



Health education through cine-debate: A humanized look at mothers of children with Autism Spectrum Disorder

EXPERIENCE REPORT

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ABSTRACT

Introduction: Health Promotion seeks to improve the population's quality of life, producing shared care management between management and social actors, and applies to all sectors, especially the most vulnerable groups. The use of cinema, in this sense, promotes active health teaching methods. Parents and caregivers of children with Autism constitute a plausible group for educational intervention. **Objective:** To describe the report on the experience of education and health promotion through Cine-Debate among health professionals and mothers of children with autism. **Experience Report:** The activity was carried out at UBS Center in Barão de Cocais in July 2023. The debate was guided by active methodologies through cine-debate. The subjects of the intervention were professionals from the Health Unit and mothers of autistic children in the coverage area. The film "The Eternal Son" was shown outside the health unit and had 20 participants. After showing the film, a debate was encouraged, led by a doctor from one of the teams. **Final Considerations:** The meeting provided an exchange of knowledge, strengthening the bond and generating effective and affective communication, creating a humanized welcoming space offering professionals a clearer vision of the real difficulties faced by families responsible for caring for these children, promoting empathy. The cine-debate is an alternative and dynamic

resource to generate involvement in heterogeneous groups. As a tool linked to other forms of education through active methodologies and Popular Education, it allowed learning and stimulated the collective creation of knowledge.

Keywords: Health promotion; Health education; Autism Spectrum Disorder; Cinema as a subject.

INTRODUCTION

Health Promotion activities can represent a challenge for health professionals who need to reinvent strategies that efficiently transmit educational messages. Since the 1980s, Brazil has been working on improving public policies with an emphasis on Prevention and within this aspect of health promotion.¹ The Brazilian Health Reform Movement was a reflection of different international movements and outlined health promotion as a policy to be presented at all levels of complexity in the management and care of the health system.

In this way, the National Health Promotion Policy – PNPS³ emerged, representing an effort to face the challenges of health production. According to the Ministry of Health, Health Promotion (HP) seeks to improve the population's quality of life, producing shared care management between management and different social actors that generates autonomy and co-responsibility.^{3,4}

HP³ has among its pillars the training of the community to work towards improving their quality of life and health, favoring comprehensive care. In this sense, us-

ing atypical parenting as a reference, as a population subgroup that can benefit from educational practices that favor the exchange of meanings and knowledge as learning tools, the Family Health Strategy (FHS) appears to be a favorable scenario for mobilization and training individuals, allowing and encouraging popular participation. Bringing as a perspective the search for innovative and socially inclusive/contributive alternatives within the scope of health promotion actions. Raising this premise, we can use the arts as tools to stimulate active teaching methods, specifically using films to promote the population's health and health education⁴.

Cinema allows the expression of reality in an artistic way, making many people identify with this art form. Cinema aims to be leisure and recreation, but it awakens feelings, emotions, and reflection, and it can be used as an educational tool, favoring critical expression and stimulating reflective debate, providing the user with tools to transform their questions⁵. As described by Blasco (2017)⁶, in a proposal to humanize medicine, "the use of cinema, with emphasis on the set of varied scenes (clips), can be incorporated into pedagogical health education projects".

HP applies to all sectors of the community but mainly to those groups that are most vulnerable. Therefore, parents and caregivers of children with Autism Spectrum Disorder – ASD, constitute a plausible group for educational intervention. According to some studies^{7,8}, the responsibility for caring for a child with a chronic disorder presents changes to the physical and mental health and quality of life of the caregiver/parents, in addition to marital problems and social iso-

lation of the family, especially mothers, according to the Pan-American Health Organization (PHO)⁹,

Autism Spectrum Disorder begins in childhood and accompanies the individual for the rest of their life. Autistic children have difficulties with social involvement and acquiring communication skills, requiring treatments and interventions for long periods of their lives. Because they present development that deviates from the standard considered normative, these children are called neurodiverse and/or neurodivergent, at the same time inferring atypical Parenting¹⁰. With this in mind, there is a possible overload resulting from the special care required by autistic people, which can cause overload and constant family adaptations that can generate stress and mental illness.^{11,12}

Understanding the perceptions, motivations, behaviors, and attitudes of this group helps to generate interventions that promote the health of the individual integrally, thus strengthening the bond between professionals, patients, and families. Therefore, this article aims to describe an experience report on Health Education and Promotion through Cinema-debate in a group of health professionals and mothers of children with Autism Spectrum Disorder.

EXPERIENCE REPORT

This study is characterized as an experience report of a Health Promotion and Education activity in the Basic Health Unit-Center (UBS, type II), integrated by two Family Health Teams- FHT, located in the Centro neighborhood of the municipality of Barão de Cocais in Minas Gerais. The development of educational ac-

tivity was guided by the concepts of active methodologies, using Cine-debate and conversation circles as instruments. The subjects of this project's intervention were professionals from the Basic Health Unit (doctors, nurses, Nursing technicians, and Community Health Agents - ACS) and families and guardians of autistic children in the coverage area.

For the development of educational activity specifically, resources were mobilized, including human resources: professionals working in the health unit. Material resources: television with internet access and the Netflix application, provided by one of the unit's employees; mats and chairs, snacks (hot dog, popcorn, and soft drink, financed by UBS professionals by mutual agreement). Cognitive resources: information about the film and the main characteristics of autism and atypical parenting. Administrative resources: social and intersectoral mobilization.

The film was shown outside the health unit, using the open space as a way of relaxation and relaxation (Figure 1). Mattresses were placed on the floor, and chairs were also made available. The meeting was held in the afternoon of July 12, 2023, and was attended by five mothers, two Public Health medicine interns, two doctors, two nurses, three nursing technicians, and six community health agents, totaling 20 participants. The moderator of the meeting was the FHT doctor. At the beginning of the session, participants were asked to sign an attendance list, and during the screening of the film and the beginning of the debates, snacks were offered to refer to the playful aspect of cinema. The activity steps are described in Table 1.

TABLE 1. STAGES OF THE CINE DEBATE

Step	Description
Choice of film and preview via modulator	The film chosen for the debate was: “The Eternal Son”, a 2016 Brazilian drama film, directed by Paulo Machline and written by Leonardo Levis, based on the book by the same name by Cristóvão Tezza, published in 2007.
Disclosure	The activity was publicized a week before the scheduled date through a printed invitation and delivered in person to all families with autistic children in the area covered and through digital means (UBS Instagram page and families’ WhatsApp group, previously created)
Presentation	General elements of the film: its technical sheet, synopsis and other information.
Film projection	Display itself
Debate	Presentation and discussion of the film articulating the theme of the work (parents’ uncertainties after discovering that their newborn son has Down Syndrome and the father’s dissatisfaction with his son’s condition) with the reality experienced by the families represented in the group. At the same time, promoting awareness among professionals and critical debate on the humanized approach to atypical families in the health unit.
Assessment	Questionnaire application with three questions • Believes in Cine debate as a tool for education and health promotion. • I would like more activities of this type to be developed. • How the film influenced your perception of family dynamics in childhood disabilities.

SOURCE: PREPARED BY THE AUTHORS



FIGURE 1, 2 AND 3: MOMENT OF THE SCREENING OF THE BRAZILIAN FILM “THE ETERNAL SON” (2016, DIRECTED BY PAULO MACHLINE AND WRITTEN BY LEONARDO LEVIS) DURING THE CINE-DEBATE HELD IN A BASIC HEALTH UNIT IN THE CITY OF BARÃO DE COCAIS IN MINAS GERAIS IN JULY 2023. SOURCE: THE AUTHORS



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After showing the film, participants were encouraged to share their experiences about the topic covered, respecting individualities and encouraging democratic participation. At the end of the debates, as a way of evaluating the activity carried out, families and professionals answered the questionnaire through which it was possible to identify that for 91% of professionals, Cine-debate can be used as an effective tool for health promotion, ensuring that “The film provided a complete analysis of family issues involved in everyday dynamics. We can see the identification of many mothers in the context, expanding our professional perspective in monitoring these families.” At the same time, 100% of families and professionals expressed interest in participating in other similar activities.

THEORETICAL REFLECTIONS

Despite its informal nature, cinema proved to be a rich resource for provoking discussions and exchanging experiences and can become a welcoming space for different views, beliefs, and opinions. By showing different realities simultaneously, it favors debate democratically, enabling educational intervention in heterogeneous groups. Active educational practices such as Conversation Circles, problematization, and Cine-Debate enhance the decentralization of health education, allowing the sharing of information and moving away from the traditional idea of the health professional as the sole owner and generator of knowledge in the education process¹³.

Some studies ¹³⁻¹⁵ indicate that health promotion actions should not be limited to scientific knowledge alone, opening spaces for representations of differ-

ent realities. The use of cinematographic productions as a widespread pedagogical resource in the teaching-learning process of diseases, by leading viewers to think, analyze, and create a critical sense about the health-disease process allows, according to Lima et al., (2018)¹³, to “transmit knowledge to the community in a clear, objective and pleasurable way, enabling a critical look and questioning the desire for knowledge that the film portrays and not just watching”.

“The Eternal Son”, a film discussing educational activities, is a feature film directed by Paulo Machline and produced by Rodrigo Teixeira that portrays the book of the same name, written by Cristóvão Tezza and published in 2007. The plot tells the story of Fabrício Tedesco, a boy with Down Syndrome in the 80s, and how the family faces the diagnosis and the challenges of atypical parenting at a time when resources were still limited in addressing disabilities. Although the film does not specifically address the topic of autism, it was chosen to be presented in the group due to the similar characteristics that the diagnosis of disability in childhood imposes on families.

Having a child with a disability can place an additional burden on different aspects of the family’s life, such as the social, emotional, and financial aspects and the demand for care and rehabilitation of the child. At the same time, the family constitutes the support network in the life of a person with autism.¹²

In the film, it is possible to appreciate the marital and family conflicts generated by the peculiar characteristics of caring for a child with a disability and the individual way the couple manages. In the case of ASD, the

psychodynamic conceptualization and the complexity of the diagnosis infer special meaning to care through the primary group. The particular characteristics of the disorder lead to an adjustment of family plans and expectations, initially conditioned by the idealized child's frustration and later by the individual's limitations.

Through the reports and observation of the RC participants, it was possible to see that the conflicts portrayed in the film are no different from those of the target group. Feelings of denial, grief, maternal overload, parental abandonment, worries about the future, and prejudice are present in the lives of parents of children with autism. Another point briefly addressed in the film is the attitude of health professionals, especially at the time of diagnosis and in approaching the family during this process, whether in the way of communicating or in the availability of information that supports the treatment and monitoring process. This was the point of debate scheduled with the health professionals who participated in the meeting.

Little is said about how the reception and support offered to patients with ASD and their families should be due to their recent inclusion in the field of mental illnesses. Global support must be ensured for all families by the SUS and must have Primary Care as the gateway and coordinator of care.¹² In this way, the debate with UBS professionals through the experience lived in the cinema, and the reports of mothers presents itself as an opportunity to provide support for atypical families through a more humanized perspective through a more real perception of the experience of disability within the family.

The experience of the difficulties represented in the film, together with the debate, led to reflection among the UBS professionals who participated in the action. Showing realities that are often not perceived in day-to-day professional work generated empathy and a more humanized look at the treatment of disabilities in their family context. Speeches in defense of inclusion, the fight against prejudice, and the need for a broader view concerning changes in work systems advocating more affective listening were raised by several participants.

The family needs appropriate support programs to maximize their capabilities. Recognizing the importance of the family's presence in child care is valuing the family in the context of care.¹⁶ Therefore, it is necessary to provide adequate support to help the family deal with these issues and overcome difficulties. Instituting most of the learning, forms of inclusion, socialization, and affection that this person will build.¹²

The main limitations of the experience were the lack of adequate space inside the unit to screen the film and having to use the external area, which, although it favored a more relaxed environment, harmed the sound quality. At the same time, the Film is not available for free access, which generated costs for the activity coordinator and could be a limitation in replicating the experience in other realities.

FINAL CONSIDERATIONS

The participant's evaluation of the educational activity was positive. In addition to creating a leisure space for mothers and professionals at the Health Unit, the

meeting provided an exchange of ideas between professionals and the family, strengthening the bond and generating effective and affective communication between participants. In addition to generating an educational space, the practice became pleasurable and relaxed, providing knowledge acquisition for professionals while encouraging protagonism as it gave the public an active voice.

Through discussion and sharing of personal experiences and feelings, it was possible to create a humanized welcoming space. By seeing themselves represented graphically by the film, the participants were able to position themselves more openly, which stimulated a more critical and constructive debate while respecting the individual realities of the participants, which, when exposed to collective reflection, could be re-elaborated.

Cine-debate is an alternative and dynamic resource to generate engagement between participants from heterogeneous groups. As a tool linked to other forms of education through active methodologies 17 and Popular Education 18, it allowed learning through sharing experiences and encouraging the collective creation of knowledge. The activity generated Health Promotion and Education, covering users and professionals at the same time.

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