

Daily task performance assessed with a cognitive perspective: comparing people with schizophrenia to people without psychiatric diagnostic

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Introduction: People with schizophrenia have been found to have impaired attention, memory and executive functions. If mistakes in daily tasks are common to everyone, what should we expect during the execution of a meal preparation for people with schizophrenia living in the community?

Objectives: The present study was intended to further explore whether a group of persons with schizophrenia living in the community had problematic information processing skills, or functional limitations, affecting daily multi-task performance. Specifically, this study aimed to verify the hypothesis that people with schizophrenia have significantly more problems in information processing skills as assessed by the Perceive, Recall, Plan and Perform System of Task Analysis (PRPP), a performance-based assessment during daily task performance than individuals without a psychiatric disorder.

Methods: Twenty-eight participants with schizophrenia and 28 controls were rated on their performance according to the PRPP System. First, Stage One of the PRPP, a procedural task analysis was used to identify problematic steps and classify the types of errors observed. Then, these errors were further analysed through the Stage Two of the PRPP, a process task analysis, in order to explain how information processing problems affect the task performance.

Results: Both groups made a greater number of accuracy errors compared to other types of errors. However, participants with schizophrenia made significantly more of these errors, and had more difficulties in perceiving, recalling, planning, sequencing and performing during the execution of the task.

Conclusion: A difference in the quality of task execution was noted in the schizophrenia group compared to the controls. Differences descriptors belonging to the Perceive, Recall and Plan quadrant, suggest that persons with schizophrenia are more vulnerable in these processing skills during a daily multi-task than a matched control group.

Contribution to the practice/evidence base of occupational therapy: The use of PRPP System procedural and process task analysis is helpful to identify performance errors and information processing difficulties and therefore to better explain how these problems may compromise the autonomy of people with schizophrenia during daily tasks.