

Insight and social cognition in first episode of psychosis

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Introduction

Impairment in insight is a prevalent symptom in psychotic disorder associated with adverse impact in treatment compliance, outcome and social functioning. Multiple factors such as neurocognitive dysfunction, social cognition alterations and clinical symptoms have been related to insight alteration although the underlying mechanisms of insight are still unknown. Social cognition and more specifically Theory of mind have been proposed to be correlated to insight considering that the capacity to understand mental states of others is connected to the ability of self-reflection. However, the relationship between both factors is still not well defined as to date the research on their association has yielded inconclusive results.

Objectives

To study the association between social cognition and insight into mental illness in individuals with early psychosis included in the first episode of psychosis program of Hospital del Mar in Barcelona between January 2011 and January 2016.

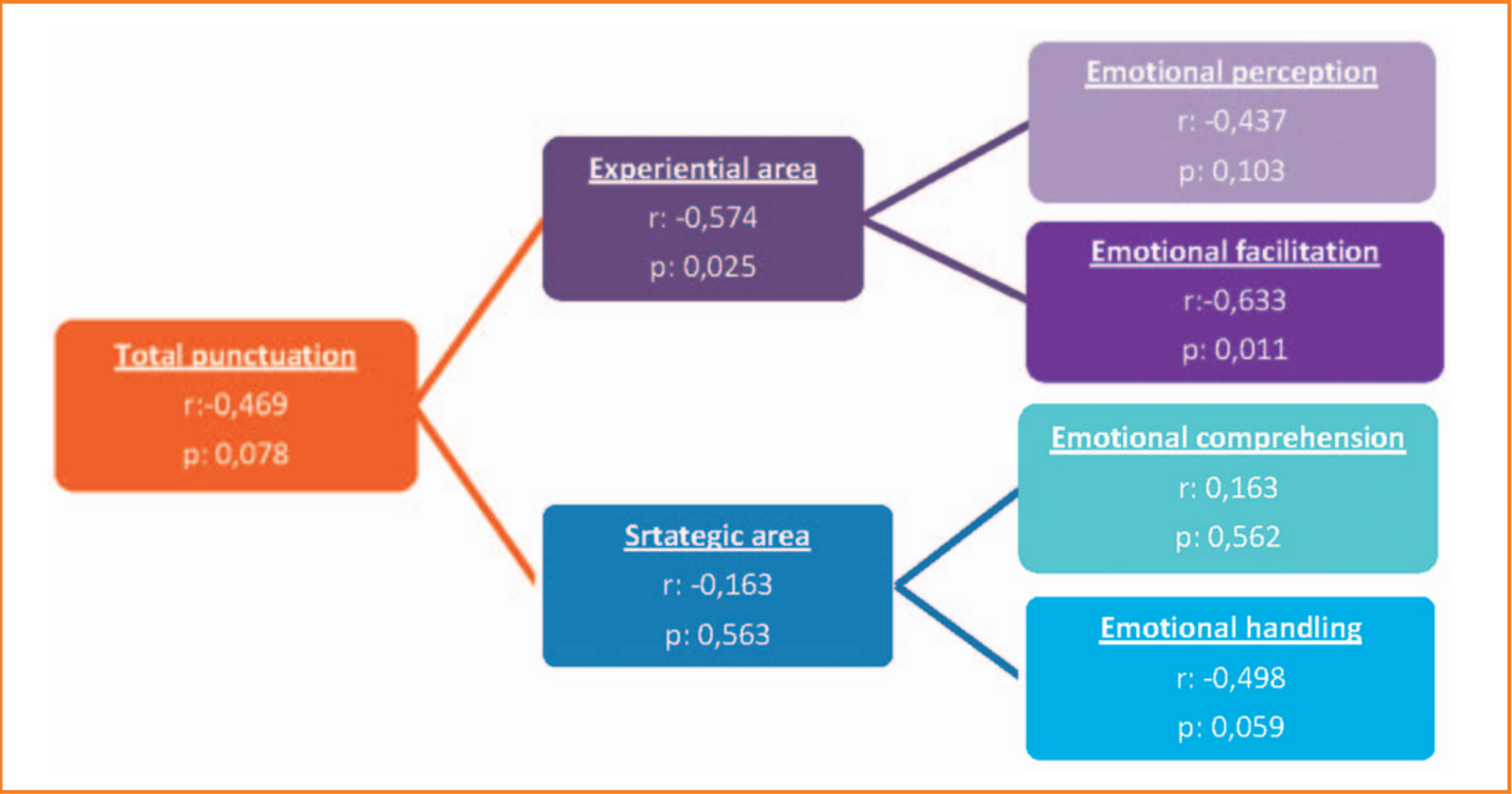
Methods

From the 94 patients included in the first psychotic episode program between January 2011 and January 2016, thirty-eight patients were cognitively and clinically evaluated six months after the episode. The three initial items of SUMD (Scale Unawareness of Mental Disorder) were used to measure insight and, as a part of the neuropsychological assessment MSCEIT (Mayer-Salovey-Caruso Emotional Intelligence Test) was used to assess social cognition. Linear correlation analysis by Pearson Correlation with sex and age as control variables was conducted to examine the relationship between the results of both tests.

Results

Insight results of SUMD six months after the first episode of psychosis were significantly associated with a confidence interval of 95% to punctuation of several subsections of MSCEIT such as experiential area total punctuation ($r=-0,574$; $p=0,025$), emotional facilitation section ($r=-0,633$; $p=0,011$) and the facial emotion perception task ($r=-0,572$; $p=0,026$) included in the emotional perception area (figure 1). No significant correlation was encountered between insight and global MSCEIT punctuation or strategic area.

Figure 1: Pearson correlation results and statistical significance of MSCEIT sections.



Conclusions

Results suggest an association between insight and emotional perception and facilitation performance in first episode patients which may suggest a role of social cognition in psychosis insight impairment. Further research to better define the participation of social cognition in insight into psychosis alteration is mandatory not only to contribute to understand the etiology of insight but also to define treatment targets to improve patient recognition of own mental illness and consequently improve the disorder prognosis.

Bibliography

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