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Personality Characteristics and the Mediating Variables that Lead to Success or Failure of Substance Use Disorder Treatments: An All-Pathways Assessment

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Personality Characteristics and the Mediating Variables that Lead to Success or Failure of Substance Use Disorder Treatments: An All-Pathways Assessment

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Introduction

Substance Use Disorders (SUDs) are a prevalent and urgent issue negatively impacting individuals, their communities, and the United States as a whole. In 2017, an estimated 20.7 million individuals needed treatment for an SUD, with only four million people receiving any treatment in the past year (SAMHSA). The total drug-overdose related deaths resulting from the more common drugs increased from 38,329 total deaths in 2010 to 70,237 total deaths in 2017 (CDC WONDER). In addition, there are substantial economic costs concerning SUDs, totalling an estimated \$740 billion annually in costs related to crime, lost work productivity, and health care (NIH 2017).

The inability to identify a "best-fit" program for an individual may contribute to increased attrition rates of SUD recovery programs and overall contribute to the death-toll from drug overdose. To increase success rates in treatment programs, it is essential that treatments are appropriate for an individual's unique needs. The National Institute of Health (NIH) recognizes that "staying in treatment long enough is critical" to the recovery process, which demonstrates the significance for SUD treatment programs to be appropriate for the individual seeking recovery.

There are currently several effective treatment modalities for SUDs, but it is important to note that, "no single treatment is right for everyone" (NIH 2019). The results of a research study by Deane, Wootton, Hsu, and Kelly (2012) provide evidence that certain personality traits (e.g. self-forgiveness) can predict an individual's success in completing a Twelve-step recovery program. Specifically, individuals that rated high in self-forgiveness were less likely to find the Twelve-step modality beneficial to their recovery. In the present study, we will be investigating four programs in relation to personality characteristics and success in treatment: Twelve-Step Programs, Wilderness Therapy Programs, Cognitive Behavioral Therapy (CBT), and the All-Pathways Approach.

Twelve-Step: The Twelve-Step program was originally developed in Alcoholics Anonymous and has become one of the most commonly-used methods in SUD recovery programs today. Two of the key components of Twelve-Step include members admitting that they cannot control their addiction and recognizing a "supreme spiritual power."

CBT: CBT is based on the premise that emotional and behavioral disturbances are a result of maladaptive thinking patterns. Treatment focuses on changing maladaptive patterns through cognitive restructuring. Therapy is a learning process of incorporating new ways of thinking and behaving.

Wilderness: Wilderness therapy programs accredited by the Outdoor Behavioral Health (OBH) council combine effective therapeutic strategies, such as mindfulness, with the positive influence many find in nature.

The All-Pathways approach is a therapeutic model based on the Person-Centered approach developed by Carl Rogers. In Person-Centered therapy, the client determines what is important and beneficial in their recovery process and their personal wants and goals are prioritized above those that are identified by others. Earlier studies indicate that effective components of recovery include autonomy, self-efficacy, respect, and empathy (Kretzman, 2013; Krentzman & Barker, 2016; Mericle, 2017; Turton et al. 2011), which are all aspects found in Person-Centered treatment approaches, indicating that the All-Pathways approach would be an effective recovery path for some individuals. The All-Pathways approach is steadily growing in popularity as a treatment modality, yet there is a current lack of research on its effectiveness in SUD recovery programs. The lack of current research on the efficacy of this approach indicates a crucial need for further studies.

The two main goals of this study are (1) develop an assessment tool that will identify which SUD recovery program is best-fitted for an individual based on their personality traits, (2) provide further research on the All-Pathways treatment approach, specifically in SUD recovery programs.

Method

Participants: Participants will be self-selected volunteers (18+ years) that have personal experience in one or more of the recovery programs we are investigating: Twelve-Step Programs, Wilderness Therapy, Cognitive Behavioral Therapy, and programs that use the All-Pathways approach.

Materials

Life Engagement Test (LET). The LET is a 6 item, self-report likert scale, seeking to quantify how engaged people are in their lives. Three items are framed in a positive direction while the other three are framed in a negative direction. Items are measured on a 5-point scale ranging from 1 = strongly disagree to 5 = strongly agree.

Centrality of Religiosity Scale (10 item) (CRS-10). The CRS-10 is a 10 item, likert scale measuring an individual's importance of religious meanings in personality. Items are rated on a 5-point scale ranging from 1 = never to 5 = very often.

Heartland Forgiveness Scale (HFS). The HFS is an 18-item, self-report Likert scale that measures an individual's general tendency to be forgiving. It measures forgiveness of self, forgiveness of others, and forgiveness of situations. Items are measured on a 7-point scale ranging from 1 = almost always false of me to 7 = almost always true of me.

Analogue to Multiple Broadband Inventories (AMBI). The AMBI questionnaire is a 181 item, self-report Likert scale measuring different factors of personality. Items are measured on a 5-point scale ranging from 1 = strongly disagree to 5 = strongly agree.

Participants will partake in an online survey constructed through Qualtrics software. Data will be analyzed for statistical significance using Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS).

Results

We hypothesize that there will be specific traits that can predict success or failure in the four recovery programs we are investigating:

(1)Twelve-Step: Scores high in self-forgiveness and self-acceptance will predict higher failure rates. Scores high in religiosity, acceptance in spirituality, self-consciousness, communality, and sociability will predict greater success.

(2)CBT: Scores high in self-discipline, self-control, perseverance, integrity, honesty, and self-focus predict greater success. Scores high in anxiety and/or depression may also predict success.

(3)Wilderness: Scores high in life-engagement, unconventionality, self-efficacy, vulnerability, variety-seeking, religiosity, acceptance of spirituality, and proactiveness will predict success.

(4)All-Pathways: Scores high in life-engagement, independence, empathy, flexibility, self-focus, open-mindedness and individualism predict success. Scores high in anxiety and/or depression may also predict success.

(5) With further investigation of the All-Pathways approach, we predict finding it an effective modality in SUD treatment programs, particularly for individuals that do not feel they "fit" in more rigid programs.

Discussion

The present study aims to identify the personality characteristics that reliably predict an individual's outcome in specific SUD recovery programs. Twelve-Step programs can be religious in nature, therefore scores high in religiosity and acceptance in spirituality are hypothesized to be predictors of success. Twelve-Step programs are group-based and social-acceptance is a key aspect in this modality, making personality traits such as self-consciousness, communality, and sociability probable predictors of success or failure in the program.

Cognitive Behavioral Therapy decreases levels of anxiety and depression, which in turn increases rates of success in recovery from alcohol and drug use. Furthermore, this therapeutic approach focuses on the client's emotions, thought processes, and their behaviors, which is why personality characteristics such as self-discipline, self-control, and self-focus are hypothesized to be predictors of success.

Wilderness treatment is a physically active and unconventional experiential approach to substance use treatment in which nature, spirituality, and group environments are utilized to treat individuals that struggle with alcohol and drug use. We predict that individuals that score high in life-engagement, self-efficacy, vulnerability, variety-seeking, religiosity, acceptance of spirituality, and proactiveness will more likely find success in a wilderness treatment program.

The All-Pathways approach ties in close with a humanistic and positive approach to psychology. These programs focus on the unique needs each individual has in order to find success in treatment. In short, the all-pathways approach encompasses all treatments that would help that specific individual overcome barriers with drug and alcohol use. Therefore, we predict that individuals that rate high on independence, flexibility, self-focus, empathy, and open-mindedness will likely succeed when seeking treatment through the All-Pathways approach.

The two primary goals of the present study are to develop an assessment that can accurately and reliably determine the best-fit SUD recovery program for an individual based on their personality traits, and substantiate the efficacy of the All-Pathways approach within SUD recovery programs. Identifying ways to increase success for individuals in SUD programs may help decrease the overall death rates from drug-overdose.

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