

---

LIVING WITH DEMENTIA: A REVIEW OF THE INFLUENCE OF SENSE OF COHERENCE

---

M. Marques<sup>1</sup>, M. GonÁalves Pereira<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Faculty of Medical Sciences (NOVA University of Lisbon), Department of Mental Health, Lisboa, Portugal

---

**Introduction:** Antonovsky's salutogenic construct of sense of coherence (SOC) includes the dimensions of meaningfulness, comprehensibility and manageability. SOC is assumed to promote and protect health in stressful situations, such as the adaptation to severe illness. There is high-quality evidence on this in several areas of mental health, and one could expect dementia to be one of them.

**Objectives/Aims:** We conducted a literature review to uncover the role of SOC as moderator or mediator in the ability of patients and their partners to cope with the impact of dementia.

**Methods:** We searched the major databases (1994-2012), using selection criteria, data extraction and methodological quality assessment. Nvivo10 software was used to accomplish a rigorous literature review.

**Results:** The SOC within the dementia context has been explored in 8 different countries. Some studies addressed the caregiver's SOC, but the focus on the person with dementia and a systemic perspective on couples remain largely neglected. There were significant associations between SOC and lower caregiver's burden, and between SOC and higher caregiver's perceived health and quality of life, namely in advanced dementia.

**Conclusions:** There is a dearth of research-based discussions of the SOC role in living with dementia. Results highlight the importance of studying couples, in a dyadic perspective, while acknowledging the voice of the patients themselves, despite several methodological challenges. Research should address the role of SOC in the individual and family's ability to cope with dementia, especially at the early stages of the process, aiming to provide new insights into dementia care.