

Schizophrenia, instrumental activities of daily living and executive functions: a qualitative study

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Introduction: People affected by schizophrenia present difficulties in occupational and social reinsertion which may be related to an inability to perform daily tasks such as Instrumental Activities of Daily Life (IADL). Currently, those occupational performance deficits have been linked to Executive Functions (EF) deficits presented in individuals affected by schizophrenia. The EF are responsible for the control, regulation and processing of information that flows through the brain.

Objectives: investigate how people affected by schizophrenia perform IADL; List difficulties presented and strategies of remedy / compensation used; Correlate, theoretically, difficulties found with EF deficits.

Method: There were selected 6 focus groups and two sets: a Portuguese and a Brazilian one. For each sample there were three groups of participants (patients, relatives and professionals) with an average of 6,5 participants per group (N=39). The data were analysed using Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis.

Results: Three superordinate themes and respective sub-themes were identified: 1. Doing in its essence (a. Autonomy, b. Satisfaction, c. Meaning, d. Difficulties); 2. The task in its essence a) Housekeeping, b. Food Preparation, c. Shop); 3. Managing difficulties (a. Family Support, b. Forums and Associations). The performance deficits evidenced may be related to the following EF deficits: decrease in volition, difficulty in planning and a decline in intentional action.

Conclusion: It was identified that people affected by schizophrenia presented a deficit regarding ability to perform IADL thus affecting autonomy and social relations of this population. There may be a correlation between this deficit and an EF impairment.