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Mind (e)Motion: The Impact of a Multidimensional Program for healthy ageing and mental well-being

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The increase in longevity has become relevant, and the World Health Organization (WHO) considers population ageing one of this century's most significant social transformations. While longer life expectancy is a positive development, it raises concerns regarding seniors' physical, mental, and social well-being. Research highlights the association between ageing and biopsychosocial changes, including cognitive decline, chronic diseases, social isolation, and depressive symptoms, all of which can negatively impact the quality of life (Ferreira et al., 2010; Whitbourne & Whitbourne, 2020).

Subjective perceptions of ageing play a crucial role in mental health and overall well-being. Interventions focusing on self-esteem, social support, and cognitive stimulation have been shown to reduce the psychological effects of ageing, promoting a healthier ageing process (Mitina et al., 2020). Additionally, life purpose, optimism, and personal satisfaction contribute significantly to well-being, suggesting that a multidimensional approach, integrating psychological and social aspects, maybe the most effective strategy (Kim et al., 2021). In response to these challenges, the WHO, through the Decade of Healthy Ageing (2021-2030), emphasizes the importance of public policies and programs that promote health, participation, and security for seniors. Portugal's National Strategy for Active and Healthy Ageing (2017-2025) aligns with these objectives, focusing on integrated interventions to address the complexities of ageing.

Within this framework, the Mente + Sã (Mind + Health) program, developed within the "Mais e Melhores Anos" (More and Better Years) initiative by Vila Nova de Famalicão City Council, offers a structured intervention aimed at promoting mental health and well-being among seniors. It uses preventive strategies to reduce ageing's effects, helping participants develop, integrate, and engage in society. Its main objectives include promoting mental health, fostering healthy lifestyle habits, preventing and reducing the severity of cognitive and emotional decline, and establishing a support network that involves informal caregivers, and the broader community. These goals highlight the importance of a holistic intervention model that responds to seniors' physical, emotional, and social needs.

Based on a broad concept of well-being, the program integrates psychological, subjective, and social dimensions. Psychological well-being encompasses self-acceptance, autonomy, purpose in life and positive relationships (Ryff & Keyes, 1995). Subjective well-being relates to emotions, affective experiences, and life satisfaction (Diener et al., 1985). Social well-being emphasizes the need for individuals to feel a sense of belonging to their community, incorporating aspects such as social acceptance and contribution (Keyes, 1998). Thus, Mente + Sã implements a series of activities, including neurocognitive stimulation, promotion of interpersonal relationships, and awareness campaigns on healthy lifestyle habits.

The program is structured around two levels of intervention: the Maintenance Circuit and the SOS Circuit. The Maintenance Circuit follows a structured roadmap for cognitive and emotional development, focusing on three key areas: Development of Basic and Higher Cognitive Processes, Development of Emotional and Interactional Processes, and Concurrent Processes. The SOS Circuit is specifically designed for seniors identified at any point as experiencing neurocognitive deficits, such as those resulting from traumatic injuries or neurodegenerative conditions. In this case, participants follow an individualized cognitive stimulation plan tailored to their specific deficits.

is ongoing professional training that provides skills to address elderly challenges while promoting knowledge exchange and innovation. Additionally, the program emphasises the involvement of informal caregivers, offering workshops on topics such as mental health and healthy eating to strengthen participants' support networks.

To assess its effectiveness, Mente + Sã is continuously monitored through an impact study—in coordination with the Sports, Education, and Communities Observatory (ODEC)—which evaluates the program's outcomes in improving cognitive, emotional, and social well-being among seniors.

Methodology, Methods, Research Instruments or Sources Used

The study on the impact of the Mente + Sã program employed a mixed-methods approach (Clark, 2016; Teddlie & Tashakkori, 2009), integrating quantitative and qualitative methodologies to obtain more comprehensive results. Currently, the program includes 60 senior participants across six classes. Selection was based on eligibility criteria such as being 65 years or older, residing in Vila Nova de Famalicão, and having specific health conditions, including Parkinson's disease, early dementia, depression, or stroke sequelae. Activities take place twice a week in two-hour sessions and are adapted to meet the needs of each group. The program is conducted in a designated space divided into three rooms, which participants rotate through during each session: a media library and library, a digital space, and an expression and movement room.

The quantitative assessment followed a pre-test and post-test (Campbell & Stanley, 1963; Miller et al., 2020) design using validated instruments. The Brief-COPE assessed coping strategies, while the WAIS-III measured cognitive functions such as memory, attention, and language. Psychological well-being was evaluated using the Psychological Well-Being Scale (BEP), which measures self-acceptance, life purpose, and autonomy. The Subjective Well-Being Scale (BES) assessed positive and negative emotions and life satisfaction, and the Social Well-Being Scale analyzed social integration, acceptance, contribution, updating, and social coherence. The qualitative assessment involved focus groups (Smithson, 2008) conducted at three key points: the program's implementation's beginning, middle, and end. These discussions allowed participants to share their expectations, perceptions of results, and suggestions for improvement. In addition, semi-structured interviews were conducted with technicians (n=23) and informal caregivers (n=10) to capture their perspectives on the program's impact. Participant observation (Hammer et al., 2017; McNicoll, 1999) was also used to document group dynamics and interaction during activities.

The program was continuously monitored through weekly activity records and regular meetings with the technical team. This monitoring was carried out by a multidisciplinary team, including professionals from the Sports Department, such as physical education teachers, physiotherapists, psychologists, and psychometricians, under the supervision of the Sports, Education, and Communities Observatory (ODEC).

Conclusions, Expected Outcomes or Findings

The study's preliminary results on the impact of the Mente + Sã program indicate highly positive outcomes across all phases, from the planning of spaces and the training of the technical team to the implementation of activities with the elderly population. The training of the technical team has proven to be essential, equipping professionals with theoretical and practical knowledge for cognitive and emotional stimulation and rehabilitation. Professionals also acknowledge the importance of this training in fostering effective communication with older adults. Evaluation and monitoring activities reveal positive perceptions of the program's impact, particularly in enhancing socialization and emotional well-being among the elderly. The active involvement of caregivers and close family members has been identified as a key factor in ensuring a strong and effective support network. Additionally, collaboration with a nutritionist has facilitated the development of nutrition and food education activities, benefiting not only the elderly participants but also the technical team and caregivers. One area identified for improvement is the need to further develop strategies to include informal and family caregivers more actively in the program. Strengthening their engagement will contribute to more effective and consistent participation, reinforcing the program's overall impact on

the well-being of the elderly. Results show that by adopting a structured, evidence-based approach, Mente + Sã represents a best-practice model in elderly care, demonstrating how local initiatives can successfully align with global strategies to promote healthy and active ageing. The results of this study provide valuable insights into the effectiveness of programs of this kind, enabling continuous improvements in intervention strategies and contributing to broader political and social discussions on ageing and mental health.

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