



Physical dependence in older adults and job burnout in their informal caregivers in the COVID-19 context, a correlational study

Dependencia física en personas adultas mayores y sobrecarga en sus cuidadores informales en el contexto de la pandemia por COVID-19, un estudio correlacional

Dependência física em idosos e sobrecarga em seus cuidadores informais no contexto da pandemia de COVID-19, um estudo correlacional

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Abstract

Introduction: The functional status of older adults (OA) is usually used as an indicator of their health. Increased dependence raises the need for an informal caregiver (IC), leading to a state of work overload, which was frequently observed during the COVID-19 confinement. **Objective:** To assess the relationship between physical dependence of OA, job burnout of their IC, and the confinement conditions in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic. **Materials and methods:** The participants included 77 OA together with their respective IC. The OA filled out a sociodemographic data sheet and a Confinement Conditions Questionnaire. In addition to these two forms, the IC filled out the Zarit Caregiver Burnout Scale and the ABVD Barthel Scale. **Results:** Statistically significant correlations were found between: physical dependence and job burnout ($\rho=0.475$, $p<0.01$); physical dependence and confinement degree ($\rho=0.441$, $p<0.01$); and job burden and confinement degree ($\rho=0.344$, $p<0.01$). **Conclusion:** Caregivers develop a greater job burnout as a consequence of the OA's dependence. Furthermore, it seems that this burnout is more related to the confinement conditions experienced by older adults than to the caregiver's own conditions.

Keywords: Caregivers; functional status; aged; pandemic. (Source: DeCS, Bireme).

Resumen

Introducción: El estado funcional de las personas adultas mayores (PAM) suele tomarse como indicador de salud; la presencia de dependencia incrementa la necesidad de un cuidador informal (CI) que puede desarrollar sobrecarga, lo cual se agudizó durante el confinamiento por COVID-19. **Objetivo:** Evaluar la relación de la dependencia física de las PAM, la sobrecarga de su CI y las condiciones de confinamiento en el contexto de la pandemia por COVID-19. **Materiales y métodos:** Participaron 77 diadas conformadas por una PAM y su CI. Las PAM contestaron una ficha de datos sociodemográficos y Cuestionario de Condiciones de Confinamiento. Los CI, diligenciaron una ficha de datos sociodemográficos, Cuestionario de Condiciones de Confinamiento, Escala de Carga del Cuidador de Zarit y Escala de Barthel de ABVD. **Resultados:** Se encontró correlaciones estadísticamente significativas entre la dependencia física y la sobrecarga ($\rho=0,475$, $p<0,01$); la dependencia física y el grado de confinamiento ($\rho=0,441$, $p<0,01$); y la sobrecarga y el grado de confinamiento ($\rho=0,344$, $p<0,01$). **Conclusión:** Los cuidadores de PAM desarrollan mayor sobrecarga frente a su dependencia física; además parece ser que la sobrecarga del cuidador está más relacionada con las condiciones de confinamiento de las personas adultas mayores, que con las propias condiciones de confinamiento del cuidador.

Palabras clave: Cuidadores; estado funcional; adulto mayor; pandemia. (Fuente: DeCS, Bireme).

Resumo

Introdução: O estado funcional do idoso (PAM) é geralmente tomado como um indicador de saúde; A presença de dependência aumenta a necessidade de um cuidador informal (CI) que pode desenvolver sobrecarga, que se agravou durante o confinamento da COVID-19. **Objetivo:** Avaliar a relação entre a dependência física dos PAM, a sobrecarga do seu CI e as condições de confinamento no contexto da pandemia de COVID-19. **Materiais e métodos:** Participaram 77 díades compostas por uma PAM e seu CI. O PAM respondeu a uma ficha de dados sociodemográficos e a um Questionário de Condições de Confinamento. Os CI preencheram ficha de dados sociodemográficos, Questionário de Condições de Confinamento, Escala de Sobrecarga do Cuidador de Zarit e Escala Barthel (ABVD). **Resultados:** Foram encontradas correlações estatisticamente significativas entre dependência física e sobrecarga ($\rho=0,475$, $p<0,01$); dependência física e grau de confinamento ($\rho=0,441$, $p<0,01$); e sobrecarga e grau de confinamento ($\rho=0,344$, $p<0,01$). **Conclusão:** Os cuidadores do PAM desenvolvem maior sobrecarga diante da dependência física; além disso, parece que a sobrecarga do cuidador está mais relacionada com as condições de confinamento dos idosos do que com as próprias condições de confinamento do cuidador.

Palavras chave: Cuidadores; estado funcional; idoso; pandemia. (Fonte: DeCS, Bireme).

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established during the pandemic. Similarly, the IC burnout was not significantly associated with their healthy habits.

On the other hand, weak, negative and statistically significant associations between burnout and social relationships during the pandemic were identified. Nevertheless, the statistical power values suggest that further research on this field is required. In fact, it seems that social relationships could be a protective factor against burnout. In this regard, Balladares *et al.*⁽²⁷⁾ state that IC support networks were reduced because of the confinement. Furthermore, it is important to highlight that even before the pandemic, ICs used to limit their social relationships to take care of the OAs, which exacerbated during the confinement. Martínez *et al.*⁽²⁸⁾ indicate that social support is a protective factor against burnout since it facilitates coping, affects the caregiving activities and guarantees quality of life and emotional well-being of OAs.

Likewise, Monge *et al.*⁽²⁹⁾ conducted a study aimed at analyzing the relationship between social support, optimism, and vital satisfaction as possible protective factors against caregiver burnout. They describe that social support functions as a protective factor against burnout. Similarly, Cerquera *et al.*⁽³⁰⁾ have suggested that social support contributes to IC resilience, thereby functioning as a buffer against stress, burden, anxiety, and depression.

Finally, a very interesting result was the statistically significant association between IC burden and the OA confinement degree, not so with the IC's own confinement, which suggests that confinement of the caregivers is not what generates their burden. Instead, the fact that the OA is confined at home is what causes the burnout state since the pandemic induced a greater demand for care. Therefore, there is a negative consequence of confinement of both IC and OA, which requires further investigation.

Conclusions

Informal caregivers burnout is correlated with the physical dependence of older adults, which implies that the greater this dependency, the care provided will develop more negative emotions associated with the act of caring, a situation that will equally affect both the IC and OA.

As an interesting fact, it seems that the caregiver burnout is more related to the OA confinement conditions than to those of the IC.

In the context of the pandemic, the confinement strategies to reduce infections seem to have negative consequences for the OA, since a high degree of confinement was correlated to greater physical dependence.

In this study, data collection during this health contingency was a challenge because the recruitment of participants was conducted through social networks, which are not regularly used by the target population of this research: Older Adults and their Informal Caregivers. Therefore, it is suggested to continue this research avenue through the analysis of these variables in a post-confinement context.

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