

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

Bruno J. Morgado<sup>a</sup>, Gonçalo F. Rodrigues<sup>a</sup>, Marco R. Filipe<sup>a</sup>, Vanessa S. Madureira<sup>a</sup> and Telma C. Almeida<sup>a,b</sup>

<sup>a</sup>Instituto Universitário Egas Moniz (IUEM), Egas Moniz Cooperativa de Ensino Superior, Caparica, Portugal; <sup>b</sup>Laboratório de Psicologia Egas Moniz (LabPSI-EM), Centro de Investigação Interdisciplinar Egas Moniz (CiEM), Egas Moniz Cooperativa de Ensino Superior, Caparica, Portugal

## 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.

CONTACT Gonçalo F. Rodrigues  [goncalo\\_rodrigues95@hotmail.com](mailto:goncalo_rodrigues95@hotmail.com)

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