

Baseline profile of participants in a psychological intervention for people with early-stage Alzheimer’s disease: A pilot study

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Background

- According to global estimates, **58.7 million people** were living with dementia worldwide in 2020, with projections reaching **152.2 million by 2050**^[1].
- Advances in early detection have increased the **diagnosis of Alzheimer’s disease at earlier stages**, when **cognitive impairment is less severe and functional autonomy and awareness of the diagnosis are relatively preserved**.
- This emerging population presents specific clinical and psychosocial characteristics, highlighting the need for **tailored psychological interventions** based on their needs.
- The Pasqual Maragall Foundation has developed “*Plenamente Activas*” a group-based intervention designed to empower people living with early-stage Alzheimer’s disease who are aware of their diagnosis.
- This pilot study on the baseline characteristics of participants is part of a larger study (PLENA) which evaluates the effectiveness of the “*Plenamente Activas*” intervention.

Aim

To describe the baseline sociodemographic, clinical, and psychosocial profile of individuals with early-stage Alzheimer’s disease who are aware of their diagnosis and have been included in a structured psychological intervention, with particular attention to quality of life and emotional well-being.

References

- [1] Alzheimer’s Disease International. Numbers of people with dementia worldwide [Internet]. 2020 Nov 20.
[2] Rosenberg M. *Society and the adolescent self-image*. Princeton (NJ): Princeton University Press; 1965.
[3] Zigmond AS, Snaith RP. The hospital anxiety and depression scale. *Acta Psychiatr Scand*. 1983;67(6):361–70.
[4] Logsdon RG, Gibbons LE, McCurry SM, Teri L. Quality of life in Alzheimer’s disease: patient and caregiver reports. *J Ment Health Aging*. 1999;5(1):21–32.

Method

- The sample included 20 participants enrolled in the “Plenamente Activas” program, including 9 men and 11 women, with a mean age of 75.9 years (SD = 4.9).
- Cross-sectional descriptive study.
- Sociodemographic and clinical variables related to well-being and quality of life were collected. The following instruments were administered:
 - Ad hoc Sociodemographic questionnaire
 - Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale (RSES) ^[2].
 - Hospital Anxiety and Depression Scale (HADS) ^[3].
 - Quality of Life in Alzheimer’s Disease Scale (QoL-AD) ^[4].
- Data were analysed using R software (v4.6.0; R Core Team, 2026)

Results

- The results showed a **homogeneous sample**, with no significant sex differences.
- Clinical characteristics suggested **relatively preserved cognitive functioning**, with a mean MMSE score of 26, and participants had been living with Alzheimer’s disease for an average of **3 years**.
- Participants reported **high self-esteem, low levels of anxiety and depression** and a **good perceived quality of life**.

Table 1. Sociodemographic characteristics

Variable	Total (N = 20) ¹	Male (n = 9) ¹	Female (n = 11) ¹	p-value ²
Age (years)	75.9 (4.9)	76.8 (3.2)	75.1 (6.0)	0.408
Spirituality				0.811
Refuses to answer	2 (10.0%)	1 (11.1%)	1 (9.1%)	
Non-believer	2 (10.0%)	0 (0.0%)	2 (18.2%)	
Believer (any religion)	11 (55.0%)	5 (55.6%)	6 (54.5%)	
Agnostic	5 (25.0%)	3 (33.3%)	2 (18.2%)	
Ethnicity				
White	20 (100.0%)	9 (100.0%)	11 (100.0%)	
Employment status				>0.999
Household tasks	1 (5.0%)	0 (0.0%)	1 (9.1%)	
Retired	15 (75.0%)	7 (77.8%)	8 (72.7%)	
Pensioner	3 (15.0%)	2 (22.2%)	1 (9.1%)	
Part-time employed	1 (5.0%)	0 (0.0%)	1 (9.1%)	
Other	1 (5.0%)	0 (0.0%)	1 (9.1%)	
Time with Alzheimer’s	3.0 (1.8)	3.1 (2.0)	2.8 (1.8)	0.876
MMSE	26.0 (2.3)	26.8 (2.4)	25.3 (2.0)	0.152

Table 2. Psychological profile

Variable	Total (N = 20) ¹	Male (n = 9) ¹	Female (n = 11) ¹	p-value ²
Self-esteem (Rosenberg)	32.7 (3.5)	33.3 (3.4)	32.1 (3.7)	0.443
Anxiety (HADS)	5.6 (2.5)	5.8 (2.9)	5.4 (2.2)	0.728
Depression (HADS)	2.6 (1.8)	3.1 (2.0)	2.1 (1.4)	0.225
Quality of Life (QoL-AD)	38.3 (3.2)	39.1 (3.5)	37.6 (3.0)	0.333

¹ n (%); Mean (SD)

² Pearson’s Chi-squared test; NA; Welch Two Sample t-test; Wilcoxon rank sum test

Conclusions

- This pilot study provides a baseline characterization of individuals with early-stage Alzheimer’s disease who are aware of their diagnosis and engaged in a structured psychological intervention.
- Findings indicate that participants enrolled in Plenamente Activas represent a relatively homogeneous group with preserved cognitive functioning, high levels of self-esteem, positive psychological well-being, and a good perceived quality of life. Although preliminary, these results contribute to a better understanding of the clinical and psychosocial profile of this emerging population.



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