



REVIEW ARTICLE

Systematic review of evidence on the association between personality and tinnitus ☆,☆☆



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KEYWORDS

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Review

Abstract

Introduction: The scientific literature demonstrates that personality traits are associated with the individual's adaptation to chronic diseases, and can be an important factor in the etiology and prognosis of physical illness. Some studies indicate that personality characteristics may influence the perception of tinnitus.

Objective: To assess the scientific evidence of the association between tinnitus and personality.

Methods: A systematic review of the following databases: PubMed, SciELO, LILACS, and Web of Knowledge. Only studies of patients older than 18 years published in English, Portuguese, or Spanish that established an association between tinnitus and personality were selected.

Results: Seventeen of the 77 articles found were selected: 13 cross-sectional studies, two longitudinal studies, one validation study, and one birth cohort study. The samples ranged from 27 to 970 patients.

Conclusion: Some personality traits, especially neuroticism, psychasthenia, and schizoid aspects, may be associated with tinnitus perception and with the annoyance due to this symptom.

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PALAVRAS-CHAVE

Personalidade;
Zumbido;
MMPI;
Revisão

Revisão sistemática sobre as evidências da associação entre personalidade e zumbido**Resumo**

Introdução: Sabe-se, na literatura científica, que características de personalidade estão associadas à adaptação do indivíduo a doenças crônicas, tornando-se um fator importante na etiologia e prognóstico de doenças físicas. Alguns estudos apontam que características de personalidade podem influenciar na percepção do zumbido.

Objetivo: Verificar as evidências científicas da associação entre zumbido e personalidade.

Método: Estudo de revisão sistemática nas seguintes bases de dados: *Pubmed*, *Scielo*, *Lilacs* e *Web of knowledge*. Foram selecionados apenas os estudos com pacientes maiores de 18 anos, publicados em inglês, português ou espanhol e que estabeleceram uma associação entre zumbido e personalidade.

Resultados: Dos 77 artigos encontrados, 17 foram selecionados: 13 estudos transversais, dois estudos longitudinais, um estudo de validação e um estudo de coorte de nascimento. As amostras variaram de 27 a 970 pacientes.

Conclusão: Algumas características de personalidade, especialmente neuroticismo, psicastenia e aspectos esquizoides, podem estar associados à percepção e ao incômodo do zumbido.

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Introduction

Tinnitus is defined as a perception of sound in the absence of an external sound source.^{1,2} It is a symptom that may be related to a number of biological, pharmacological, nutritional, and psychological etiologies, and most often multiple etiologic factors are involved.³ Pavan⁴ reported that approximately 20% of the general population suffers from some form of tinnitus. Other studies have reported incidences of 10–32% of the population.^{1,5}

In most cases, tinnitus is a symptom perceived only by the patient, and it is not possible to measure it objectively. The discomfort from tinnitus is subjective and variable with respect to intensity and frequency, and can significantly impact the patient's life and cause adverse personal, professional, social, and family consequences. Twenty percent of patients with chronic tinnitus report it to be severe and disabling.^{1,6}

Tinnitus is a symptom that has physical and psychological dimensions and a comprehensive approach requires a multidisciplinary team to provide appropriate assessment and treatment for the affected patients.^{7,8}

Many researchers suggest that psychological characteristics may be related to the impact of tinnitus on the lives of patients. Patients with severe tinnitus may have hysterical defenses, depressive and/or anxiety symptoms, stress, irritability, difficulty concentrating and sleeping, negative effects in mood, and impairment in performing daily activities.^{7–11}

Personality can be defined as an aggregate of characteristics that distinguish one individual from all others. Some theorists consider that personality is the essence of the human condition.¹² Personality involves the totality of psychic dynamics, and its formation evolves from the interaction of genetic, physiological, emotional, cognitive, social, and cultural factors. It is the personality that

determines thinking, attitudes, beliefs, the way of perceiving the world and relating to other people, and it also has an impact on health and disease processes.^{13,14} In the realm of personality, conscious and unconscious aspects, behaviors, affective-emotional experiences, intrapsychic conflicts, thoughts, and feelings are all considered. The structure of personality is relatively stable and predictable, and the dynamics of personality determine how the individual relates to the environment.

The assessment of personality can be conducted by mental health professionals by means of structured or semi-structured clinical interviews based on DSM-IV-TR,¹⁵ or by psychologists using psychological assessment instruments. There are a variety of psychological assessment instruments able to assess personality structure and dynamics; these can be objective instruments (even self-administered) or projective expressive methods.^{16,17} The use of these instruments is restricted to psychologists.^{18,19}

In the scientific literature, there are many articles studying the association of personality to health and disease process. The articles describe the characteristics of personality as an important factor in the etiology and prognosis of physical illnesses when associated with other factors.²⁰ Welch and Dawes²¹ comment that personality characteristics may influence the perception of tinnitus. There is scant literature regarding studies of the personality characteristics of tinnitus patients. To date, no research on the subject has been published in Brazil.

The objective of this study was to assess the scientific evidence of the association between tinnitus and personality.

Method

A systematic review of published articles on tinnitus and personality indexed in the databases PubMed, Web of Knowledge, SciELO, and LILACS was performed.

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