

ABSTRACT

Aim: The current study investigated a pattern of associations between executive functions and everyday functioning in a sample of schizophrenia patients with the aim to specify the ecological validity. The ecological validity as a specific form of external validity refers to the extent of the relation of the test outcome measures and patients' behaviour in everyday situations.

Sample and methods: A sample of 77 patients (22 women and 55 men) with the diagnosis of schizophrenia or schizoaffective disorder, who met study inclusion criteria, was assessed with several executive function tests: Wisconsin Card Sorting Test (WCST), Trail Making Test B (TMT B), Phonemic Verbal Fluency Test and Semantic Verbal Fluency Test (VF), Similarities from Wechsler Adult Intelligence Scale (WAIS III), Rey-Osterrieth Complex Figure Test in Boston Qualitative Scoring System (BQSS), and with rating scales for patients' behavior in everyday situations - Personal and Social Performance Scale (PSPs), newly developed clinical scale (CliSca), Interview for Assessment of Insight (SAI) and patients' self rating in Social Functioning Scale (SFS). Relationships between demographic measures and test outcomes were examined.

Results: Verbal fluency tests did correlate significantly with the newly developed clinical scale that seems to be more convenient for describing of inpatients' social functioning. VF performance significantly differentiates among subgroups of patients with distinct social functioning. Other correlations did not reach the significance level. Self rating or questioning of the patients seems to be problematic for its limited credibility as a result of a distorted insight in schizophrenia patients. The occurrence and the degree of the deficit syndrome is a measure well differentiating subgroups of patients with distinct executive deficits – in VF tests, TMT B, WCST. BQSS scores, considered as having executive features, did not correlate with any social functioning measures or the executive function tests.

Conclusions: The selection of the tool for description of social functioning is an important aspect in examining relationships between executive function tests and social functioning. The observational scales and the performance-based scales of social functioning are more convenient for an assessment of daily functioning deficits in schizophrenia patients. The acceptable assessment of executive functions and social functioning is a crucial requirement for planning of elaborated psychiatric rehabilitation, occupational therapy, and community reintegration.

Key words: ecological validity, executive functions, schizophrenia, functional abilities