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EATING DISORDERS IN ADOLESCENTS: ANOREXIA NERVOSA. CASE STUDY

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Abstract

Unhealthy eating behaviors and preoccupations with body size and shape can lead to eating disorders such as anorexia nervosa. Anorexia nervosa is characterized by low body weight, which is based on a distorted body image, with individuals suffering from this disorder having an irrational fear of gaining weight. Anorexia nervosa is not about food per se. It represents an unhealthy way of coping with emotional problems.

Treating this disease in time can be very effective, as not catching it in time can lead to death, as a result of heart failure, or in many cases suicide.

Given the importance of the disease, its prognosis and the frightening statistics we face, early detection and identification of cases of patients with anorexia can be of vital importance, therefore this paper aimed to clarify the problem we face, explain the symptoms and signs that appear in patients with anorexia nervosa, with a focus on adolescents and discuss the effectiveness of logotherapy in the treatment of a case of an adolescent with anorexia nervosa, to understand more about the characteristics of anorexia nervosa.

Keywords: *anorexia, adolescent, diagnosis, case study, etc.*

CHAPTER I: INTRODUCTION

Anorexia Nervosa (AN) is an eating disorder characterized by the presence of behavioral, psychological, and physiological manifestations. The former involves a refusal to maintain a minimum body weight for one’s age and height; the latter involves changes in the perception of weight and body image. Initially associated with the middle and upper classes of metropolitan areas, the disease is now considered global and affects people of different races, social classes, genders, and ages. The specific characteristics of these patients are: high levels of self-demand, the constant search for perfection in everything they do or are, a strong tendency to follow the family line, an extreme fear of gaining weight, and a distorted perception of body image because even when they are underweight, they see themselves in the mirror as being healthy and overweight.

On the other hand, in relation to the family of these patients, it is generally seen that they are family systems that have a high level of demands, mainly with that child in particular, they are families that have experienced dramas or traumatic life events or that have encountered or faced patterns of eating

disorders.

To understand anorexia nervosa and its designation as an eating disorder, it should be emphasized that food is an essential substance for living, which provides nutrition. Normal nutrition assumes "... the process that includes a series of functions, the purpose of which is to provide the organism with the energy and nutrients necessary to maintain life, to promote growth and to replace losses, from conception to death". (Tato, 2006, p.96) Therefore, any pathological change in the aforementioned function, whether in quality or quantity, is considered an eating disorder. Although approximately half of patients with anorexia nervosa recover completely, about 30% achieve only partial recovery, and 20% remain chronically ill. (Harrington, C. & Jimerson, M. 2015) Anorexia nervosa has the highest mortality rate of any mental health disorder, with an all-cause standardized mortality ratio of 1.7 to 5.9 (Dunn, T.M. & Bratman, S. 2016).

CHAPTER II: Methodology

2.1 Purpose of the Study

Given the importance of the disease, its prognosis and the frightening statistics we face, early detection and identification of cases of patients with anorexia can be of vital importance, therefore this paper aims to:

1. Clarifying the problem we face;
2. Treating eating disorders;
3. Clarifying the symptoms and signs that appear in patients with anorexia nervosa, with a focus on adolescents;
4. Methods of treating anorexia nervosa with a focus on logotherapy.
5. Taking into account the case study of an adolescent with anorexia nervosa, in order to understand more about the characteristics that anorexia nervosa presents.

2.2 Objectives

General objective: Identifying the characteristics that enable the detection and diagnosis of anorexia nervosa among the adolescent population and testing the efficacy of logotherapy in its treatment.

2.3 Specific objectives:

- Studying the etiology, characteristics and symptoms of anorexia nervosa among adolescents.
- Identifying possible methods of treating anorexia nervosa.
- Evidencing the effectiveness of logotherapy in the treatment of anorexia nervosa through case studies.
- Drawing valid conclusions and recommendations on experiences, the depth of the disease and possible treatment according to each identified case.

2.4 Research Questions

- What are the characteristics that can lead to the detection and diagnosis of anorexia nervosa among adolescents?
- Does the family context influence the development of anorexia nervosa in adolescents?

- Is logotherapy appropriate and effective for intervening in anorexia nervosa?

2.5 Hypothesis

H1: Biological, psychological, social and family factors in the adolescent population are risk factors for eating disorders.

H2: The risk and/or presence of an eating disorder can be minimized through logotherapy, by re-understanding the meaning of life and oneself.

CHAPTER III: DATA ANALYSIS

3.1 Results

3.2 Data analysis

To prepare the analysis, transcription of the notes taken and interviews, analysis of the anamnesis and family background of the patient with anorexia nervosa according to certain objectives of the analysis, etc. The analysis will be carried out after transcription and categorization of all the material to later lead to the achievement of some valid conclusions and recommendations.

3.3 Sample

To conduct qualitative research through case studies, it is important to keep in mind the population that is intended to be studied, so the experience of the participants must be in line with the objective of the research and the latter must have the inclination, attitude and ease to narrate their experiences (Taylor, S. 1992). In accordance with the above, the participant selected for this research meets the requirements described, both for the characteristics of her personal history about the eating disorder experienced, as well as for her internal resources to promote her recovery and willingness to participate in this study.

3.4 Data Collection

Two instruments were used for data collection, the observation method and the unstructured interview.

3.5 Procedure: Qualitative research aims to capture and reconstruct meanings from an inductive procedure of dominance, using flexible and unstructured methods to collect information (Ruiz, J. 2012). The in-depth interview is one of the most widely used techniques given its relevance and coherence with this type of methodology, which is characterized by various personal encounters between the researcher and the informant, where the aim is to understand the latter's perspectives on life, their specific experiences or situations, maintaining a horizontal exchange of information (Taylor, S. 1992).

CHAPTER IV: Discussion, Recommendations, and Conclusions

4.1 Conclusions

At this point, facing a mental illness such as anorexia nervosa can put a person's life at stake, so it is essential to be well informed about the first symptoms and signs that can be very obvious, but other times carefully hidden by the patient, and about its logotherapeutic approach, which can change the way of thinking and feeling about their weight and place, and above all, in the re-understanding of the meaning of life.

4.4 Recommendations and Limitations

- The clinical psychologist should be informative about the disease and the treatment process not only for the patient but also for the family, should provide moral support and show empathy towards the patient, should convey calm, security and hope that he can succeed in all ways or types of therapies that may be involved.
- Parents, teachers, school psychologists, other caregivers should be very vigilant in identifying cases as early as possible. Treating this disease in time can be very effective, just as not catching it in time can lead to death, as a result of stopping the functioning of the heart, or in many cases suicide.
- The use of anxiolytics, antidepressants or other medications should be done with caution.

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