

Post-treatment Life Planning and Relapse Prevention: An Effectiveness Study of an Integrative Model of Vocational Life Design for Young Rehabilitated Drug Abusers

Executive Summary

A longitudinal mixed method of quantitative and qualitative research was used to evaluate the effectiveness of an integrative model of vocational life design in preventing relapse of youth rehabilitated from drug abuse. This integrative model involved four one-hour individual vocational counselling sessions based on Savickas' narrative life design and twelve 2-hour expressive arts groups. Motivational Interviewing techniques were used to aid the will to change.

Seventy youths rehabilitated from drug abuse have participated this study. In the quantitative part, both the 35 participants in the intervention group and another 35 participants in the control group were invited to complete four questionnaires. 62 participants completed the four time-point measures. In the dimension of drug use behaviours, frequency and number of participants of drug use were calculated. In the psychosocial dimension, self-efficacy to refuse drug use and psychometric scales were used to track the changes of the participants. In the qualitative research, 28 participants joined semi-structured focus groups. Two case studies are presented to show the intervention process.

The research findings suggest the presence of effectiveness of the integrated model of vocational life design. Participants in both groups showed improvements in different psychometric scales. However, the progress of participants in the intervention group was greater and more consistent. The intervention group showed continuous improvement in their self-efficacy to refuse drug use, whereas the control group's self-efficacy to refuse drugs dropped in level at Time 4 of the time-point measures. In the intervention group, the relapse rate was lower than that of the control group. In the focus group interviews, the intervention group shared more specific and meaningful understanding of their future career paths and how they found meaning in their jobs. In the in-depth interviews, the participants showed progress in achieving breakthrough in their personal growth and also an enhanced inner strength when facing difficulties in their daily lives.

The findings in this study echoed previous studies in that self-efficacy and drug abuse are negatively correlated, demonstrated that life satisfaction is a protective factor with regard to drug use relapse. We also found that finding meaning in life is a stronger predictor of drug refusal efficacy than life satisfaction. Participants' ability to focus on the future and to recognise their potential in future opportunities play an important role in helping them find meaning in life.

Key Words: Posttreatment, Life Design, Meaning of Life, Life Satisfaction, Expressive Arts