

Sense of coherence in older adults: mini-review

Abstract

In old age there are losses and stressful situations, so tools are required to successfully face these situations, the sense of coherence (SOC), can provide these tools, so the goal was to explore the presence of SOC in older adults, through a review of the literature. The results indicate that SOC is a present condition in older adults, even when there are illnesses and emotional problems such as depression, as well as favoring resilience and general health.

Keywords: sense of coherence, older adults, review

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Introduction

Old age is a stage of life in which people face changes in the physical, psycho-emotional aspects and their social relationships. Most of these changes refer to losses and stressful situations that arise from the social and family environment. Facing successfully these life circumstances requires psychological resources that help resist and adapt.

In this sense, Antonovsky¹ identified the Sense of Coherence (SOC), defined as a global orientation that expresses the extent to which one has a generalized, lasting but dynamic feeling of confidence in that 1) the stimuli of the internal environments and external to one in the course of life are structured, predictable and explainable; 2) resources are available to meet the demands posed by these stimuli; and 3) these demands are challenges, worthy of investment and commitment.

The SOC has three components that allow people to value their resources to face life: 1) Comprehensibility: that is, analyzing situations cognitively; 2) Manageability: a management capacity, an instrumental function, which allows valuing internal and external resources to manage situations; and, 3) Significance: that is related to motivation and commitment to act. Some studies have shown that SOC characterizes a person throughout adulthood, except radical and lasting changes in the situation of life.² However, we still need to explore the presence of SOC in the elderly population as well as the mechanisms by which it is established and its relationship with other variables.

Therefore, the objective of this work is analyze the existing literature on the Sense of Coherence in older adults.

Method

A review of scientific articles was made in the databases; Academic Search Premier [Ebsco Host], Pubmed, Science Direct, Redalyc, Scielo and Google Academic using keywords; Sense of coherence, older adults, old people, elderly. We considered 10 studies that were analyzed with a matrix with five sections: reference, objective, method and results.

Results

About SOC in older adults, it is known that it is negatively related to Neuroticism and positively to Responsibility, Kindness and

Extroversion as personality traits.³ Also, older people who perform physical activity die significantly more SOC.⁴

There are conditions that test the SOC, such as diseases, in this sense, patients with RA, mostly older women, showed a high stability of SOC, which also reduces anxiety and depression in these patients.⁵ In this order of ideas Rohani, Abedi, Sundberg and Langius-Eklöf et al.,⁶ indicated the mediating capacity of SOC between diseases and quality of life. When an intervention is needed, it is known that person-centered care increased in the three dimensions of SOC in older adults.⁷

Regarding the evaluation of the SOC, the Antonovsky Consciousness Scale has been validated by Virués-Ortega et al.,⁸ and confirmed a factorial structure with adequate validation and reliability indexes in Spanish elderly adults. In Mexico, the 29-item version has been used^{9,10} and 13, only the reliability of this latest version has been reported.¹¹ These Mexican studies have documented that SOC decreases depression levels¹¹, increases resilience¹⁰ and the general health status of older adults⁹. Finally, Eriksson and Lindström¹² (2005) conducted a review and analysis on the validity and reliability of the scale and found that it has been used in 33 languages in 32 countries with at least 15 different versions of the questionnaire. In 124 studies they used the SOC-29 version with Cronbach ranges from 0.70 to 0.95, which shows that it is a valid, reliable and cross culturally applicable instrument that measuring how people manage stressful situations and stay well.

Conclusion

This review observed that SOC is a condition present in older adults. In addition, there is a valid and reliable instrument for evaluation in 2 versions (SOC-29 and SOC-13). Finally, that this is presented even under cases of illness or psychological problems such as depression, in this sense, favors resilience and general health, in this way it concludes on its importance in the gerontological study.

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Conflict of interests

Author declares that there are no conflicts of interest

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