

Fieldwork approaching in socially excluded participants of young neet

Trabajo de campo en participantes socialmente excluidos jóvenes NiNis

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SUMMARY

This article offers a reflection on how to approach the phenomenon of young people who neither study nor work with the intention of showing an alternative to perform the fieldwork procedure with the support of various qualitative methodological strategies and psychological clinical intervention. The first part of this study focuses on the arguments that may the choice of the methodological paradigm with this type of participants as NEET and the second part describes the steps that were followed in the approaching to the social phenomenon at the time of doing the width research work a more comprehensive study on the

social construction of young who are not in education, employment or training (NEET) with ages from 17 to 29 years, as well as the importance and the foundation of each step chosen during this process of approaching with a population that has been socially.

Keywords: *Qualitative research, comprehensive-interpretive, supporting networks, phenomenon approaching, young “NEET”.*

RESUMEN

El presente artículo ofrece una reflexión de cómo aproximarse al fenómeno de los jóvenes que no

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estudian ni trabajan con la intención de mostrar una alternativa de realizar el procedimiento de trabajo de campo con el apoyo de diversas estrategias metodológicas cualitativas y para una intervención clínica. En la primera parte de este estudio se centra en los argumentos que pueden favorecer la elección del paradigma metodológico con este tipo de participantes además de conocer a los NiNis y la segunda parte describe los pasos que se siguieron en la aproximación al fenómeno social, al momento de realizar el trabajo de investigación más amplia sobre la construcción social de los jóvenes que no estudian ni trabajan con edades desde los 17 años hasta los 29 años, así como la importancia y el fundamento de cada paso elegido durante este proceso de acercamiento con una población que ha sido etiquetada socialmente.

Palabras clave: *investigación cualitativa, comprensivo-interpretativo, redes de apoyo, aproximación al fenómeno, jóvenes “ninis”.*

INTRODUCTION

A qualitative featured research development begins, like any other scientific process, with the selection of the academic branch and the object of study construction (parting from the way the phenomenon is conceived to study – Epistemology-). And it continues with the formulation of objectives and questions to which the research intends to respond (1) Qualitative research can be transversal (collecting information at once) or longitudinal (collecting data at different times), deductive (from theory and contrast through information obtained) or inductive (starting with the gathered information and build a theory).

Continuing with the same idea, qualitative research “... is the process that produces descriptive data: the words of the people, spoken or written, and observable behavior” (2). We allow to describe in different ways the construction of a discourse shared by different social voices and limiting a specific phenomenon, to analyze the processes therein are given, contextualize, guide a possible intervention and provide data to support the development of future research. Thus, qualitative research shows consistent orientation to the extent that it applies with the thoroughness of steps and especially considering the theoretical and methodological consistency.

Techniques of qualitative research, rather than being a particular field in various disciplines such as social psychology, can be differentiated between anthropology, sociology, or history, is a place of coincidence, that its transfer, more than an exception, has been the currency of change throughout their respective historical becoming, depending on their contexts and particularities (3).

According to Castro (4), the qualitative approach is interested in observing, listening, and understanding, so the level of reality is subjective. In addition, study participants are creating social order through interaction which also promotes understanding; and subjects and study situations must be addressed at the level of a microanalysis. Therefore, the interpretive perspective is used to develop knowledge inductively and assume that the obtained meanings are diverse and provides it with an adequate approximation in natural contexts (5).

One of the advantages of qualitative research is that it goes through various disciplines of social sciences and participates in a variety of discourses or theoretical perspectives and includes numerous methods and data collection strategies. This way denotes the extent of the qualitative approach in addressing psychological research (6). It also offers different strategies for gathering information or obtaining information, for example, interview, group discussion or life histories, ethnography, among others (7-8). Simplifying, we could speak of two necessary elements, observation, and interview (9). Following these ideas, this methodological process can achieve a perspective of social and psychological processes, providing tools to collect prospectively or retrospectively, information on how they have developed certain phenomena and the highly complex interactive dynamics, offering tools for detection of patterns that can be repeated over different situational or temporal contexts (10).

Another important point of the qualitative paradigm is regarding the analysis as it allows an interaction patterns study that is developed by different individuals or groups, as well as analysis of cultural patterns and their interpretation by members of a community or group (2,11). This means that it has an opening for doing research naturally and can be performed under

any social phenomenon. Parting from this methodology, a set of objectives and more open and diverse procedures can be combined because it has a range of options that allow you to cope with appropriate quality assurance processes exploration, description, contrasting, and possible generalization. At the same time, given its special adaptation to address the study of the novel or little empirical phenomena reports, it represents a set of alternatives to overcome some of the obstacles in this investigation.

This fact comes to unleash marginalization and therefore a label to those who do not accomplish traditional standards. It is intended that from this qualitative approach, new alternatives can be applied to know the “new” and “social labeling” phenomenon because studies and social discourses speak only from the periphery of young people without detailed analysis of each of the personal possibilities, but especially because they have not considered the styles of life of young people.

Since in many cases they do not have a scientific understanding of a particular phenomenon, it is suggested an alternative to base this paradigm

theoretically, considering the information that you have today, where it is part of the clarity of the question research, search for empirical studies of the phenomenon coupled with an analysis of the key concept of research, by collecting and classifying information in books and magazines on the subject to finally do an elaboration of bibliographical data of references.

For this study, a comprehensive theory was considered, such as Gergen's Theory of Social Construction, the identity theories for adolescents and young people from social psychology (5).

On the other hand, the qualitative strategy allows to development and disseminate extensive descriptions of great understanding which are extremely useful to provide direct knowledge of social phenomena and represent a source to understand, enabling a systematic approach to the perspective of social actors and the meanings that they give to their experience. These descriptions can serve in turn as a complement to other approaches and directing it to future research. Many studies have been carried out on young people belonging to stigmatized groups, such as homosexuals, prisoners, terminally ill youths,

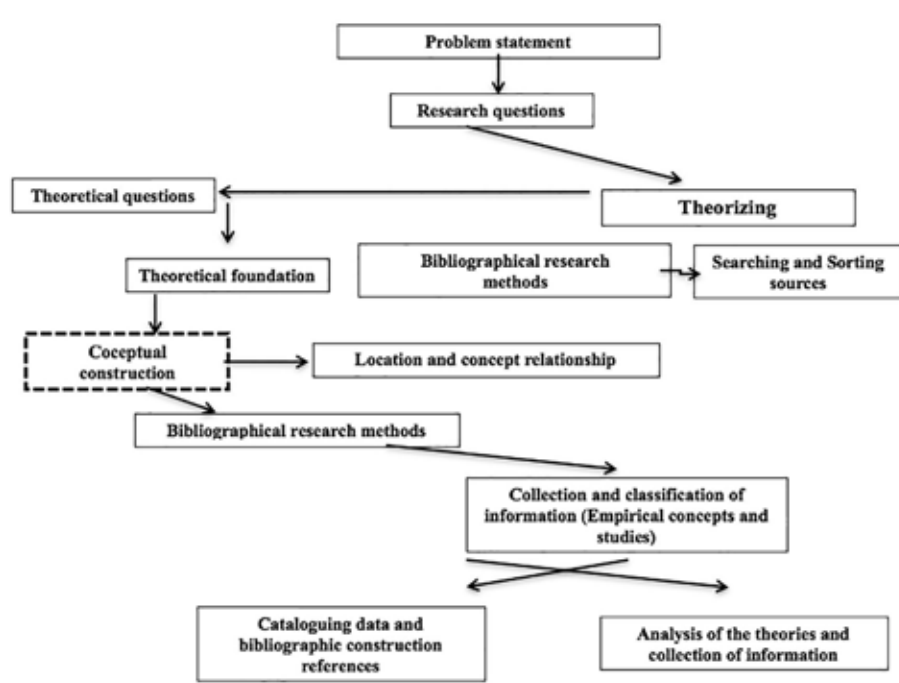


Figure 1. Theoretical Framework construction.

young people with HIV/AIDS, and young people living with some addiction (12-17).

These proposals share a common discourse on how they act on young people making differences in power and certain social spaces, also found a form of stereotypes and generalizations, social exclusion, direct aggression, structural violence, among others. The methodology used includes the perception of young people before these experiences of vulnerability, which suggests that before the vulnerable young people, it is appropriate to do fieldwork where the discourse of what they live is sought, the situation of not being incorporated in the school or work. The novelty of this work is the way to approach people who do not have a specific place to meet, so they use various techniques of qualitative sampling to support in finding those who are not in school or the job.

For purposes of this proposal, it was chosen to be inductive, as from the data obtained from the macro and micro social discourse, public opinion, empirical research experts and the collection of information social actors (fieldwork) aims to build a comprehensive model about the social construction of identity in young who are neither in education, employment nor training (18).

Through this descriptive, analytical, and exploratory approach, an unbeatable approaching strategy is presented to study the so-called "NEET", this is because it has not been given yet a clear definition of the phenomenon and because they are not considered an established social group. Later, it is discussed how they have been called from the macro discourses (19).

In this idea, one of the objectives of social discourse about young people who neither study nor work, is first, to recognize the label tagged as "NEET" -because they are not in school or at work (20-21). Nowadays, there is an international concern for this group of people as they have increased dramatically (22) According to reports from the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), the number of those who neither study nor work globally round among the 210 million people, in Mexico, there are more than 7 million (23) this would mean that there are enough people who, for various reasons, are not in the axes of social organization (14) with serious consequences on mental health (24-26).

This daunting scenario itself is further complicated, considering that some of the factors such as social exclusion, poverty, and inequality factors have been intensified in recent times (27). In addition, there are new forms of vulnerability following the recent social and cultural transformations that determine the exclusion of young people from the educational and labor fields. This has also resulted in this phenomenon, young people are not located in socially desirable occupations, building a new social phenomenon that includes adolescents and youth, even adult responsibilities, who are neither part of the formal education system nor entering the labor market (28).

This situation creates significant challenges in the disciplines of social sciences, as in the case of psychology (not to mention the implications in the political, social, and cultural development of a country's economic aspect), has defined himself as a "student" or "worker" identity. Therefore, young people, who are not in this condition, are located in an extreme situation of exclusion where it seems they "do not exist" socially (29). When performing a critical analysis exercise, it is possible to see that beyond a group of young people without work, is a series of individual, social, and political conditions, including the family economy, ranging from the macro-economic processes to micro phenomena such as the media that seem to favor and reinforce delayed adolescence and youth in crisis where it is often difficult to assume adulthood responsibilities.

It has been discussed in the literature on the situation of young NEET if it is an individual choice or a consequence of the lack of opportunities established by the State (30). In any case, it would be interesting to address this problem from the periphery because they do not talk about what happens to people from their perception. As a result, one of the purposes of this paper is to reflect on how the qualitative paradigm can be a suitable alternative to research with labeled social phenomena. This proposal stems from the experience in the fieldwork with youth who "neither study nor work" (NEET). This project is based on broader research on the social construction of young people who do not study or work because an interpretive study of multiple cases between 17 and 29 years of age was carried out. For the selection of informants, the intensive

intentional sampling strategy was used (18). Through this sampling, it was sought to carefully select the cases that characterized the object of study and provide deep information based on the reality on a voluntary and confidential basis (31). The research focused on analyzing the process of the social construction of identity from their perspective, under a comprehensive look of the phenomenon, can be a more thoughtful approach to these young people. From this position, we start from the idea that people construct their stories and meanings through experience, language, and social relations. The stories provide a framework of intelligibility that permits the attribution of meanings and allow us to interpret the experience, reflecting ideologies and prevalent practices in context.

In scientific research, the first point to start the study is to have clarity on how you look at an object of study, as this determines the choice of the methodological paradigm. For purposes of this work, it is part of a phenomenological vision because it is studied and interpreted on how people experience the world: no matter how the world is known, but how they live and how the experience occurs. Epistemology can provide theoretical and methodological consistency, and most linked to the epistemology of knowledge is the qualitative paradigm with comprehensive-interpretive method (32), because it allows to access the experiences of the social partners, and individuals when dialogue about their experiences, ask questions, consider alternative metaphors and the threshold is crossed into new meanings. This perspective conceives the world as constructed, interpreted, and experienced by people in their interactions and broader social systems. The research focuses not only on objectively verifiable facts but also on the many subjective meanings attributed to them by the people and the experiences of these are recovered (33).

Seen from this type of qualitative paradigm, the direct source of information is the natural environment of young people, which is obtained through social actors, under a defined framework. In this sense, there is a wide range of issues that can be analyzed through qualitative research. On the one hand, qualitative methodology is appropriate to respond to open-ended questions or exploratory, which are typical of the first

approach to a social phenomenon. In another type of methodology is only a point of comparison, to mention an example, but for this type of methodology there is no series of linear steps, rather the methodology is open. The data collected is predominantly descriptive, it may be describing people, situations, events, phenomena, among others. The following suggests a way to locate the sources of information of this type of research. After all, it is essential to be clear on the theoretical and empirical source, because it guides to a conceptual framework and data collection through the theoretical framework and fieldwork, hence the importance of possibly taking the same time (Figure 2).

The difficulty of studying a phenomenon labeled with little conceptual clarity, is that there is an opposition between the methodologies of extensive surveys and data collection sometimes, so it is necessary to explore and there arise some questions: How is a qualitative research conducted? What is that a person no longer studies or works? Is it a matter of deciding or a consequence? Which are the risks? What can you do to solve this situation?

To provide answers to these questions, it can be through traditional ethnography and participant and non-participant observation that are inherent, but two strategies that dominate studies with hidden populations are proposed: the targeted-structured interviews and commonly known as “snowball sampling” (34).

Following the study objectives, the interview is considered as the ideal tool for saving and recreating the significant experience of their situation where young people do not study or work. The choice of this instrument responds to the possibility of personal interaction among participants “toward understanding the perspectives of the informants about their lives, experiences or situations, as expressed in their own words” (2). There are different types of interviews such as semi-structured, depth, and targeted, which are designed to do the scanning. However, the study-focused interview was chosen because this technique of data collection seeks to explore certain specific issues and also encourages participants to play a more active role in the course of the discussion (35). Therefore, the stories are explored, as a reciprocal relationship

FIELDWORK APPROACHING IN SOCIALLY EXCLUDED PARTICIPANTS

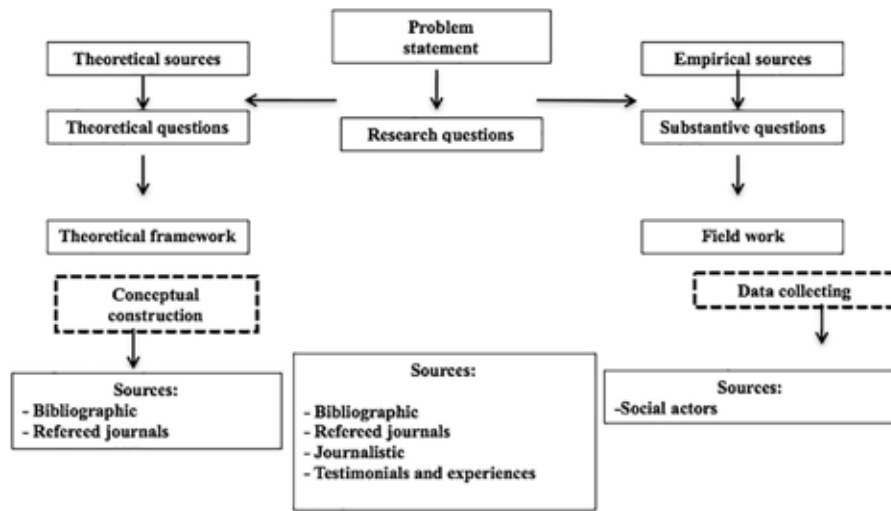


Figure 2. Information source's location.

is established between the interviewer and the interviewee that will generate information from careful reflection.

Merton, Fiske, and Kendall (35) describe this interview in a series of steps following the subsequent process: 1) creates a natural bond, 2) encourages fitness for conversation, 3) shows understanding, 4) gets concrete and basic descriptions facts, 5) makes pre-established questions, 6) reduces the emotional level, 7) concludes the conversation without losing contact. In research, interviews represent the ideal instrument to enter the world of young people and their subjectivities and to understand the social construction of identity.

To gather information, it is being proposed to develop an interview guide. Its construction involves a process of trial and error because it involves determining what to ask and how to ask. Following methodological consistency can be constructed from the theoretical reflection on the social construction as well as the comments and suggestions made by young people who participated in the pilot interviews.

A very important consideration in the development of the interview aspect is to help create a climate of greater trust and openness for both the participants and the researcher, and it does not influence the exposure of the story.

As an additional tool and with the approval of the interviewees, it is necessary to keep a field journal to take notes of the interview itself and not rely on memory. It can be mentioned to respondents that they have the freedom to stop, question, or finish the interview whenever they consider it appropriate.

When the strategy to be used is clear, the focused interview in this study, you need to approach potential participants. There are two types of criteria for selecting informants according to the recommendations of methodological texts: the first is the theoretical approach; ... the theoretical premises define which features informants should have to be selected, either by their status, role, social position, or experience, as a member of a category or social subcategory and even the degree of knowledge about the phenomenon of interest. This procedure is called "theoretical sampling" in qualitative research (36). The second criterion relates to select individuals for their inherent qualities, as would be the type of personality, the interaction with the interviewer, personal support, the ability to establish relationships of trust, and others of this type (37). The purpose of these two strategies is to achieve an adequate "sample" of informants in relation to the object of study and build an interviewer-interviewee relationship of mutual trust.

Sampling can be defined as a research technique to approach the participants. The form of “support networks” were used where you ask different people about potential participants, and once given this first step, the first “support” to contact the investigator and the name is provided for this study “potential participant”, which in turn gives contact details like phone number, email, Facebook, and so on. This strategy can be seen as a response to solving the problems associated with sampling, unrecognized, isolated, or criminal tagged populations. It can also be placed within the group of methodologies link, which seeks to take advantage of social networks of respondents to provide the researcher with a set of potentially expandable contacts.

This process is based on the assumption that “the link” between the “support networks” and the possible participants are more trustful, which helps to have a contact that can generate certainty, plus to get a variety of participants, since the “support networks” are known for different media, we suggest that sampling through an assortment network will give a variety of participants, considering the diversity of NEET young people – school dropouts, unemployed youth, young mothers, sick youth. That is, the approximation participants can be done by an open invitation from a “support network” known or reference chain in which someone “who is not necessarily a participant” lead to a “potential participant” (34). it is undeniable that young people who neither study nor work, are not an urban tribe, so there is no place where to find them, only the label is known and that is not embedded

in educational institutions or the labor market. However, in these categories, there are a lot of aspects to be argued, such as the design of work and education, as the former can be performed without receiving any financial retribution and the second is a process that is not only needed of an educational institution.

Given the above reasons, it is thought appropriate that the first contact with young people is by telephone, to give a brief explanation of the study and the interview process, emphasizing that it is studying youth and diversity of young people, this can be attractive for participants because they will have a space for dialogue where no value judgments are issued. However, other researchers have reported problems such as NEET young people (and other marginalized youth) changing phone numbers often, and so not being easy to call at all. This step also helps to arrange the time, day, and place with the interviewee interested in participating. It is also very important to consider the available periods of the participants in sharing their experience. Then, a synthesized form is shown on how the process of rapprochement with young people became (Figure 3).

Since the first meeting, it is necessary to explain to each participant in detail the study objectives, the importance of their participation and ethical aspects of research, also submit to each of the participants the written format consent and/or talking to the participant’s parents and deliver the consent form to them in case it is underage. It is required to read it to solve any

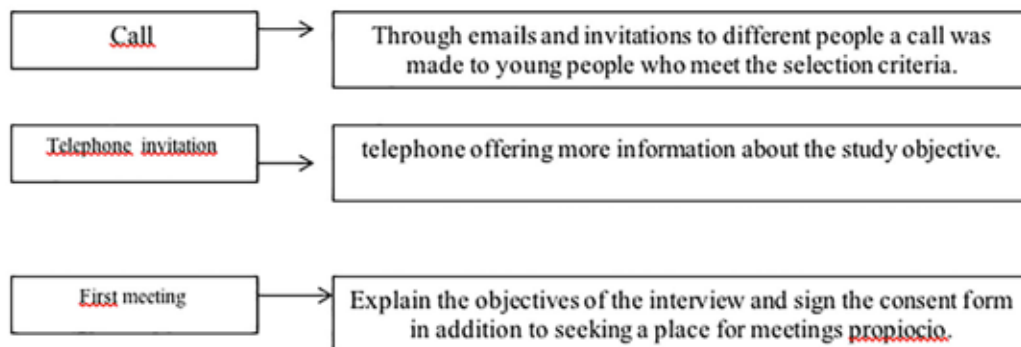


Figure 3. Process of rapprochement with young people.

possible doubts and highlight the commitments of both the participant and the researcher. At the beginning of each interview, it is suggested to give a detailed explanation of the study, so informants know the purpose of the research and freely decide to participate.

Another aspect to consider is to ask permission for recording and transcribing the interviews without altering the agreement of confidentiality. Also, being a phenomenon involving a “social label” must remain anonymous (assigning a pseudonym or asking them to choose one themselves) and let them know the results generated from the study, because it gives them confidence in the seriousness of the research, about methodological issues, and certainty in the recovered information.

Following this line of thoughts, interviews can be done in different scenarios, giving the participants the opportunity to different alternatives to be fair, allowing a scenario of privacy such as a classroom or at participants’ home. The most important aspect of the interview is to make young people feel comfortable, confident, and free to speak, this is to find an accessible place for interviews, so they do not invest over time or money in moving from their places to where the interview is.

When interviews are complete, it is proposed to start with the stage of transformation of the original recording to the verbatim transcript of the conversation. This process is the “description” of the original verbal interaction. However, another set inherent in the act of speaking, such as volume, intonation, tone, pitch, and rhythm of the voice is not recorded in the transcript (4).

Subsequently, it is suggested to develop the thematic index of each interview to identify the sequence and order of importance in which the experiences were narrated. This allows knowing the most important aspects of the young people's lives, frequency of certain events, significant people, the core issues that gave meaning and structure to the narrative.

Within the framework of qualitative research, many proposals establish general procedures for the development of process analysis (38-40). From this set of proposals, Kvale’s one was chosen because of its proposed systematization

(elaboration of categories) and simultaneously opening proposed for the implementation of the interview. To perform an analysis of the speeches of the young, the first task is to set the themes on which the information is structured and organized. Performing this analysis allows the preliminary identification of findings based on the account of the experiences, gathering the sentences and paragraphs of the text in specific categories.

Thus, analytical categories have to be developed for classifying information from the interview guide and study objectives. These categories are grouped using the technique of categorization of meanings given by Kvale (38). Through this technique, each interview is coded in a series of mutually excluding categories, allowing structuring large and complex narratives information units that facilitate the understanding of a phenomenon and its occurrence along with the interview. Similarly, it propitiates to the discursive content of respondents acquire meaning for the researcher.

The next step is the subcategories search which allows a more accurate analysis of the information. This process is carried out through the successive reading of each interview (minimum 10 readings of each interview), to achieve elucidate meaning and significance of what was said by the interviewees and find possible convergences and divergences between them, with the aim of understanding from the reality of each of the participants. For information processing analysis, the theoretical benchmark was chosen because it helps to identify the most important elements of narration and meaning for the participants from the literature. To perform the above, it was necessary to encode the material and then compare categorizations obtained by each of the participants.

Also, there is software that can support data analysis (Atlas ti, Nudist, MAXQDA, among others) but the MAXQDA is an excellent choice because it is very familiar as to have the texts on paper, it is also very easy to identify categories. The generated categories are analyzed together with all text, in accordance with the theoretical reference guiding the study and from the social context of respondents; in which inevitably the family, peers, and macro-social speeches intervene as part of its social construction.

About the interview transcripts, it is proposed that the same investigator of the project designs them, but it would be great to have the support of an assistant who does not know the respondents. The management of audio-recorded and videotaped information will be used exclusively for the responsible of the study and research purposes only.

In summary, the process for carrying out this phase of the study is:

- 1) Identification and definition of the general categories.
- 2) Assign to each of the categories an element that distinguishes them all.
- 3) Development of thematic files where information of each of the categories is concentrated.
- 4) Subsequently, a concentration table is designed with each of the categories, in which it will be analyzed on differences and similarities between them through the MAXQDA.
- 5) Finally, the interpretation will be worked out from the information obtained from the theoretical framework underpinning this research.

Ethics in research has to be considered, through this, participants know the following (32).

- The purpose of the study
- The interviews procedure
- The potential risks and benefits
- Voluntary participation and the right to withdraw from the study
- The guarantees of confidentiality
- The written consent.

The methodology of this psychological research was based on the systematic, explicit, and transparent procedures that allow intersubjective consensus to approach a phenomenon.

CONCLUSION

This study allows us to understand that the wealth of research becomes for others a “persuasive fiction of modernism”, considering practices, beliefs, and social phenomena regarding a specific social context because socio-cultural contextualization gets a rhetorical effect so that it is also a methodological principle to be instrumentalized in research to explain and/or give meaning to the phenomena that are studied as a social label, but with an openness to being explained.

From this approach, although the qualitative methodology comprises a set of objectives and procedures more open and diversified, now has a range of resources that can face with appropriate quality assurance processes description and understanding. Furthermore, given its special adaptation to deal flexibly the study of social phenomena “NEET” given its high complexity and temporal variability represents a set of alternatives exceptional value to overcome some of the obstacles present in the current psychological research. The need to incorporate the voices of those suggested that have been excluded, since this phenomenon has been labeled.

In this way, the life situation of the participants is presented as complex and diverse; It is possible to understand how these realities are built up at the present moment of being young; particularly in these young people, whose choices in certain contexts, which in turn establish a youth identity, such as school and work, are not presented as a "logical" step. On the contrary, the findings of the study show that today it is extremely difficult for many young people to make this "direct" transition between youth and adulthood.

Another significant implication of the study is the existence of closeness and trust between participants and their families that matches the studies. Regarding this, a preliminary clarification must be made; friends, although this circumstance does not seem to be common, since it does not share the spaces of school or work, young people look for other moments and places to meet their friends and share experiences, leaving behind differences of roles and times, to assume that we cannot differentiate someone

who does not study or work, within the general concept of young.

The investigation of the phenomenon “NEET” that from this postmodernist approach could be placed along with other currents such as transculturality and gender, in its interest to include and make visible to young people, their voices, and their stories beyond traditional canons of science. The premise of the visibility of voices of young people excluded would be a starting point in the discussion of the methodological strategies with youth. The traditional interest in obtaining rich interview data or complex and fluid narratives should be replaced by a more focused interest in hearing their voice. The importance of this approach to the study of socially labeled youth is that until now, it has not given voice to young people, so it is important to create a movement of inclusion of those in a position where they do not study or work, considering that the “supporting networks” are an excellent option to identify participants.

This inclusion of young people in conditions of exclusion requires a reflective approach in two ways. The first is about the concept itself, since it is not clear, given the youth diversity, but also on how complex it is to be inserted in the labor and educational world, as in the construction phase of the theoretical framework is necessary to contemplate the diversity of voices that influence the concept. The second of how to approach young people who do not meet at any certain time or space and are not placed under certain characteristics of social identity, so the suggestion is to use various outreach strategies, giving openness and trusting participants. However, it is necessary to discuss on new ways of interviewing and break the traditional canons of structured based interview subjected to who are at school or work. To summarize, the challenge is not only opening the topic to the discussion on how to approach young people but also what strategies would be to address social and psychological conditions given the situation of not belonging to the axes of traditional social organization. The condition of the “NEET” affects their state of mental health and has negative psychological manifestations such as low self-esteem, depressive states, and suicidal behavior, so it is necessary to carry out intervention strategies in those who do not have

access to health.

These findings suggest that the social exclusion of NEETs has an impact on mental health. A series of social policies are needed to generate more educational opportunities, greater support for student retention, and programs that facilitate the transition from school to the labor market. Cultural norms must also be considered in terms of life path expectations, the perceived relevance of higher education. A recent systematic review of reintegration interventions for NEET youth is required. Therefore, the inclusion of mental health strategies in reintegration programs is an important avenue for future research, given the importance of clinical psychology in society.

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