Abstract

Objective: Contribute to the discussion on risks and risk behaviors of a group of working children and teenagers in order to unveil their realities and experiences, new meanings and feelings that will strengthen their ability to care for themselves. Methodology: A qualitative research that illustrates the need to address from a comprehensively look and critical thinking, the conceptions of quality of life and risk behaviors of children and young workers. Results: Risky behavior is not only an exclusive condition of children and young workers, but it is related to their contexts and social stories. Their families have weak symbolic devices to support and provide security, affection and guidance to their children, resulting in a lack of care, which leads them to create other frames of reference and risk behaviors, such as drug use or activities that result in violent situations, theft and damage to private property. Some of them also construct meanings and significance from their daily lives and relationships with adults at home, school, work, which involve their own recognition or subjectivity in terms of self-care practices related to protection from sexual abuse, guard against peer pressure regarding drug use, and protecting younger children from consumption. However, self-care does not eliminate surrounding risk factors (violence, occupational hazards) or consequences that are primarily dependent on social and economic conditions that generate said factors. Conclusions: It is necessary to accommodate working children in institutional settings and respond to their demands, social and cultural rights, and overcome the stigma and blame mechanisms for working or being consumers of psychoactive substances. The need to strengthen the political and social capital of families and working children is observed, in order to enable them to take an active role regarding the defense and guarantee of their rights.

Keywords

Quality of life, risky behavior, working children, care.