

SOCIAL SUPPORT, MENTAL HEALTH, AND SATISFACTION WITH LIFE IN INSTITUTIONALIZED ELDERLY

A. Pardal, H. Espirito-Santo, L. Lemos, J. Matreno, H. Amaro, S. Guadalupe, F. Daniel, J. Ferreira, M. Fernandes, D. Carvalho, S. Maia, R. Gonçalves

Psychology, Instituto Superior Miguel Torga, Coimbra, Portugal

Introduction: Research has shown the importance of social support on mental health, however, this investigation has not been done in elder population.

Objective/aims: Our aim is to study the relationship between perceived social support, satisfaction with life, anxiety symptoms and depressive symptoms.

Methods: We collected a sample of 46 institutionalized elderly aged between 65 and 95 years old. We used the *Geriatric Anxiety Inventory* (GAI) and *Geriatric Depression Scale* (GDS) to assess anxious and depressive symptoms. To assess social support we used the *Older Americans Resources and Services Program* (OARS), which evaluated the social resources, and to assess the life satisfaction we used the *Satisfaction With Life Scale* (SWLS).

Results: We found that 91.3% of subjects were illiterate or with low education and only 4 (8.7%) had studied beyond the fourth grade. The elders showed an high average of anxiety and depression symptoms, and dissatisfaction with life. Regarding the perception of social support, the elderly essentially reveal high dissatisfaction with the extent of contact with others and the availability of help. We also found that perceived social support is related with GAI, GDS, and SWLS.

Conclusion: Intervention strategies should involve the integration of elder population in social life.