

ABSTRACT

The present cross sectional and experimental research was designed to explore the phenomenon of “Positivity Effect” in emotional recall and recognition memory of older and younger adults. This research was based on the theoretical model of Socioemotional selectivity theory proposed by Carstensen (1999). It was hypothesized that older adults are more likely to perform better or equal to younger adults in recall and recognition memory of positive stimuli (words and pictures) but they are more likely to have reduced memory for negative stimuli. Mixed experimental research design A ($B \times C$), Age Group (Stimuli type \times Valence type) was used. A purposive sample of 80 participants ($n = 40$ younger adults, $M_{age} = 24.07$, $SD = 2.24$, range = 18-29; $n = 40$ older adults, $M_{age} = 65.52$, $SD = 3.72$, range = 60-80) was equally stratified between men and women. Two experiments were designed on E-prime software: one with pictures and other with words. Each experiment was consisted of two phases: recall and recognition. Sixty pictures and sixty words with three valences (20 positive, 20 negative and 20 neutral) were selected from the International Affective Picture System (IAPS) and Affective Norms for English Words (ANEW). Urdu translations of Future Time Perspective scale (FTP), General Health Questionnaire (GHQ) and Positive and Negative Affect Schedule (PANAS) were used. Mixed design ANOVA showed a significant interaction for age and valence in both recall and recognition memory of older adults even after controlling for GHQ but nonsignificant for FTP as covariate. A significant inverse association between chronological age and FTP scores and low scores on Anxiety and Depression scales by older adults supported our hypothesis. Implications of study for the awareness of general public as well as for social scientists are discussed.