

The effect of age on the relationship between negative life events and prevalent and incident depression: results from the Brazilian Longitudinal Study of Adult Health (ELSA-Brasil)

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BACKGROUND

Several studies have shown an association between negative life events and mental health problems such as depression. The association between negative life events and prevalent and incident depression is unclear in adults, 35-74 years. We investigated this association by four age strata in the Brazilian Longitudinal Study of Adult Health (ELSA-Brasil).

METHODS

- The ELSA-Brasil is a prospective cohort study of 15,105 civil servants from university and research institutions located in six Brazilian state capitals.
- Participants were classified according to age strata at baseline: first (35-44), second (45-54), third (55-64), and fourth (65-74).
- Negative life events in the last year (robbery, hospitalization, death of a relative, financial hardship, and rupture of a love relationship) were collected at baseline.
- Depression was assessed using the Portuguese version of the Clinical Interview Schedule Revised (CIS-R) scale at baseline, 4-year/8-year follow-ups.
- We built a logistic (Odds Ratio [OR], 95% Confidence Interval [CI], and Poisson regression models (Relative Risk [RR], (CI) to evaluate this association.

RESULTS

- The association between negative life events with prevalent depression was most common in the 35-44 age stratum (robbery, hospitalization, financial hardship, rupture of a love relationship), while for incident depression, the association was most common in the 45-54 age stratum (hospitalization, death of a relative, financial hardship). The strength of these associations decreased with age.

- Financial hardship was the negative life event most strongly associated with prevalent depression: first, OR, 2.23 (95% CI, 1.54-3.23); second OR, 1.83 (95% CI, 1.39-2.40); third, OR, 1.68 (95% CI, 1.15-2.45); fourth, OR, 2.54 (95% CI, 1.19-5.39), and with incident depression: first, RR, 1.42 (95% CI, 1.12-1.79); second, RR, 1.91 (95% CI, 1.35-2.71); and fourth, RR, 1.50 (95% CI, 1.28-1.17), except in the 55-64 age stratum.
- Rupture of a relationship was associated only with prevalent depression, while the death of a relative only with incident depression.



LIMITATIONS

This study uses self-reported information about negative life events with possible memory bias and the sample is not population-based.

CONCLUSION

The burden of negative life events in the younger age strata is very high and needs to be considered an important risk factor for depression in individuals younger than 55 years of age. The association of

negative life events with prevalent and incident depression is concentrated in the younger age strata and decreases with aging.

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