

A PILOT STUDY ON PROMOTING SENSE OF COHERENCE THROUGH PERSON-CENTERED THERAPY IN OLDER ADULTS

S. von Humboldt, I. Leal

Research Unit in Psychology and Health, R&D, ISPA-Instituto Universitário, Lisbon, Portugal

Objectives: Older adults' sense of coherence (SOC) is often challenged by changes in later adulthood. Therefore, this study aims to explore if a brief eight-session individual person-centered therapy (PCT) intervention on older adults can promote their SOC, as compared with a control group (waiting list). We posited that participants randomized to PCT would report improvements in SOC from pre- to post-intervention compared to those in waiting list.

Methods: The Sense of Coherence Scale (SOC) and demographics were assessed at the baseline (t_1), post-treatment (t_2) and at the 12-month follow-up (t_3), in a group of 87 participants between 65-86 years ($M=71.9$ $SD=4.77$).

Results: Results indicated that participants in PCT evidenced greater improvements as to their SOC (31.4%) than those in waiting list (2.3%). Both at the post-intervention, and at follow-up, participants who underwent PCT had a significantly higher SOC ($M=4.76$, $SD=.524$). In addition, results revealed no significant between group differences in any socio-demographic variable ($P's>.05$) in t_1 , t_2 and t_3 .

Conclusions: Changes in SOC were positive and maintained, thus, findings suggest that PCT is favorable to enhancing SOC. In this context, PCT is also a personal resource to promote SOC. Moreover, since SOC is shown to be associated with health-related well-being among older populations, SOC development in old age should be focused.