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Cognitive, socio-emotional and adaptive profile development in adults with autism spectrum disorders and severe intellectual disability

Specific and validated developmental assessments centered on cognitive and socio-emotional (CSE) abilities and adaptive behavior (AB) are necessary to implement personalized behavioral and functional intervention programs for adults with autism spectrum disorders (ASDs) and severe intellectual disabilities (IDs), aiming to enhance their social communication and autonomy. The study objective was to describe these individuals' cognitive, socio-emotional and adaptive development profile, its heterogeneity and its relations between all domains.

The Socio-emotional Cognitive Evaluation Battery (SCEB-A), a psychometrically validated tool for adults with ASD and severe ID and developmental ages under two years, and the Vineland-II scales were applied to 97 adults (64 men and 33 women with a mean age of 36 years). These adults were recruited from 18 French medico-social services dedicated to this population. The participants were examined by trained psychologists using SCEB-A and familiar professionals using the Vineland-II questionnaire. The CSE profile of this group of adults revealed lower developmental levels in some domains, such as expressive language, vocal and gestural imitation, and symbolic play, and higher developmental levels in spatial relations, behavior regulation, joint attention, and affective relation. The AB profile was characterized by a better development level in Daily Life than Communication and Socialization domains. The mean AB development level was better than CSE. There were some correlations between several CSE and AB domains attesting relationships between some functional behaviors and abilities.

The SCEB-A, novel instrument for adults with ASD and severe ID is useful and relevant for assessing this clinical population's cognitive and socio-emotional development. Associated to an adaptive development assessment, these developmental evaluations enable professionals to implement personalized educative intervention programs and cognitive and social remediation, in adults, including aging adults.

Keywords: Autism spectrum disorder; Severe intellectual disability; Socio-emotional Cognitive Evaluation Battery for Adults; Vineland-II; Profiles of cognitive, socio-emotional and adaptive development

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Psychologist for 24 years in a university child psychiatry department (CHU de Tours), which pioneered the first neurodevelopmental research on autism in France. Subsequently, professor of clinical psychology and psychopathology at Paris Descartes University for 20 years, supervising 20 doctoral theses in psychology. In collaboration with university colleagues, established a research laboratory focusing on psychopathology and health processes, as well as teaching units on developmental psychopathology and autism, including a professional degree program for supporting individuals with autism. Conducted research on early signs of autism based on home movies studies and developed behavioral and developmental assessment tools for autism. Notably, author of the Socio-emotional Cognitive Evaluation Battery (SCEB) for children and adults (SCEB-A) published by Pearson-France ECPA.