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Effect of EAGALA model on psychological well-being in adolescents: a mixed methods approach

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Statement of the Problem: Historically, South African children and youth have experienced high levels of adversity and continue to be exposed to high levels of trauma as either victims or witnesses of violence and are recognised as being the most neglected sector of the South African population. This can negatively affect their psychological well-being. The young residents of South African disadvantaged townships represents a group that does not have access to resources that are traditionally acknowledged for promoting mental health and well-being; leading to a loss of self-esteem, depreciated sense of self-worth, a loss of self-respect and suicide. Existing community-based health facilities lack child and youth friendly mental health services to prevent mental disorders and promote mental health and psychological well-being. The purpose of this study is to determine the potential of the EAGALA model to facilitate psychological well-being in adolescents living in a disadvantaged community.

Methodology & Theoretical Orientation: The philosophical stance of pragmatism was used as a theoretical point of departure for using an embedded mixed-methods approach. The quantitative data was collected using the RSPWB pre- and post-intervention to determine the effect of the EAGALA model on participants' psychological well-being. The qualitative data in the form of personal texts was embedded in this larger design for the purpose of expanding and deepening understanding regarding the subjective experience of the participants.

Findings: Significant differences were observed between the experimental and control group with regards to psychological well-being ($p < 0.05$). Qualitative themes that came to the fore were autonomy, personal growth, positive relations with others and self-acceptance.

Conclusion & Significances: The EAGALA model is effective in promoting psychological well-being. It was also found that horses can act as facilitators of teaching of positive life values. Recommendations are that EAGALA model programs be established as part of youth friendly mental health services.

Biography

Nicoleen Coetzee has her expertise in Psychophysiology. The focus of her research is how human physiology and psychology interacts to promote well-being and the role nature and specific animals, play in this ever evolving puzzle of maintaining homeostasis.

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Sharon Boyce specialises in equine-assisted Psychotherapy and has pioneered combining logo therapy with the EAGALA model which is a form of equine-assisted therapy.

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