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Procedia - Social and Behavioral Sciences 237 (2017) 554 - 561

7th International Conference on Intercultural Education "Education, Health and ICT for a Transcultural World", EDUHEM 2016, 15-17 June 2016, Almeria, Spain

# The mental representation of the emotional universe and that related to bonding among university students of health sciences

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#### Abstract

Stress and the emotional responses of anxiety, fear and anger, the prevelance of a psychiatric and or psychological symptomatology and a huge emotional exhaustion affect the relationship between the health professional and the patient as regards bonding. This symptomatology may even appear in university students of Health Sciences.

Concious of the need to train the management of emotions and bonding in university students, we organised a theoretical-practical workshop in the Department of Occupational Therapy, Speech Therapy and Nursing at the University of Castilla-La Mancha. A total of 77 students participated, all of whom responded to a series of questions. The qualitative analysis of these questions reflects

that the most difficult emotions to train are admiration and security. The emotions that most habitually appear are happiness and sadness, while those of anger, fear, disgust and curiosity appear to a lesser extent.

With regard to the results of the variables related to bonding, it was shown that the students know which elements make the therapeutic bond easier or more difficult. Finally, the majority of the experiences that the students recounted were related to the spheres of health, education and their relationships with partners.

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Peer-review under responsibility of the organizing committee of EDUHEM 2016.

Keywords: emotions, therapeutic bond, higher education, recounting experiences

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#### 1. Introduction

Stress and the emotional responses of anxiety, fear and anger (Falkum & Vaglum, 2005; Mc Pherson, Hale, Richardson & Obholzer, 2003; Vargas-Terrez, Moheno-Klee, Cortés-Sotres y Heinze-Martin, 2015), along with the prevelance of a psychiatric and/or psychological symptomatology and a tremendous emotional exhaustion (Barbero, Fernández-Herreruela, García-Llana, Mayoral-Pulido y Jiménez-Yuste, 2013; Esquerda, Yuguero, Vinas y Pifarré, 2016; Fundació Galatea, 2012; Gil-Monte, 2003; Zapf, 2002) frequently appear among service organisation professionals (doctors, nursing professionals, those employed at prisons, the police, social workers, etc.) who come into direct contact with the users of those organisations (patients, pupils, prison inmates, the homeless, etc.). There is even a high suicide rate (Montes-Hidalgo y Tomás-Sábado, 2016; Tomás-Sábado y Montes-Hidalgo, 2015; Vargas-Terrez et al., 2015).

In many cases, these responses and symptomatology also appear among nursing and medical students and those doing their practical training (Brant, Wetherell, Lightman, Crown, & Vedhara, 2010; Esquerda et al., 2016; Vargas-Terrez et al., 2015), and may have a negative effect on their capacity to learn, memorise, concentrate and on their clinical capacities, thus implying a risk and a worsening in the quality of health care with which patients are provided. In other cases they may even lead them to abandon their Bachelor's or Post-Graduate Degree or their practical training. The presence of these symptoms may consequently affect the relationship between the health professional and the patient, thus affecting the treatment received, communication, empathy and the professional's ethical competence as regards the patient (Esquerda et al., 2016; Galán, Romero, Morillo y Alarcón, 2014; Vidal, Tirado y González, 2015).

Of the strategies that may help reduce the psychological symptomatology, it is possible to highlight the development of appropriate emotional abilities and/or skills (Montilva, García, Torres, Puertas y Zapata, 2015; Tomás-Sábado y Montes-Hidalgo, 2015; Vidal, Tirado y González, 2015) such that they contribute towards improving the health professional-patient relationship with the objective of establishing a good therapeutic bond.

The university authorities in charge of educating future health professionals via their Bachelor's and Post-Graduate degrees should be made aware of the possibility that their students may develop a serious psychological symptomotology in order to detect any mental health problems in time so as to control, manage and handle them. This response should be provided via the curriculum during the years of university education (Esquerda et al., 2016; Galán et al., 2014; Montilva et al., 2015) or by means of preventative programmes or self-care workshops, etc. (Barbero et al., 2013; Vargas-Terrez et al., 2015).

Concious of the need for university students to be trained in the management of emotions and bonding, we organised a theoretical-practical workshop in the Separtment of Occupational Therapy, Speech Therapy and Nursing at the University of Castilla-La Mancha with the objective doing so. This was intended to be a tool that would allow students to attain professional and personal knowledge of the emotional universe and that relate to bonding in order to increase their flexibility in these matters, along with their life satisfaction.

#### 2. Methods

The experience, which was entitled 'Learning to manage emotions in order to establish a therapeutic bond', took place in the Department of Occupational Therapy, Speech Therapy and Nursing at the University of Castilla-La Mancha in February 2016 all day Friday and on Saturday morning. It cost 15.00€ to enrol in the workshop and implied the recognition of 0.5 ECTS credits.

The objectives of the training workshop were:

- To train the students in the knowledge and recognition of basic emotions.
- To help them learn to manage their emotions in order to adapt to life.
- To improve the students' capacity to attain a more satisfactory therapeutic bond with the patient.

Those taking part were Occupational Therapy, Speech Therapy and Nursing students, along with any professionals related the sphere of health who wished to enrol. A total of 77 students enrolled.

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