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AFFECTIVITY AND COGNITIVE FUNCTIONING IN INSTITUTIONALIZED ELDERLY

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Affectivity is related to cognitive impairment, but it is not known whether positive affect and negative affect increase/decrease the risk of cognitive impairment. In this study, we sought to examine the prevalence of cognitive impairment, and the potential role of positive and negative affectivity on cognitive functioning in institutionalized portuguese elderly, controlling the potential role of demographic and emotional factors.

A cross sectional investigation has been conducted with a portuguese institutionalized sample at Coimbra's Council. We inquired 412 healthy elderly with a mean age of 80.38 years (SD = 7.24) using the Positive and Negative Affect Schedule (PANAS), the Mini-Mental State Examination (MMSE), the Geriatric Depression Scale (GDS) and the Geriatric Anxiety Inventory (GAI). Demographic (76.9% women, 14.3% > 4 years of education, 99.1% manual occupation, 82.2% without partner) and other self-reported related factors were taken into consideration (GDS mean 14.30 ± 6.31; GAI mean = 12.49 ± 5.93).

The prevalence of cognitive impairment was 66.6% (youngest-old: 1.4%; young-old: 24.7%, old-old: 36.5%, oldest-old: 3.9%). We found that only the positive affect was significantly related with the MMSE (r = 0.22). Multiple logistic regression analysis showed that positive affect predicted impairment in cognitive performance (OR = 0.96, CI 95% = 0.93-0.98; p < 0.001). These relationships were significant even after controlling for depression and anxiety status, age, education, and occupation.

These findings suggest that positive affect is a variable to attend to when evaluating cognitive functioning in institutionalized elderly.

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