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**Health risk behaviors in homeless girls: A qualitative approach using the theory of planned behavior**

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Even though homeless girls engage in several health risk behaviors that negatively impact their well-being, little is known from a psychosocial perspective. The aim of this research was to qualitatively analyze the health risk behaviors of substance use and abuse, sexual risk behaviors and illicit activities (theft, prostitution and drug dealing) through Ajzen's Theory of Planned Behavior in a group of 250 homeless girls ages 12-23 years old to, subsequently, design and implement effective intervention strategies. A semi-structured interview based on Ajzen's theory was applied and a content analysis was done. Main findings revealed that although homeless girls know the repercussions associated with such behaviors, they carry them out due to social pressure, to belong to a group and to please their partner. Therefore, affiliative relationships are the central factor that increases the likelihood of engaging in health risk behaviors, followed by the presence of these behaviors in the environment. Consequently, the key to an efficient intervention lies in promoting the establishment of a healthy social support network, the learning and acquisition of assertive skills (resisting pressures, saying no and establishing healthy interpersonal relationships), and the non-association with risk groups as essential components for diminishing such behaviors. In this way it will be more feasible to modify the behavioral, normative and control beliefs associated with health risk behaviors. Afterwards, through community interventions it is possible to buffer the negative effects of risk-environments. Nonetheless, without these components, the best psychological therapy accompanied by medical treatment, will have no long-lasting effects.

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