Activación conductual como intervención terapéutica en adolescentes y adultos emergentes: revisión de avances científicos

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RESUMEN

La depresión constituye uno de los problemas de salud mental con mayor prevalencia en la población juvenil y adulta, generando un impacto significativo en el bienestar emocional, así como en el funcionamiento académico, social y laboral de quienes la padecen. En adolescentes y adultos emergentes, esta problemática se intensifica debido a los cambios propios de estas etapas del desarrollo, aunque los tratamientos farmacológicos y la terapia cognitivo conductual han sido ampliamente utilizados para abordar la depresión, en muchos casos presentan limitaciones relacionadas con los costos, la duración de las intervenciones, la adherencia al tratamiento y la resistencia a la medicación. Estas dificultades evidencian la necesidad de desarrollar y evaluar intervenciones terapéuticas eficaces, accesibles y breves que permitan mejorar la atención en salud mental de estas poblaciones. En este contexto surge la Activación Conductual (AC) como intervención terapéutica, cuyo objetivo principal es incrementar la participación del ndividuo en actividades significativas y reforzantes que favorezcan la obtención de experiencias positivas. Por ello, la Activación Conductual (AC) propone estrategias estructuradas y basadas en evidencia, orientadas a la programación gradual de actividades significativas y la reducción de patrones de evitación que suelen mantener o agravar los síntomas depresivos. En este sentido, la intervención se centra en identificar conductas de inactividad que limitan el contacto del individuo con experiencias gratificantes, reemplazándolas progresivamente por acciones dirigidas a objetivos concretos. La Activación Conductual ha emergido en los últimos años como una alternativa terapéutica prometedora dentro de las terapias

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conductuales contemporáneas, destacándose por su estructura clara, su enfoque centrado en la acción y su breve aplicación. En particular, su aplicación en adolescentes y adultos emergentes resulta relevante, ya que estas poblaciones presentan altos niveles de vulnerabilidad frente a los trastornos depresivos y requieren intervenciones adaptadas a sus características evolutivas. La presente monografía tuvo como objetivo identificar los avances investigativos basados en Activación Conductual en distintos formatos como intervención terapéutica en adolescentes y adultos emergentes en la base de datos Web of Science. Los 15 artículos revisados incluyeron intervenciones aplicadas en diferentes contextos con población adolescente y adultos emergentes. Las intervenciones se implementaron mediante diversos formatos, entre ellos programas presenciales, intervenciones digitales, sesiones grupales y combinaciones con otros enfoques terapéuticos. Los resultados evidenciaron que la Activación Conductual contribuye de manera significativa a la reducción de los síntomas depresivos y a la mejora del bienestar psicológico. En conclusión, la evidencia revisada sugiere que la Activación Conductual constituye una intervención terapéutica prometedora para el tratamiento de la depresión en adolescentes y adultos emergentes, al favorecer la reducción de síntomas depresivos y el aumento de la participación en actividades significativas. No obstante, varios estudios presentan limitaciones metodológicas, como tamaños de muestra reducidos o seguimientos a corto plazo, en este sentido se recomienda desarrollar estudios con muestras más amplias y diversas, así como promover investigaciones en contextos latinoamericanos que permitan evaluar la aplicabilidad de la Activación Conductual en diferentes realidades

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socioculturales, a su vez, resulta pertinente fomentar la implementación de esta intervención en distintos contextos clínicos, educativos y comunitarios para determinar su efectividad.

Palabras clave: Activación Conductual, Depresión Adolescentes, Adultos, Intervención, Salud Mental.

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ABSTRACT

Depression is one of the most prevalent mental health problems among young people and adults, significantly impacting emotional well-being, as well as academic, social, and occupational functioning. In adolescents and young adults, this problem intensifies due to the changes inherent in these developmental stages. Although pharmacological treatments and cognitive behavioral therapy have been widely used to address depression, they often present limitations related to cost, intervention duration, treatment adherence, and medication resistance. These difficulties highlight the need to develop and evaluate effective, accessible, and brief therapeutic interventions to improve mental health care for these populations. In this context, Behavioral Activation (BA) emerges as a therapeutic intervention whose main objective is to increase the individual's participation in meaningful and reinforcing activities that promote positive experiences. Therefore, Behavioral Activation (BA) proposes strategies focused on scheduling activities and reducing avoidance patterns. Through these mechanisms, the therapy seeks to re-establish the individual's contact with their environment and promote behavioral changes that contribute to improved mood and overall functioning. BA has emerged in recent years as a promising therapeutic alternative within contemporary behavioral therapies, standing out for its clear structure, action-oriented approach, and brief application. Its application in adolescents and young adults is particularly relevant, as these populations exhibit high levels of vulnerability to depressive disorders and require interventions adapted to their developmental characteristics. This monograph aimed to identify research advances based on the fact that depression

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is one of the most prevalent mental health problems in the youth and adult population, generating a significant impact on emotional well-being, as well as on the academic, social, and occupational functioning of those who suffer from it. In adolescents and young adults, this problem intensifies due to the changes inherent in these developmental stages. Although pharmacological treatments and cognitive behavioral therapy have been widely used to address depression, they often present limitations related to cost, intervention duration, treatment adherence, and medication resistance. These difficulties highlight the need to develop and evaluate effective, accessible, and brief therapeutic interventions that improve mental health care for these populations. In this context, Behavioral Activation (BA) emerges as a therapeutic intervention whose main objective is to increase the individual's participation in meaningful and reinforcing activities that promote positive experiences. Therefore, Behavioral Activation (BA) proposes structured, evidence-based strategies aimed at the gradual scheduling of meaningful activities and the reduction of avoidance patterns that tend to maintain or worsen depressive symptoms. In this sense, the intervention focuses on identifying inactive behaviors that limit the individual's contact with rewarding experiences, progressively replacing them with actions directed toward specific goals. Behavioral Activation has emerged in recent years as a promising therapeutic alternative within contemporary behavioral therapies, standing out for its clear structure, action-centered approach, and brief application. Its application in adolescents and emerging adults is particularly relevant, as these populations exhibit high levels of vulnerability to depressive disorders and require interventions adapted to their

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developmental characteristics. This monograph aimed to identify research advances based on Behavioral Activation in various formats as a therapeutic intervention for adolescents and emerging adults in the Web of Science database. The 15 reviewed articles included interventions applied in different contexts with adolescent and emerging adult populations. The interventions were implemented through diverse formats, including face-to-face programs, digital interventions, group sessions, and combinations with other therapeutic approaches. The results showed that Behavioral Activation contributes significantly to reducing depressive symptoms and improving psychological well-being. In conclusion, the reviewed evidence suggests that Behavioral Activation is a promising therapeutic intervention for treating depression in adolescents and emerging adults, as it promotes a reduction in depressive symptoms and increased participation in meaningful activities. However, several studies have methodological limitations, such as small sample sizes or short follow-up periods. Therefore, it is recommended that studies with larger and more diverse samples be developed, as well as that research be promoted in Latin American contexts to evaluate the applicability of Behavioral Activation in different sociocultural realities. Furthermore, it is pertinent to encourage the implementation of this intervention in various clinical, educational, and community settings to determine its effectiveness.

Key Words: Behavioral Activation, Depression, Adolescents, Adults, Intervention, Mental Health.

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