

Knowledge, attitude and practice of adolescents in a therapeutic community about condom use

Conhecimento, atitude e prática das adolescentes em uma comunidade terapêutica acerca do uso de preservativo

Conocimiento, actitud y práctica de los adolescentes en una comunidad terapéutica sobre el uso del preservativo

RESUMO

Objetivo: Avaliar os fatores associados ao conhecimento, atitude e prática das adolescentes acolhidas em uma comunidade terapêutica. **Método:** Estudo quantitativo descritivo, do tipo inquérito Conhecimento, Atitude e Prática, realizada com 42 adolescentes da Comunidade Terapêutica Associação Paz em Cristo, com idade entre 11 e 17 anos de idade, no período de março a outubro de 2022, em Marechal Deodoro, Alagoas. **Resultados:** Foi evidenciada precocidade na iniciação sexual, que atualmente 57,14% estudados, 100% tem conhecimento sobre a importância do preservativo, mas apenas 31,43% fazem uso em todas as relações sexuais. **Conclusão:** O conhecimento, a atitude e a prática das adolescentes são influenciadas pela vulnerabilidade, iniciação sexual precoce, escolaridade e uso de drogas. Assim, torna-se indispensável as ações educativas promovidas pelas instituições de ensino e de saúde, promovendo orientações acerca da educação sexual, com apoio da comunidade e dos profissionais de saúde.

DESCRIPTORES: Adolescentes; Conhecimento; Atitude; Prática; Preservativos.

ABSTRACT

Objective: To evaluate the factors associated with the knowledge, attitude and practice of adolescents welcomed in a therapeutic community. **Method:** Descriptive quantitative study, type survey Knowledge, Attitude and Practice, conducted with 42 adolescents from the Therapeutic Community Association Peace in Christ, aged between 11 and 17 years, from March to October 2022, in Marechal Deodoro, Alagoas. **Results:** Precocity in sexual initiation was evidenced, which currently 57.14% studied, 100% have knowledge about the importance of condoms, but only 31.43% make use in all sexual relations. **Conclusion:** The knowledge, attitude and practice of adolescents are influenced by vulnerability, early sexual initiation, schooling and drug use. Thus, the educational actions promoted by educational and health institutions become indispensable, promoting guidance on sexual education, with the support of the community and health professionals.

DESCRIPTORS: Adolescents; Knowledge; Attitude; Practice; Condoms.

RESUMEN

Objetivo: Evaluar los factores asociados al conocimiento, actitud y práctica de los adolescentes acogidos en una comunidad terapéutica. **Método:** Estudio cuantitativo descriptivo, encuesta tipo Conocimiento, Actitud y Práctica, realizado con 42 adolescentes de la Asociación Comunidad Terapéutica Paz en Cristo, con edades comprendidas entre 11 y 17 años, de marzo a octubre de 2022, en Marechal Deodoro, Alagoas. **Resultados:** Se evidenció la precocidad en la iniciación sexual, que actualmente el 57,14% estudió, el 100% tiene conocimiento sobre la importancia del preservativo, pero sólo el 31,43% hace uso en todas las relaciones sexuales. **Conclusión:** El conocimiento, la actitud y la práctica de los adolescentes están influenciados por la vulnerabilidad, la iniciación sexual temprana, la escolaridad y el consumo de drogas. Así, las acciones educativas promovidas por las instituciones educativas y de salud se vuelven indispensables, promoviendo la orientación en educación sexual, con el apoyo de la comunidad y los profesionales de la salud.

DESCRIPTORES: Adolescentes; Conocimiento; Actitud; Practicar; Condones.

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INTRODUÇÃO

The period of adolescence is marked by the transition between childhood and adulthood. The respective age group may vary according to the adopted literature, being classified from 10 to 19 years according to the World Health Organization (WHO) and from 12 to 18 years according to the Child and Adolescent Statute (ECA - Estatuto da Criança e do Adolescente).¹

In this phase, important changes occur as a result of puberty, such as physical, mental and social changes that will serve to shape the profile of this individual.² All these transformations influence social and family relationships, in addition to being in this period that sexual initiation commonly occurs.¹

The desire for new discoveries often leads adolescents to neglect taking care of their own health, leading them to situations of vulnerability, such as

alcohol, cigarette and drug use, antisocial behavior, bad eating habits and risky sexual behavior, increasing the risks of Sexually Transmitted Infections (STIs) and early pregnancy. Despite the wide dissemination in the media about the use of condoms, many young people still have doubts about preventive measures.³

In addition to these facts, in vulnerable communities, access to assistance services is predominantly inefficient, government resources are precarious and the lack of knowledge about the correct use of condoms, making young people more susceptible.⁴

Analyzing the knowledge, attitudes and practices of certain population groups presents a holistic view of the individuals studied and guides future interventions in this environment.¹ Knowledge is related to the ability that the interviewee demonstrates that they have information, discernment and understanding on the subject, demon-

strating prior knowledge about condom use, understanding its usefulness, the prevention of unwanted pregnancy and STIs.⁵

The attitude concerns understanding the importance of putting into practice the topic addressed. In other words, the attitude demonstrates that the interviewee identifies the importance and reason for using condoms correctly. Practice demonstrates that in addition to the individual knowing the importance of the attitude, he actually performs and exercises knowledge on the subject, actually using the condom.⁵

In view of the importance of understanding the social and individual aspects of adolescents regarding the use of condoms, the present study aims to evaluate the factors associated with the knowledge, attitude and practice of adolescents sheltered in a therapeutic community regarding the use of condoms.

METHOD

The study was defined as descriptive quantitative. Data collection was carried out in a therapeutic community that welcomes female adolescents in vulnerable situations in the municipality of Marechal Deodoro, Alagoas. The target population of the study were female adolescents, aged between 11 and 18 years old, welcomed into the therapeutic community.

To question the interviewees, the Knowledge, Attitude and Practice Survey (KAP) was used in order to assess whether they know about condoms, whether they know how to use them and whether they actually use them in practice.

The approach to the research locus occurred during the internship in Family and Community Medicine I, specifically in health education activities. It should be noted that boarding school students have been carrying out educational activities since January 2020, and currently 02 educational activities are carried out per week. In this way, the need to address the use of condoms among them was perceived, since many knew and knew the importance, but did not use them for various reasons.

As inclusion criteria, adolescents from the Therapeutic Community Associação Paz em Cristo, aged between 11 and 17 years old, who were welcomed at the site during the data collection period, were selected. Adolescents who reported not having started their sexual lives were excluded.

After completing the development of the research project, it was sent for evaluation and received authorization from the Research Ethics Committee (CEP) under opinion No. 5,550,692.

So that the teenager could have access to the Free and Informed Consent Form (FICF), first the legal guardian obtained access to the Free and Informed Consent Term (FICT) and authorized, by signing the instrument in two

copies, one for the researchers and one for the participant, thus informing that the minor was authorized to participate in the research.

After authorization and signature through the FICF, the FICT was invited and handed over to the teenager, who was explained all the steps of the research and the information contained in the FICT itself and she, if she had agreed to participate in the study, she signed the instrument in two copies, one for the researchers and one for the participant. The data collection instrument was not applied until all copies were duly signed.

Data collection was carried out in September 2022. The collected data were recorded in proper forms and subsequently entered into an Excel spreadsheet and analyzed using descriptive statistics in absolute and relative frequency. The data was stored in a file on OneDrive and after 05 years, it will be discarded.

The risks for the subject were inherent to studies with human beings, highlighting the risk of embarrassment when verbalizing about the theme related to his personal life; the risk of fatigue due to the length of the interview, as well as the risk of leakage of the collected data. To minimize such risks, the researcher adopted a welcoming and friendly attitude, emphasizing the importance of the interviewee's opinion and experience regarding condom use, as well as her full autonomy to answer what she considered appropriate.

If the adolescent still felt embarrassed or tired for the length of the interview, the position of terminating or withdrawing from participating at any time, including during the interview, would be respected. Regarding the risk of leakage, it was emphasized that only researchers linked to the research project would have free access to the interviews, as well as, to guarantee data confidentiality and privacy, the abbreviation of the participant's name was used using the first letter.

The benefits found were aimed at adolescents, researchers and the academic community, with the exploration of a known theme, but little explored, specifically in therapeutic communities, and from the reports, interpretation of data and correlation with the theoretical content found. Strategies can be constructed in order to guide the importance of using condoms from this study, as well as new research and objects.

In addition, for the researchers, it was worth knowing the particularities of adolescents in vulnerable situations, thus adding to the exercise of the activity of a health professional. As for the adolescents and the therapeutic community team, it was interesting to acquire new knowledge on the subject, thus avoiding unwanted pregnancies and contamination with Sexually Transmitted Infections (STIs).

RESULTS

Of the total number of participants, 35 (83.33%) were considered eligible after applying the inclusion criteria and 07 (16.66%) were ineligible because they met the exclusion criteria.

Among the interviewees, (68.57%) declared themselves to be heterosexual. Almost a quarter (22.86%) announced they were bisexual. Finally, (8.57%) of them identified themselves as homosexual. The vast majority (62.86%) declared themselves brown, followed by (20%) who consider themselves black, (11.4%) white and (5.71) yellow.

Just over half (57.14%) reported being currently studying, with the vast majority (77.14%) having incomplete primary education. All adolescents present the single marital status. Regarding religion, more than half (57.14%) are evangelicals, with a greater number (20%) of girls who have no religion and (20%) of Catholics. Only (2.86%) 1 adolescent declared himself to be a practitioner of African-derived religions.

More than a third of the interviewees declared coitarche at 12 years of age. The tables below refer to knowledge, attitudes and practices related to condoms.

All of them reported having heard about preservation at some time and only one of them reported not knowing what they are for. The vast majority (88.57%) reported having heard about male and female condoms, with only (11.43%) adolescents claiming to have known only about male condoms individually.

Of the total number of adolescents, (91.43%) stated that the condom serves both to prevent sexually transmitted infections and pregnancy, (5.71%) reported that it would only serve to prevent pregnancy and (2.86%) did not know how to inform what would be the function of the condom.

The majority (28.57%) received information about condom use through the health center, followed by (25.71%) who acquired this information through the family, (20.00%) through school and (25.53%) through television, friends and other sources.

Regarding the total number of interviewees, (82.86%) adolescents think it is necessary to use condoms during vaginal sex, (5.71%) found the use unnecessary and (17.14%) did not give an opinion. Regarding anal sex, (68.57%) interviewees believe it is necessary to use a condom, (5.71%) believe it is unnecessary and (25.71%) have no opinion about it. Regarding the use in oral sex, (48.57%) think it is necessary, (17.14%) state that the use is unnecessary and (34.29%) did not respond.

Regarding condom use, (31.43%) participants always use it, (28.57%) never use it, (20%) most of the time and (20%) rarely use it. With regard to how to use it, the majority (68.24%) reported using it from the beginning to the end of sexual intercourse, (22.86%) do not use it and (8.57%) use it in another way. Considering the last five relationships, (25.71%) used a condom

Table 01 – Characterization of adolescents in the therapeutic community, Marechal Deodoro, 2022.

Sexual orientation	N	%
Heterossexual	24	68,57%
Homossexual	3	8,57%
Bissexual	8	22,86%
Others	0	0,00%
Race/color	N	%
White	4	11,43%
Black	7	20,00%
Brown	22	62,86%
Yellow	2	5,71%
Indigenous	0	0,00%

Source: Research Data, 2022.

Table 02 - Schooling, Marechal Deodoro, 2022.

Currently studying?	N	%
Yes	20	57,14%
No	15	42,86%
Education	N	%
Illiterate	0	0,00%
Incomplete Elem. School	27	77,14%
Complete Elem. School	8	22,86%
Complete High School	0	0,00%
Marital status	N	%
Single	35	100,00%
Married	0	0,00%
Widowed	0	0,00%
Divorced/Separated	0	0,00%
Lives together/stable union	0	0,00%
Religion	N	%
Has no religion	7	20,00%
Catholic	7	20,00%
Evangelical	20	57,14%
Religions of African Matrices	1	2,86%
Outros	0	0,00%

Source: Research Data, 2022.

every time, (25.71%) most of the time, (14.29% in the minority of times and (34.29%) never.

DISCUSSION

According to Teixeira ⁶ (2020), Therapeutic communities emerged in Europe in the last century and were intended to provide humanized treatment initially to psychiatric patients, but which later extended to drug addicts and those lacking social support. Patients would be reclusive in an environment where they would be far from their addictions, thus interrupting a harmful lifestyle that would promote their self-destruction. In this sense, therapeutic communities come with the perspective of supporting adolescents with disorders caused by the use of drugs and alcohol, in addition to addressing issues related to physical and sexual violence, providing individualized and qualified care. ⁷

Regarding the characterization of the profile of the adolescents welcomed in the therapeutic community, they were aged between 11 and 17 years old. Among the interviewees, 31.43% of the interviewees are bisexual or homosexual, therefore, it is worth referring to the study by Lúcio ⁸, important for showing that many women who have relationships with other women mistakenly believe that sexual infections only occur in heterosexual relationships, and end up sharing sex toys without using condoms properly, thus transmitting STIs.

It is notorious that currently young people, including the LGBTQIA+ population, have found through the internet and relationship apps a tool to find other people in search of affective and sexual contact. However, this availability promoted the idea of casual sex more easily, which translates into higher risk rates in the absence of an awareness of prevention and care. ⁹

The study identified that 82.86% of the young women are black and brown.

Table 03 – Beginning of sex life. Marechal Deodoro, 2022.

First sexual intercourse	N	%
07 years old	2	5,71%
08 years old	0	0,00%
09 years old	3	8,57%
10 years old	2	5,71%
11 years old	6	17,14%
12 years old	12	34,29%
13 years old	5	14,29%
14 years old	4	11,43%
15 years old	1	2,86%

Source: Research Data, 2022.

Table 04 – Conhecimento acerca do uso do preservativo. Marechal Deodoro, 2022.

#KNOWLEDGE	N	%
1) Have you heard about condoms?		
Yes	35	100,00%
No	0	0,00%
2) Do you know what condoms are for?		
Yes	34	97,14%
No	1	2,86%
3) What condoms have you heard about?		
Both (male and female)	31	88,57%
Just the male one	4	11,43%
Just the female one	0	0,00%
None	0	0,00%
4) What is the condom for?		
To prevent sexually transmitted infections and pregnancy	32	91,43%
Just to prevent pregnancy	2	5,71%
Just to prevent sexually transmitted infections	0	0,00%
Do not know	1	2,86%
For other purposes		
5) Where did you get information about condom use?		
School	7	20,00%
Friends	3	8,57%
Family	9	25,71%
Health Center	10	28,57%
TV	3	8,57%
Social networks on the internet	0	0,00%
Internet sites	0	0,00%
Magazines	0	0,00%
Others	3	8,57%

Source: Research Data, 2022.



It is worth mentioning that in the Brazilian scenario, blacks have practically all worse health indicators when compared to whites, according to the Epidemiological Bulletin of HIV/AIDS of the Ministry of Health, published at the end of 2019.¹⁰

The present study corroborates the study by Santos, Casco, Parker¹¹, with a sample of 175 people, where only 45% of black women used condoms. In the age group of 16 to 24 years, the result was even worse, since the use of condoms was cited by 16% of black women.

Regarding schooling, just over half (57.14%) reported being currently studying and that the vast majority (77.14%) had incomplete primary education. The causes of school dropout are expressed by the sum of social, economic, family and educational aspects, with early pregnancy and the need to work to supplement income, the main motivators for school dropout in families that are in vulnerable situations. Student failure collaborates with social segregation, since the school does not fulfill its duty to promote the development of the individual as a citizen and provide a critical and moral vision to deal adequately with people and challenges of the future.¹²

Although all the adolescents in the study present themselves with a single marital status, married women are the ones who least use protection in the sexual act, simply because they trust their partner.¹³ The single condition was also the most found in the study by Viana¹⁴, which outlined the epidemiological profile of teenage pregnancy and associated factors in the city of Pínhireiro-MA, being represented by 82% among women aged 10 to 14 years and 72% among those aged 15 to 19 years, calling into question the abandonment of the figure of the partner during pregnancy.

When analyzing the information obtained about religion, 57.14% of the adolescents are evangelical. Studies

Table 05 – Attitudes about condom use. Marechal Deodoro, 2022.

#ATTITUDE		
1) Condom use during vaginal sex	N	%
It is necessary	29	82,86%
It is unnecessary	2	5,71%
Has no opinion / Did not respond	6	17,14%
2) Use of condom in anal sex	N	%
It is necessary	24	68,57%
It is unnecessary	2	5,71%
Has no opinion / Did not respond	9	25,71%
3) Uso de preservativo no sexo oral	N	%
It is necessary	17	48,57%
It is unnecessary	6	17,14%
Has no opinion / Did not respond	12	34,29%

Source: Research Data, 2022.

Table 06 – The practice of condom use. Marechal Deodoro, 2022.

#PRACTICE		
1) Do you use a condom during sexual intercourse?	N	%
Always	11	31,43%
Never	10	28,57%
Most of the times	7	20,00%
Rarely	7	20,00%
Didn't want to answer	0	0,00%
2) How do you use the condom?	N	%
Only at the end of intercourse	0	0,00%
From the beginning to the end of sexual intercourse	24	68,57%
I don't use a condom	8	22,86%
Others	3	8,57%
3) In the last five sexual intercourses, how often was a condom used?	N	%
In all the last 5 sexual intercourses	9	25,71%
Most of the times (3 or 4 times)	9	25,71%
In the minority of times (1 or 2 times)	5	14,29%
Never once	12	34,29%

Source: Research Data, 2022.

suggest that many evangelical religious leaders do not value the use of condoms during sexual relations, because according to these conceptions, if the faithful are within the monogamous norms of the church, there is no reason to use condoms during sexual relations.¹⁵

Within a perspective of prevention and protection, it is important that parents, health professionals and society as a whole, including adolescents, recognize religion as a mediating factor for the adoption of healthy habits, being interpreted as a possible determinant of good behavior.¹⁶

Regarding the onset of sexual activity, the results showed a variation between 07 and 15 years of age, and the most prevalent age was 12 years, with (34.29%) of girls. In comparison with another study that had a range between 9 and 19 years, with 16 and 17 years being the most prevalent age group.¹⁷ Revealing in this way, an even more notorious precocity in the adolescents of the present study. It is worth mentioning that Law nº 12.015/2009 of Art. 217-A¹⁸ characterizes as rape of vulnerable to conjunction or practice another libidinous act with minors under 14 years.

The anticipation of the adolescents' sexual life may suggest that initiation occurred due to the environment in which they were inserted, victims of sexual violence and marginalized in society, thus increasing exposure to STIs, early pregnancy and consumption of illicit and licit drugs. This scenario reveals a serious public health problem, exposing the fragility of strategic measures for the promotion and prevention of reproductive and sexual health, thus reflecting negatively on the lives of these young women.¹⁹

With regard to knowledge about condoms, unanimity was noted in relation to knowing, only one adolescent did not know the purpose, in addition to that (28.57%) obtained information through the health center, followed by

(25.71%) in the family environment and (20%) at school, exposing the importance of public health, family and school structure. According to Machado²⁰, currently the condom is the most popular method of contraception, along with withdrawal and then the contraceptive pills, however adolescents may find it difficult to know, often due to the environment where it is inserted. However, when providing guidance on contraception, it is necessary to present all available methods and their purposes.

Educational activities play a fundamental role in guiding adolescents, as through actions, interest in the topic can be awakened, providing access to safe and sufficient information about the use of condoms, solving doubts, share experiences, thus collaborating with the learning process and consequently benefiting health, easing STIs and unwanted pregnancy.²¹ The actions carried out by the inmates in the study community have shown positive results, as many girls shared their experiences and showed greater knowledge after the educational activities, which report changes in relation to knowledge and attitude towards condoms.

Regarding the attitude towards condom use, (82.86%) answered that it was necessary to use it in vaginal sex, (68.57%) in anal sex and (48.57%) in oral sex. Thus showing that attitude and practice are linked to knowledge, which may influence undesirable implications due to unsatisfactory and inconsistent knowledge or even the wrong use of the device.

In terms of condom use, 31.43% always use it, 28.57% never use it and 68.57% use it from the beginning to the end of sexual intercourse. When asked about the frequency in the last 5 sexual intercourses, the majority (34.29%) stated that they had not used any of the times. In another study with 195 adolescents from public schools in Maranhão, (91.3%) used condoms in all sexual relations. Although most

know about the benefits of condoms, there is still resistance to their use. This can be a result of relating to older people, experiencing sexual violence, the partner not liking to use, the unpredictability of the relationship and among many other factors.²²

According to the Ministry of Health, condoms are the most efficient and safe contraceptive method, which also prevents the transmission of STIs. In addition, it is the most popular device among teenagers. However, knowing does not mean having complete and sufficient information about the correct use, which can therefore justify the difficulty and resistance of its use among young people.²³

Non-adherence to condom use may be related to several factors that directly impact the increased risk to the sexual health of adolescents, such as the precocity of the first sexual intercourse, sexual violence, use of illicit and licit drugs, social vulnerability, trust and multiplicity of partners.²⁴

CONCLUSION

Given the above, it is identified that several factors contribute to the knowledge, attitude and practice of condom use, such as early initiation of sexual activity, incomplete schooling, the vulnerable environment where the adolescents were inserted before the therapeutic community, where the majority experienced sexual violence, had multiple partners and were users of illicit and licit drugs.

The study proves the need and importance of educational actions carried out by medical students, in order to alleviate the problem and guide adolescents about sexuality in a safe and satisfactory way, in an attempt to alleviate STIs and early pregnancy, in addition to providing bio-psychosocial support due to the traumas experienced by most young women.

The importance of health promotion and disease prevention actions

is emphasized in order to minimize possible health risks. In addition, screening is necessary for possible early diagnosis and treatment, aiming at a better quality of life in view of the exist-

ing particularities.

New studies of different methodological approaches are suggested for a better understanding of the factors that impact on the choice of condom

use and the weaknesses concerning their use in all sexual practices aimed at the adolescent public.

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