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Traumatic experiences in a lifetime: impact on the connection with others and the role of emotions

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ABSTRACT

Introduction: Traumatic events in a lifetime have an impact on the connection with others [1] and on emotional regulation in adults [2]. In the present study, we aim to analyse the relationship between traumatic events and the connection with others and to verify the relationship between traumatic events and emotional regulation.

Materials and methods: The study design is descriptive, observational, and cross-sectional. The sample consisted of 63 Portuguese adults divided into two groups according to whether participants had experienced traumatic events (G1: $n = 28$, 44.4%) or not (G2: $n = 35$, 55.6%) with ages between 18 and 61 years old ($M = 28.78$, $SD = 12.61$). The link to the study was disclosed by e-mail and in social networks. Participants answered online to a sociodemographic questionnaire, the Difficulties in Emotion Regulation Scale (DERS) [3], the Adult Attachment Scale-R (AAS-R) [4], and the Childhood Trauma Questionnaire (CTQ) [5]. The study was conducted in accordance with all the ethical principles.

Results: There were significant statistical differences between G1 and G2 on the total scale of the CTQ [$F(1,61) = 11.510$, $p = .001$], and in the subscales Emotional Abuse, Anxiety, and Trusting Others. The total score of the CTQ showed a negative correlation with the Trusting Others ($r = -0.299$, $p < .05$) and a positive correlation with the total score of the DERS ($r = 0.281$, $p < .05$), and with Limited Access to Regulatory Strategies ($r = 0.337$, $p < .05$). There was a positive association between Emotional Abuse and Anxiety ($r = 0.413$, $p < .05$). The Emotional Neglect and the Physical Neglect showed correlations with the DERS, Inability to Engage in Goal-Directed Behaviour, Difficulty to Control Behaviour, and Limited Access to Regulatory Strategies.

Discussion and conclusions: Participants who didn't experience trauma revealed higher scores of connections with others. Our results also demonstrate that victims of trauma in childhood develop dysfunctional patterns of emotions [6]. This research highlights the negative consequences of child abuse in adults, concerning emotional regulation and connecting with others.

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Violence risk assessment in forensic psychology office: from childhood to elderly

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