. In addition, the environment of daycare centers and schools has specific epidemiological characteristics, since many children share closed spaces, which facilitates the spread of diseases. (9) For this reason, conditions such as scabies, parasitic infections, and viruses are quite common

in this context, reinforcing the need for effective hygiene measures to prevent transmission and infection.

The school environment, however, also presents itself as a privileged space for the promotion of appropriate hygienic practices, since children remain in institutions for long periods of the day. During the intervention carried out in an EMEI in Belo Horizonte, it was observed that most of the children remain in the institution full-time, including meal times. These moments are strategic to reinforce the importance of hand and tooth hygiene, directly contributing to the formation of healthy habits from childhood. (12)

The experience reported in the study in question proved to be an effective intervention in the context of early childhood education, since it was able to combine playful and musical aspects in the teaching of hygiene habits. The use of music, especially through the creation of the parody "Let's wash", provided the engagement of children in a significant way, promoting the learning of essential customs for a healthy routine from early childhood.

Thus, music as an instrument that facilitates the learning process has been proven in the scientific literature. As pointed out by Hallam (5), the incorporation of music in the school setting may be able to promote improvements in the academic performance of infants, in addition to stimulating cognitive skills such as memory, concentration and the ability to make connections, which are crucial aspects for child development. As reported in the present study, the children showed interest and interaction in the activities performed, and this engagement is an indication that the combination of rhythm, repetition and interaction with the work content may be able to fix the knowledge transmitted, corroborating the evidence that playful learning facilitates learning.

On the other hand, this type of approach has also brought to light important challenges. The variation in the age range of children, ranging from one to three years old, requires an adaptation of the proposed activities to achieve the involvement, participation and understanding of all participants. As proposed by De Lacerda (4), the experiences of playfulness are processed individually, considering the differences in cognitive and psychomotor development among children in this age group. This became evident since, while some children actively interacted in the actions, others did not show as much interest, evidencing the difficulty of playfully encompassing children of different ages.

The brevity of the action, carried out in just a single meeting, made it impossible to assess the long-term impacts, both in the school environment and in the home context.

According to the Ministry of Health, studies show that the reproduction and continuity of educational practices are fundamental for the consolidation of healthy habits. (1) In this sense, the absence of follow-up after monitoring of the participating children limited the analysis of the lasting effects of musicalization on the promotion of hygienic habits.

In addition to the direct impact on infants, the experience described in this study also provided significant gains to the students involved. The action enabled the practical application of theoretical knowledge about health in a real context, in addition to expanding their understanding of innovative teaching methodologies, such as musicalization. The reflections made by the students on the topics addressed contributed in a relevant way to their education, developing not only technical skills, but also pedagogical skills essential to interact with different social groups and contexts.

Finally, it is worth noting that the correlation between health and education, as shown in this study, provides a valuable opportunity for public health promotion. The use of different educational strategies associated with accessible cultural practices can become a useful way to promote healthy habits from early childhood. However, to ensure long-term results, interventions need continuous monitoring and adaptation to meet different and specific realities of each age group and social context.

CONCLUSION

Therefore, it is concluded that the use of music to educate children in early childhood education presented positive results both for the target audience and for the academics. Although this study reports an isolated experience in an EMEI in Belo Horizonte, it can serve as an example for other educational institutions that wish to approach hygiene in a playful and relaxed way, since music is an easily adaptable and accessible instrument.

In addition, the students had the opportunity to apply their skills of interaction with children and health promotion, both skills that will be crucial for the students' professional lives. In addition, this practice also contributed to the construction of children's health literacy and, thus, they will be better able to transmit learning to other people. Therefore, it is suggested that other researchers apply similar strategies and analyze in the long term the effects of interventions on the solidification of knowledge in children, with the aim of improving the methods and, possibly, disseminating the practice throughout the country.

DECLARATION OF INTERESTS

We, the authors, declare no conflicts of interest in this present study. We also confirm that the material is original, unpublished and submitted exclusively to this journal.

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