

## Chapter 1 Basic social skills in the training of dentists

### Capítulo 1 Habilidades sociales básicas en la formación de odontólogos

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## **Abstract**

Objective: To highlight the importance of basic social skills in the training of second-year public university dentistry students. Methodology: Qualitative research with a hermeneutical historical approach that applies the techniques: questionnaire and workshop to 25 students who voluntarily decide to participate in this study. Informed consent applies. Data are categorized and analyzed in Microsoft Excel and descriptive results are reported. Contribution: They recognize how important basic social skills are necessary for good clinical performance and identify which of them were strengthened after completing the "Basic Social Skills Strengthening Program". They realize that these skills are developed in everyday life, acquired from childhood through observation, but that they can also be learned and modified over time. They also realize that they positively influence their interpersonal relationships.

## **Students, Dentistry, Basic social skills**

### **Resumen**

Objetivo: Destacar la importancia de las habilidades sociales básicas en la formación de los estudiantes de segundo curso de Odontología de las universidades públicas. Metodología: Investigación cualitativa con enfoque histórico hermenéutico que aplica las técnicas: cuestionario y taller a 25 estudiantes que voluntariamente deciden participar en este estudio. Se aplica consentimiento informado. Los datos se categorizan y analizan en Microsoft Excel y se reportan resultados descriptivos. Contribución: Reconocen lo importante que son las habilidades sociales básicas necesarias para un buen desempeño clínico e identifican cuáles de ellas se fortalecieron después de realizar el "Programa de Fortalecimiento de Habilidades Sociales Básicas". Se dan cuenta que estas habilidades se desarrollan en la vida cotidiana, se adquieren desde la infancia a través de la observación, pero que también se pueden aprender y modificar con el tiempo. También se dan cuenta de que influyen positivamente en sus relaciones interpersonales.

## **Estudiantes, Odontología, Habilidades sociales básicas**

### **1.1 Introduction**

The ultimate goal of any teaching model is to develop or improve students' abilities, capacities and skills. Every person must have self-awareness (self-knowledge) and must be clear that he/she is influenced by the social framework in which he/she is immersed. This influence occurs through socialization and interaction with diverse situations and the plurality of social environments to which he or she is exposed (Figueroa and Mijangos, 2018). However, it is not always easy to be aware of one's self and one's actions, when this happens it hinders the achievement of personal, social and professional objectives and goals; therefore, the person must express him/herself clearly both verbally and corporally and realize that his/her environment directly influences his/her performance (Sales et al., 2018).

Learning is acquired through social interaction, which guides behavior in certain situations (communicating ideas, respecting rules, etc.) Thus, basic social skills, emotional intelligence and inter- and intrapersonal intelligence allow human beings to know themselves and know how to relate to their environment in order to act harmoniously.

As we are constantly facing changes in the scientific, technological, cultural and, above all, political spheres, we need people with well-developed basic social skills (listening, initiating and maintaining a conversation, asking questions, introducing themselves and giving compliments) that allow them to have personal and social well-being.

Most people have basic social skills, they just do not internalize them, i.e., most people exercise them automatically. This leads to the assumption that, if one listens, understands, thanks or acknowledges, one exercises "active listening"; therefore, there is no effective communication, i.e., what is required is not answered or it has been understood in another sense. Most people think that hearing is the same as listening, seeing is the same as observing, assuming instead of asking or clarifying.

For the above mentioned, it is essential that students have basic social skills for their interactions to be of quality, since they are present in everyday life, which makes it necessary to incorporate programs to strengthen these skills as an improvement of school contexts and therefore of their professional future.

## 1.2 Methodology to be developed

Qualitative hermeneutic research, which aims to highlight the importance of basic social skills (listening, initiating and maintaining a conversation, asking questions, introducing oneself and giving compliments) in the training of 25 second year dental students of a public university who decided to participate on a voluntary basis. The following techniques are used: Goldstein's questionnaire (1989), "Basic social skills strengthening program" and open-ended questionnaire.

The qualitative approach invites to construct the problem and approach it through the observation of society, it studies an integrated whole that forms a unit of analysis and that makes something, to be what it is; it identifies the deep nature of realities, in this case through behavior. In this research approach one observes and describes; and data are taken from people's own words whether spoken or written, or through the behavior of the participants in the study.

Whereas hermeneutics allows the interpretation of social and communicative influence, rather than of a text. It refers to interpreting, explaining or translating through reflection that seeks to unravel the truth. It focuses on the development of interpretative sensitivity to everything related to the object of study.

The data were collected with prior informed consent.

First, the Goldstein questionnaire of basic social skills was applied, then the workshop entitled "Program for strengthening basic social skills" was implemented and, at the end, the Goldstein questionnaire, the open-ended questionnaire and the semi-structured interview were applied again. The questions of the Goldstein questionnaire, are the following:

- 1 Do you pay attention to the person who is talking to you and make an effort to understand what they are saying to you?
- 2 Do you talk to others about unimportant topics and then move on to more important ones?
- 3 Do you talk to others about things that interest others?
- 4 Do you determine what information you need and ask for it from the right person?
5. Do you let others know that you appreciate favors?
6. Do you make yourself known on your own initiative?
7. Do you help others in the group get to know each other?
8. Do you like some positive aspect of the other person or activity they do and tell them about it?

The maximum score is that which is close to the value "five" and is in relation to the skill that is most developed. That is, it indicates to what extent the participant is competent or deficient in the use of a certain basic social skill. Scores 1 and 2 indicate a deficiency in these skills.

The "Program for strengthening basic social skills" was also designed and implemented, which consisted of 10 sessions that addressed the following topics: communication, attentive listening, empathy, nonverbal communication and conversational skills. The program sessions were designed under the four-step model proposed by Goldstein (1989):

- 1.- Modeling: in it, participants pay attention to the situation presented to them and are asked to pay more attention to the behavior they should reproduce.

Role-playing: in this step the participant is asked to represent a certain basic social skill and it is also made clear beforehand that, for this step to work well, the participant's availability, commitment and spontaneity are necessary, together with the teacher's reinforcement.

Reinforcement: The teacher and the other participants praise the positive behaviors represented that are close to the basic social skill to be reinforced and also describe those that need to be improved.

Generalization of the training; the participant implements what he/she has learned in daily life.

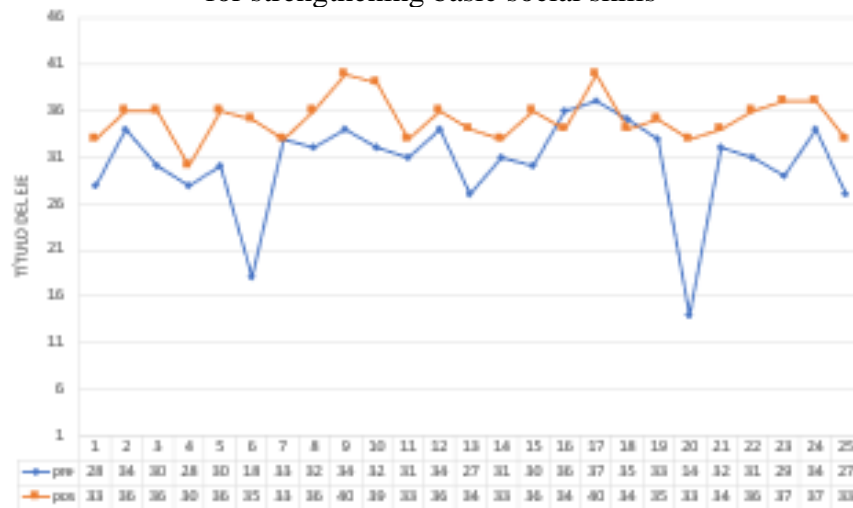
An open-ended questionnaire was also applied with 3 questions related to the importance they give to the development of basic social skills for the practice of the dental profession.

1. 1.- From your point of view, what basic social skills should you apply when taking a clinical history?
2. 2.- How do you consider that basic social skills improve your dental training?
3. 3.- What do you think are the effects that the program for strengthening and developing basic social skills has had on you?

### 1.3 Results

Twenty-five second-year dental students from a public university participated in the study. Of these, 23 were women and 2 were men.

**Graphic 1.1** Results of the applications of Goldstein's questionnaire (before and after) of the "program for strengthening basic social skills"



Source: own elaboration, 2022

Graphic 1.1 shows the difference in the acquisition of basic social skills before (pre) and after (post) the implementation of the "Basic Social Skills Strengthening Program". It should be noted that all participants increased these skills after the program.

As for the results of the open-ended questionnaire, applied at the end of the "Basic social skills strengthening program", the answers were categorized in (verbal and non-verbal communication, active listening, assertiveness and empathy) and the following results were obtained:

- 1.- From your point of view, what basic social skills should you apply when taking the clinical history?

In this question the basic social skill that prevailed the most was "Active listening". The participants refer to the following:

- A) I would use the listening method which is mainly the most complete method where we have more communication with the patient or the person we are interacting with.
- B) Introduce yourself, listen, form questions, conversations and give thanks.
- C) Know how to listen and have a good communication in order to understand in the best way what they are trying to tell us.
- D) To be assertive, to be empathetic with patients. Achieve a good doctor-patient communication. Asking questions is also important because it helps us to ask in the right way. Giving thanks is also of utmost importance since we should always give thanks for helping us, being grateful is everything. Introducing yourself is also important because it builds confidence in them and calms their nerves.
- E) I think that all of them are important to use since first of all you have to introduce yourself in a correct way, you have to know how to start the conversation and then listen, you also have to ask questions that the patient can understand and finally thank them in a kind way.
- F) Active listening to the patient, initiate and maintain a conversation with the patient, it is important to ask questions to find out how the patient is doing, to thank and motivate the patient and to receive or give praise, why not.
- G) Of the social skills that I think we should apply in the clinical history I consider that listening is the basis of this, having an active listening, paying attention, being assertive in what we want to communicate and what they want to communicate to us, knowing how to maintain a good conversation from the beginning to the end of the conversation with the patient, and that during this conversation questions are asked with assertiveness that manage to capture our ideas to the patient and this will make the collection of information more efficient. A good presentation and saying thank you whenever possible will motivate and make the person listening to us feel how he/she feels.

Regarding the question How do you think basic social skills improve your dental training? The students responded as follows:

- A) They form students capable of understanding the power of language, not only for their daily life, but also for professional practice, I consider that the BSS are the key to success, to perform an optimal job.
- B) I believe that they have a great influence because in many things we had different thoughts or we thought in a different way, at the time of the course maybe I had a notion, but already taking into account the course made things clearer and even helped us to improve what we already knew.
- C) The doctor-patient relationship within the office or practice is important because it will allow you to have more information about the patient and the HSB will give you the tools to achieve it, in addition to generating a space of trust and security and as a doctor you will gain good comments.
- D) I think this greatly improves the training of us as students since we must know how to treat people, be tactful and treat them as we would like to be treated, I feel it is very important because it forms us not only as professionals but also as people.
- E) It helps us to behave and communicate properly with others, this will allow us to have a better interaction with our patients and work team.
- F) It is beneficial for us because we learn to express ourselves better and understand other people, take into account the needs, feelings and interests of others.
- G) It makes us more socially skilled, more empathetic and kind to people, and assertive when communicating. This is something we will need throughout our career.

H) In the question "What do you think are the effects that the program of strengthening and development of basic social skills left on you?"

The participants responded as follows:

- A) I feel able to deal with a patient, to obtain good results and to make the patient feel comfortable. Today I feel more confident when speaking and with the ability to generate an optimal environment for work development and communication.
- B) That now I have strengthened the actions that forge us as a person.
- C) More tools to have a better doctor-patient interaction, more confidence in your arguments.
- D) It changed many things in me, it made me realize that there were things about my behavior towards people that I had to change, it helped me to be more empathetic and have more patience with people. I really liked this course because it helped me to be a better person.
- E) Personally I feel that it helped me, and I learned many things to have a better relationship and communication with others, although I still have many things to apply what I learned, little by little I am developing these skills.
- F) From my point of view, it seems to me that there are no negative points or effects, because everything that was seen is for the good of ourselves and to be able to understand people better.
- G) More confident, empathetic and assertive people when communicating.

Regarding the analysis and discussion, this research was carried out with the aim of highlighting the importance of basic social skills (listening, initiating and maintaining a conversation, asking questions, introducing oneself and giving compliments) in the training of dentists. With the results obtained, it can be affirmed that these skills should be fostered in the family and reinforced in the educational context as mentioned by López (2014)

The application of basic social skills as rules of coexistence for the implementation of various learning activities, help the student to reflect on their importance to be assumed in the clinical context. In this way, the importance of living together with respect for oneself and others is highlighted, as referred to by the Ministry of Education of Peru (2015).

With this study, it is shown that even at the university level, the development of basic social skills remains an area of opportunity; which coincides with international findings (Henriquez, 2021; Huaman 2020; Guerra et al., 2019; Condor, 2018; Tapia, 2018; Huertas, 2017; Mendieta, 2016; Monzon, 2014; Cabrera, 2013; Santos, 2012) And which in turn has an impact on poor interpersonal relationships (Sanabria, 2017; Romo et al., 2018).

With the development of the same, it is inferred that interpersonal relationships in the educational context are improved, matching what was commented by Barrón (2018) and Pérez and Fililella (2019).

If programs similar to the one used in this study were implemented consecutively, kindness, courtesy, cooperation, companionship, sincerity and honesty could be strengthened when participants share their thoughts, as commented by (Flores et al., 2016; Valdés and Gómez, 2019).

With the results obtained, it is inferred that it is of utmost importance to mention that the family (upbringing system), is the beginning of the formation of these skills. It is in the family where the person learns values, norms and behavioral models. The family, is the first formative agent, which has direct influence on the socio-affective development that influences the behavior that will be expressed in the following stages of the life cycle (adolescence, adulthood, etc.); as mentioned by (Muñoz, 2009; Vargas et al., 2017).

## Conclusions

It can be said that, based on the results obtained in this study, basic social skills were developed in the students. They refer that through the "Program for strengthening basic social skills" they visualize the importance of social skills in their dental practice. The students recognize that:

- They had no notion of what "active listening" was; they used to interrupt and not pay full attention when dialoguing.
- They frequently interrupted the sender to give their personal opinion.
- They heard their senders, but did not listen to them correctly.
- They were in the habit of talking to someone and they were doing something else, either on their cell phone or something else, and did not show interest in the conversation.
- They did not understand how to make my non-verbal language match what I was saying.
- They were not confident enough to express to the sender if something was bothering them during the dialogue.
- They did not attach much importance to thanking.

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