Evidence of cross cultural effects on the assessment of autobiographical memory in ageing: Implications for cognitive assessment of dementia

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Cultural differences have been reported in autobiographical memory (ABM) that suggests collectivistic cultures recall more social as opposed to self-focused memories. There is, therefore, an overwhelming necessity to develop culturally appropriate tests for ethnic minority groups. In this cross culture study we investigated the performance of Caucasian British and Pakistani older adults on a novel test of ABM. This test used visual triggers (of globally popular events) rather than direct questioning to elicit autobiographical recall in an attempt to overcome the cultural bias reported in previous research. Attention was also paid to the use of a social versus self-focused approach in recall. Eighty four older adults aged 60 years and over (42 British, 42 Pakistani) were administered the novel ABM test (15 images were selected - 3 per decade from 1960-2000). Participants were asked to name the event, decade and year from which they were asked to recall personal memories and names of personal acquaintances. Memories were then corroborated by a spouse or relatives. Ethnicity was significantly associated with the differences in recall of episodic memories in all decades. The findings suggest that cultural effects express a different approach to performance on tasks which are relevant for clinical assessment of Alzheimer's disease and other forms of dementia. There is, therefore, a pressing need to adapt assessment instruments and collect normative data which also account for cross-cultural differences to increase the validity of cognitive assessment in ethnic minorities groups worldwide.

Biography

Baber Malik has completed his Bachelors at the age of 21 years from the University of Hull and is currently studying his Ph.D. at the University of Sheffield at the department of Neuroscience. He has successfully presented posters at the Alzheimer’s Research UK conference in the Yorkshire region and is currently working on standardizing and modifying memory tests that can be used for use with the ethnic minority groups in the UK in the context of dementia assessment and diagnosis.

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