













ORIGINAL

Pre-Professional Placement Intervention Models in the Social Work programmed at the Technical University of Manabí in 2024

Modelos de Intervención en las Prácticas Pre-Profesionales de la Carrera de Trabajo Social de la Universidad Técnica de Manabí durante el 2023

Derling José Mendoza Velazco^{1,2}  , Fabián Gustavo Menéndez Menéndez¹  , María Andreina Salvatierra Choez¹  , María Eulalia Briones Ponce¹  , Iris María Sánchez Azúa^{1,3}  

¹Universidad Técnica de Manabí UTM, Facultad de Ciencias Sociales y Humanísticas, Trabajo Social. Portoviejo, Ecuador.

²Universidad UTE, Centro de Educación en Línea UTE. Quito, Ecuador.

³Universidad Estatal de Milagro, Facultad de Ciencias Sociales, Educación Comercial y Derecho. Guayas, Ecuador.

Cite as: Mendoza D, Menéndez Menéndez FG, Salvatierra Choez MA, Briones Ponce ME, Sánchez Azúa IM. Pre-Professional Placement Intervention Models in the Social Work programmed at the Technical University of Manabí in 2024. Salud, Ciencia y Tecnología. 2024; 4:953. <https://doi.org/10.56294/saludcyt2024953>

Submitted: 13-01-2024

Revised: 09-04-2024

Accepted: 11-05-2024

Published: 12-05-2024

Editor: Dr. William Castillo-González 

ABSTRACT

Introduction: pre-professional placements are a fundamental component of Social Work students' education, as they enable them to apply theoretical knowledge in real-world contexts. However, at the Technical University of Manabí, no prior research has been conducted on the intervention models utilized.

Objective: the objective of the research was to determine the intervention models currently employed in the pre-professional placements of the Social Work programmed at UTM. The study aimed to characterize the models in terms of their objectives, structure, activities and evaluation mechanisms.

Methods: the study adopted a quantitative approach with an exploratory-diagnostic design. The population consisted of 510 students in the seventh and eighth levels. The sample comprised 426 students, selected through non-probability sampling. A 17-item questionnaire on intervention models was designed.

Results: the main results identified 10 applied models, with Case Management, Crisis Intervention and Behavior Modification being the most prevalent. Most include clear objectives, action plans and teacher supervision.

Conclusion: the effectiveness of the intervention models applied in the pre-professional practices is corroborated, however, systematic evaluation needs to be improved, the models need to be adapted to local needs and the articulation between theory and professional practice needs to be strengthened for a comprehensive training.

Keywords: Social Work; Diagnosis; Education; Research; Ecuador.

RESUMEN

Introducción: las prácticas preprofesionales son un componente fundamental de la formación de los estudiantes de Trabajo Social, ya que les permiten aplicar los conocimientos teóricos en contextos reales. Sin embargo, en la Universidad Técnica de Manabí no se han realizado investigaciones previas sobre los modelos de intervención utilizados.

Objetivo: el objetivo de la investigación fue determinar los modelos de intervención empleados actualmente en las prácticas pre-profesionales del programa de Trabajo Social de la UTM. El estudio pretendió caracterizar los modelos en términos de sus objetivos, estructura, actividades y mecanismos de evaluación.

Métodos: el estudio adoptó un enfoque cuantitativo con un diseño exploratorio-diagnóstico. La población estuvo constituida por 510 estudiantes de los niveles séptimo y octavo. La muestra estuvo compuesta por 426 estudiantes, seleccionados mediante muestreo no probabilístico. Se diseñó un cuestionario de 17 ítems sobre modelos de intervención.

Resultados: los principales resultados identificaron 10 modelos aplicados, siendo la Gestión de Casos, la Intervención en Crisis y la Modificación de Conducta los más prevalentes. La mayoría incluyen objetivos claros, planes de acción y supervisión por parte del profesor.

Conclusiones: se corrobora la efectividad de los modelos de intervención aplicados en las prácticas preprofesionales, sin embargo, es necesario mejorar la evaluación sistemática, adaptar los modelos a las necesidades locales y fortalecer la articulación entre teoría y práctica profesional para una formación integral.

Palabras clave: Trabajo Social; Diagnostico; Educación; Investigación; Ecuador.

INTRODUCTION

International Pre-Professional Placements in Social Work have been widely recognized as a important component of professional training.⁽¹⁾ Over the past decade, international attention has positively focused on the implementation of intervention models in Social Work students' pre-professional placements. Many countries have demonstrated a significant commitment to the continuous improvement of academic and professional training in this discipline. Currently, universities worldwide emphasize the importance of evaluating and adapting intervention models to ensure that students acquire the necessary skills to address the complexities of social intervention.⁽²⁾

Various studies highlight that placements facilitate the application of theoretical knowledge, the development of skills and competencies required for intervention, as well as the early integration of students into real-world work settings.⁽³⁾ Additionally, the significance of implementing structured and systematic placement models, with clear learning objectives and rigorous mechanisms for monitoring, evaluation and feedback throughout the process, is emphasized.⁽⁴⁾

In Latin American countries such as Brazil, Argentina and Chile, there is also a growing interest in strengthening the design and management of student placements in Social Work.^(5,6) While there have been attempts to establish guidelines and frameworks from universities and academic units, there are still gaps and weaknesses in the conceptualization of systematic models that coherently articulate graduate profiles, local needs and changing contexts of professional intervention. Some countries face similar challenges in terms of the absence of systematic evaluation and in-depth knowledge about the intervention models applied in this context. This landscape highlights the need to address the identified deficiencies and promote more effective practices in the education of Social Work professionals.⁽⁷⁾

The main models are: Psychodynamic model, Crisis Intervention Model, Task-Centred Model, Humanistic Existential Model, Critical/Radical Model, Case Management Model, Systemic Model, Ecological Model, Behavior Modification Model. Models of professional intervention in social work are conceptual frameworks that guide the professional practice of social workers. These models are based on different theories and approaches and offer different perspectives on how to deal with social problems. Models of professional intervention are theoretical-conceptual frameworks that orient and guide the work of social workers in the processes of care and intervention with individuals, families, groups and communities.⁽⁸⁾

In the Ecuadorian context, particularly within the Social Work programmed at the Technical University of Manabí, there is no evidence of prior diagnostic studies on the implemented pre-professional placement models. Although the early engagement in work settings is valuable for the educational process, there are no clear parameters or rigorous systematizations that allow for an adequate characterization of the experiences and guidance for improvements or innovations.⁽⁹⁾ This situation creates information gaps on how student performance is organized and evaluated, which models predominate, and how these are articulated with the graduate profiles defined in the curriculum.

Against this backdrop, the following questions guide the present research:

- What are the intervention models currently used in the pre-professional placements of Social Work at the Technical University of Manabí?
- How are these models characterized in terms of their objectives, structure, activities, evaluation mechanisms, etc.?
- To answer these questions, the following objectives are presented:
- Determine the intervention models currently used in the pre-professional placements of Social Work at the Technical University of Manabí.
- Characterize the applied models in terms of their objectives, structure, activities, and evaluation mechanisms.

METHODS

Research Focus

The study was developed under a quantitative approach, characterized by the collection and analysis of numerical data to understand social phenomena. It is based on the measurement of variables and the application of statistical techniques to generalize results to a wider population.⁽¹⁰⁾

Type of study

The study corresponds to an exploratory type of diagnostic study. This study seeks to examine a phenomenon that has been little studied or understood, providing an initial overview and paving the way for more detailed investigations.⁽¹¹⁾ This study is framed as exploratory, as it addresses the underexplored dynamics of intervention models in pre-professional placements.

Population and Sample

The population consisted of 510 social work students. 260 students belong to the seventh level and 250 students to the eighth level, all belonging to the virtual modality period 2024-I (April - August 2024).⁽¹¹⁾ A participative selective sampling was applied. The criteria were to select 7th and 8th level students who wished to participate in the study. The final sample was 426 students (231 from the 7th level and 195 from the 8th level).⁽¹²⁾

Techniques and Instruments

The survey technique was used in this research. For data collection, a questionnaire was administered. The questionnaire was used as an instrument.⁽¹²⁾ The questionnaire was designed with 17 specific questions related to preparation for pre-professional practice, application of theories, impact of practice, impact and frequency, adaptability and flexibility of intervention models. 16 items had 5 response options, with option 1 representing the lowest level "never". Option 2 represented the "Rarely" level. Option 3 represented the intermediate level "Sometimes". Option 4 represented the level "Often". Finally, option 5 represented the highest level "Always". Item 17 had 9 response options, with option 1 being the "least frequent" and option 9 the "most frequent".⁽¹³⁾

Descriptive Analysis of the Results

The present study utilized the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS), version 26, to carry out a basic descriptive statistical analysis on a 17-item questionnaire distributed across five variables. The questionnaire was distributed through Google Forms and collected responses from 426 students. In the initial phase of the analysis, a descriptive examination of the variables was conducted, providing an overview of the distribution of responses. Key statistical measures, such as means, standard deviations, and frequencies, were calculated to offer a detailed understanding of the variability and central tendency of the data.⁽¹⁴⁾ The descriptive analysis allowed for a thorough exploration of the participants' responses in relation to each questionnaire variable. The presentation of results included descriptive graphs and tables that facilitated the interpretation of patterns and trends in the data.

Reliability of the Data Collection Instrument

To evaluate the reliability of the results obtained through the administered questionnaire, a Cronbach's alpha analysis was conducted. A pilot test was applied to 15 students. The analysis yielded a Cronbach's alpha of 0,907. This high value obtained (above 0,7) suggests a high internal consistency among the items that make up the measurement scale.⁽¹⁵⁾

Ethical aspects

The data obtained in the study were used in compliance with the Declaration of Helsinki.

RESULTS

The following presents the results obtained in the research "Intervention Models in the Pre-Professional Placements of the Social during 2023":

According to the statistical analysis conducted on the responses obtained from the questionnaire administered to the 426 participating students, the following key findings were obtained (see Figure 1).

A significant variability was observed in the preparation for pre-professional placements among Social Work students at the Technical University of Manabí during 2024-I. The results indicated that 45,2 % of the students always consider themselves prepared. This was followed by a notable 32,5 % who reported being almost always prepared. Then, 13,5 % indicated that the pre-professional placements are sometimes effective.

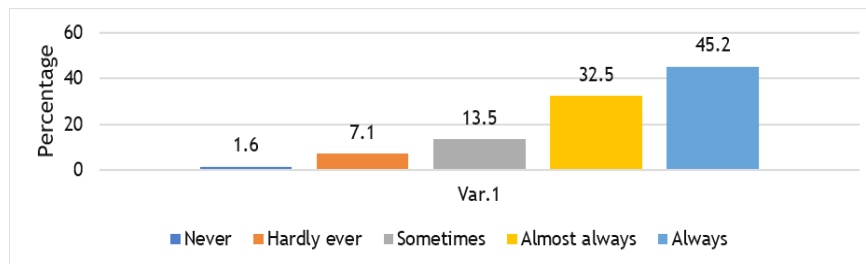


Figure 1. Variable 1: Preparation for the Pre-Professional Internships of the students of the Social Work Career of the Technical University of Manabí during 2024-I

For Variable 2, it was observed that the application of theories in the pre-professional placement (second variable) showed a significant distribution in the frequency levels. No responses were recorded at level 1 (never), indicating that theories were always applied to some degree. A small percentage (2,4 %) indicated a level 2 (rarely), suggesting sporadic application of theories (see Figure 2).

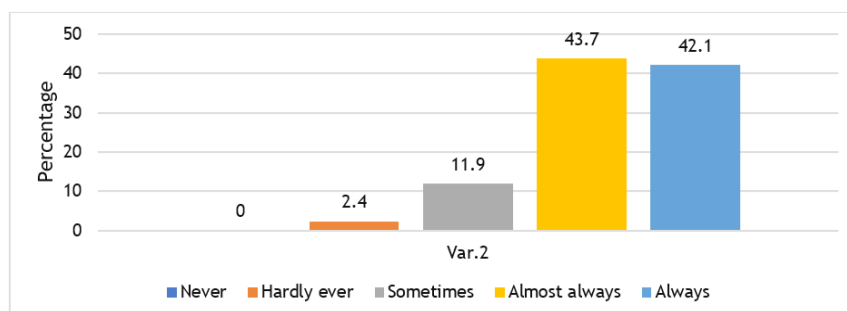


Figure 2. Variable: Application of Theories in the Pre-Professional Practice of the students of the Social Work Career of the Technical University of Manabí during 2024-I

11,9 % of the participants responded with a level 3 (sometimes), indicating an intermittent application of theories in the pre-professional placement. This data can be interpreted as an opportunity to increase the integration of theory and practice, ensuring a more coherent and applied education for the students. Levels 4 and 5 (almost always and always) obtained the highest responses with 43,7 % and 42,1 % respectively, demonstrating a strong presence of the application of theories in the pre-professional placements. This reflects a significant emphasis on the integration of theoretical knowledge within the practical field, contributing to a balanced and comprehensive education.

The results of Variable 3 "Impact of Pre-Professional Placements" showed that 57,1 % of the surveyed students considered that the placements had a high impact on their professional development, allowing them to consolidate the theoretical knowledge acquired in the classroom.⁽¹⁶⁾ 36,5 % opined that the impact was almost always efficient, as it facilitated the connection between theory and practice to a certain extent. Only 5,6 % evaluated the impact of the placements as intermediate, indicating that there was little correlation between what was learned theoretically and what was experienced in the field (See Figure 3).

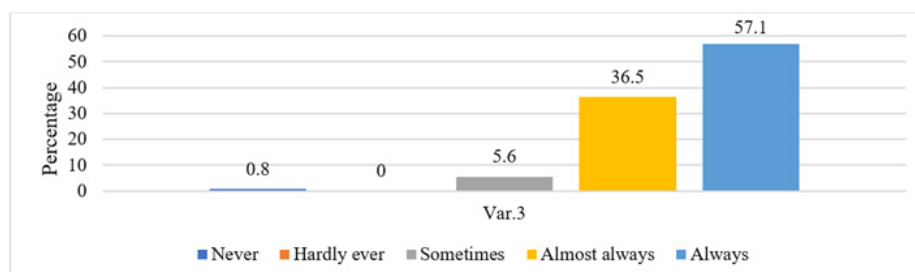


Figure 3. Variable 3: Impact of the Pre-Professional Internships on the students of the Social Work Degree at the Universidad Técnica de Manabí during 2024-I

The results on the adaptability and flexibility of the intervention models applied in the pre-professional placements showed that 49,2 % of the surveyed students affirmed that the models "almost always" adapt to changes in the sociocultural context. 40,5 % indicated that the models can adapt "always" to new problematic

situations. 8,7 % stated that the models adapt "sometimes". Finally, a small percentage of 0,8 % reported that the intervention models are never and rarely adaptable (see Figure 4).

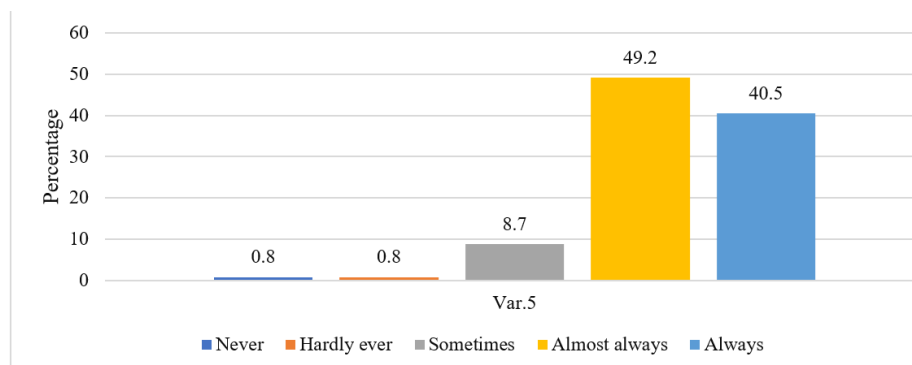


Figure 4. Variable 4: Adaptability and Flexibility of the Models of Intervention by the students of the Career of Social Work at the Technical University of Manabí during 2024-I

These findings suggest that, according to the majority of the students, the intervention models used demonstrate a certain capacity to adapt to modifications in the social environment or to new problematic scenarios, as proposed by Reamer⁽³⁾; Hooper et al.⁽⁷⁾ in highlighting that professional practice models require flexible mechanisms to allow their adaptation to changing contexts. To determine the intervention models currently used in the pre-professional placements of Social Work at the Technical University of Manabí during 2024-I, Variable Frequency of Use of Intervention Models, expresses the following (see Table 1).

Approach	N	Valid	Missing	Mean	Median	Std. Deviation	Variance
Statistical	426	426	0	4,70	5,00	2,578	6,644
Psychodynamic	426	426	0	5,45	6,00	2,412	5,818
Crisis Intervention	426	426	0	05,04	5,00	2,509	6,294
Task-Centered	426	426	0	4,90	5,00	2,542	6,461
Humanistic-Existential	426	426	0	4,28	4,00	2,419	5,850
Radical-Critical	426	426	0	6,10	7,00	2,709	7,341
Case Management	426	426	0	5,00	5,00	2,555	6,528
Systemic	426	426	0	4,46	4,00	2,535	6,426
Behavioral Modification	426	426	0	05,07	5,00	2,599	6,755

The total sample was 426 students, with no missing values. Therefore, the sample is representative. The models with the highest frequency of use reported by the students were: Crisis Intervention (mean 5,45), Case Management (mean 6,10) and Behavior Modification (mean 5,07). In contrast, the least frequent models were: Psychodynamic (mean 4,70), Humanistic Existential (mean 4,90) and Ecological (mean 4,46). There is moderate variability in the responses for most models (standard deviation between 2,4-2,7), except for Case Management, which was somewhat higher (2,709).

DISCUSSION

The discussion of the results reveals that the most widely used intervention models in the pre-professional practicums of Social Work at the Technical University of Manabí are Case Management, Crisis Intervention, and Behavior Modification.⁽¹⁷⁾ This is because these approaches are geared towards resolving concrete social problems and allow for practical results to be obtained in the short term, as suggested by Lake et al.⁽¹⁸⁾. It also coincides with the views expressed by Schott et al.⁽¹⁹⁾ who indicate that these models, focused on the internal and subjective processes of individuals, require a more prolonged intervention time, which hinders their application in practicum contexts with limited schedules. These findings suggest that students are employing a variety of intervention models to address their clients' needs, which is consistent with the diverse and complex nature of the social problems they face. However, it is important to highlight that, according to the results, the applied models are characterized by having specific objectives, a sequential structure of phases and activities, continuous evaluation mechanisms, and feedback between tutors and students.

Nevertheless, there is evidence of the need to strengthen aspects such as the adaptation of the models to specific contexts and the articulation between the objectives of the practicums and the graduate profile. In

this regard, Roberts et al.⁽²⁰⁾ emphasizes the importance of implementing structured and systematic models, with clear learning objectives and rigorous monitoring, evaluation, and feedback mechanisms throughout the process. Another relevant aspect is the need to reinforce the systematic evaluation of the results of the practicums and the articulation between the different actors involved in the educational process, in order to strengthen the relationship between theory and professional practice, as suggested by Zalaquett et al.⁽²¹⁾. Finally, while the effectiveness of the intervention models used in the pre-professional practicums of Social Work at the Technical University of Manabí is corroborated, greater emphasis is required on the systematic evaluation of results, the adaptation of models to changing social realities in a dynamic and flexible manner, and the articulation between the different actors involved in the educational process.

CONCLUSION

In relation to the first objective of determining the intervention models currently used in the pre-professional placements, the results show that the most implemented models are Case Management, Crisis Intervention and Behavior Modification. These three models are applied to a greater extent because they facilitate individual intervention and the holistic approach to complex problems. However, the frequent use of the systemic and psychodynamic models is also reported, evidencing that the theoretical training of the students influences the choice of models.

Regarding the second objective of characterizing the applied models, it was identified that the task-centred, systemic and case management models are generally applied for periods of 3 to 6 months in public and private institutions in the health and education sectors of Ecuador. These models are characterized by establishing clear intervention objectives, having a sequential structure of phases and activities, applying continuous evaluation mechanisms and feedback between tutors and students. However, the results also show that it is necessary to strengthen aspects such as the adaptation of the models to specific contexts and the articulation between placement objectives and graduate profile.

As a general conclusion, the effectiveness of the intervention models used is corroborated as they contribute to the development of competencies in the students. However, greater emphasis is required on the systematic evaluation of placement outcomes and the articulation between the different stakeholders involved in the educational process, to strengthen the relationship between theory and professional practice. It is also important to adapt the models to changing social realities in a dynamic and flexible manner. These findings provide valuable input on the quality standards that must be met by the training in pre-professional placements of the programmed, while also guiding the design of new intervention strategies in line with the identified needs. Further strengthening of various aspects is required, so that pre-professional placements fully achieve their objective of facilitating the effective transition between academia and professional performance in real social contexts.

REFERENCES

1. García TF, Romero LP de L. Basics of Social Work. Alianza Editorial; 2019. 320 p.
2. Langer CL, Lietz C. Applying Theory to Generalist Social Work Practice. Hoboken, New Jersey: Wiley; 2014. 336 p.
3. Reamer FG. Social Work Values and Ethics. New York: Columbia University Press; 2018. 296 p.
4. Hook MPV. Social Work Practice with Families: A Resiliency-Based Approach. New York, NY: Oxford University Press; 2019. 456 p.
5. Jiménez RC. Work with a family, contribute from the family guidance. Rev Electrónica Actual Investig Educ. 2015;15(1):1-27.
6. Proctor E. The Pursuit of Quality for Social Work Practice: Three Generations and Counting. J Soc Soc Work Res. 2017;8(3):335-53.
7. Hoepfer J, Fordham A, Abramson A, Tyson B, Fields C, Broderick C, et al. Where Social Work Can Lead You: Journeys Into, Around and Even Out of Social Work. Bridget Aileen LLC; 2022. 266 p.
8. Wali J. Where Were the Social Workers? A Historical Overview of the Social Work Profession's Complicity in the Family Policing System. Columbia Soc Work Rev. 10 de mayo de 2023;21(1):121-40.
9. Harms L, Connolly M. Social Work: From Theory to Practice. Cambridge University Press; 2024. 256 p.

10. Mendoza D, La Madriz J, López M, Ramón V. Research Competencies of Higher-Education Teaching Staff Based on Emotional Intelligence. *Mediterr J Soc Sci*. 2019;9(5).
11. Hernández R, Mendoza C. *Metodología de la investigación: las rutas cuantitativa, cualitativa y mixta*. McGraw Hill. México; 2018.
12. Mendoza D, Barreiro LMA, Chica TKM, Medranda EMA, Chávez SAR. Resilience in vulnerable university groups: An analysis of social work intervention strategies from the perspective of social inclusion. *Educ Sci J*. 12 de enero de 2024;26(1):82-102.
13. Mendoza Velazco D, Cejas M, Carmona CSV, Cejas MCN. Methodology for University Mathematics Teaching Staff: Emotional-Technological-Ontological Logic Evaluation. *Methodol Univ Math Teach Staff Emot-Technol-Ontol Log Eval*. 12 de octubre de 2023;9(4):645-55.
14. Sarwono J. Quantitative, Qualitative and Mixed Method Research Methodology. Vol. 1, Research Gate. Research Gate; 2022.
15. Tatano C. Introduction to Phenomenology: Focus on Methodology. Introduction to Phenomenology: Focus on Methodology. SAGE Publications; 2020.
16. Edmondson D. Social Work Practice Learning. SAGE; 2013. 225 p.
17. Sokol RL, Heinze J, Doan J, Normand M, Grodzinski A, Pomerantz N, et al. Crisis Interventions in Schools: A Systematic Review. *J Sch Violence*. 2021;20(2):241-60.
18. Lake AM, Niederkrotenthaler T, Aspden R, Kleinman M, Hoyte-Badu AM, Galfalvy H, et al. Lifeline Crisis Chat: Coding form development and findings on chatters' risk status and counselor behaviors. *Suicide Life Threat Behav*. 2022;52(3):452-66.
19. Schott EMP, Weiss EL. Transformative Social Work Practice. *Transform Soc Work Pract*. 2021;1(1):1-20.
20. Roberts AR, Ottens AJ. The seven-stage crisis intervention model: A road map to goal attainment, problem solving, and crisis resolution. *Brief Treat Crisis Interv*. 2005;5(4):329-39.
21. Zalaquett P, Muñoz E. Intervención en crisis para pacientes hospitalizados. *Rev Médica Clínica Las Condes*. 2017;28(6):835-40.

FINANCING

The authors did not receive financing for the development of this research.

CONFLICT OF INTEREST

The authors declare that they have no conflicts of interest.

AUTHORSHIP CONTRIBUTION

Conceptualization: Derling José Mendoza Velazco.
Data curation: María Andreina Salvatierra Choez.
Formal analysis: María Eulalia Briones Ponce.
Acquisition of funds: Fabián Gustavo Menéndez Menéndez.
Research: Iris María Sánchez Azúa.
Methodology: Iris María Sánchez Azúa.
Project management: Fabián Gustavo Menéndez Menéndez.
Resources: María Andreina Salvatierra Choez.
Software: María Eulalia Briones Ponce.
Supervision: Derling José Mendoza Velazco.
Validation: María Andreina Salvatierra Choez.
Display: Fabián Gustavo Menéndez Menéndez.
Drafting - original draft: María Eulalia Briones Ponce.
Writing - proofreading and editing: Derling José Mendoza Velazco.