

International Journal of Psychology, 2016

Volume 51, Issue Supplement S1, Page 178.

Untangling aging effects in Prospective Memory: A complex hierarchical model.

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Pereira, A., Meirinhos, V., & Chmiel, N. (2016).

Abstract

Remembering to perform future activities is a fundamental requirement for independent living. This includes tasks such as remembering to pick up the milk, where prospective memory (PM) failures may lead to inconvenience, but also tasks where failures can have serious and even life-threatening consequences, such as remembering to take medication. It is therefore unsurprising that failures of PM are one of the most prominent memory concerns across the entire human lifespan.

Measurement models of age differences in PM are very scarce and have generally failed to produce consistent results. We establish a hierarchical measurement model that distinguishes 3 levels that cumulatively account for the explanation of the variance in objective measures of PM for both young and older adults. We propose that cognitive ability, complexity of the ongoing task and perceived cognitive efficiency are hence mediators of the complex relationship between PM and age.