

IMPACT OF HALITOSIS SELF-AWARENESS ON WELL-BEING - AN EXPERIMENTAL STUDY

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INTRODUCTION: Halitosis is a highly prevalent condition that has always been a concern in society. However, there is little evidence on how halitosis self-awareness can impact people's well-being and attitudes. This study intends to shed some light on the subject.

OBJECTIVES: To evaluate the impact of halitosis self-awareness on one's well-being (through its subcomponents: happiness, emotions and behavior) and on the attitude towards others with halitosis.

METHODS: Experimental study carried out at the Laboratory of Psychology at the *ISCTE – Instituto Universitário de Lisboa* in May 2010. The participants, 96 volunteer university students, were randomly distributed into four experimental settings/groups aiming at suggesting the presence/absence of halitosis: X (induction of halitosis diagnostic and absence of unpleasant odour/taste induction), W (exclusion of halitosis diagnostic and induction of unpleasant odour/taste), Y (induction of halitosis diagnostic and induction of unpleasant odour/taste) and Z (control group: exclusion of halitosis diagnostic and absence of unpleasant odour/taste induction). The data collection was made through direct observation of behavior in group dynamics, and by pre and post-manipulation questionnaires.

RESULTS: Significant effects were observed ($p < 0.05$) in the following variables: decrease of happiness (X, W, and Y), higher frequency of negative emotions (X, W, and Y), greater interpersonal distance (X, W, and Y), and greater necessity to communicate through mimics (Y), smoke or chewing gum (W and Y). No effects of halitosis self-awareness were observed on the attitude towards others with halitosis.

CONCLUSIONS: Halitosis self-awareness causes an immediate impact on the individual, influencing negatively his/her well-being. This recognition of the association between halitosis self-awareness and its influence on happiness/emotions/behaviour should be considered when approaching these patients.