

A STUDY OF COPING RESOURCES AND SELF ESTEEM OF DRUG ADDICTS AND SUGGESTIONS FOR COMPREHENSIVE GENDER SENSITIVE TREATMENT

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Abstract

A Study is strongly emphasized that a comprehensive gender sensitive treatment tailored to individual addicts be introduced in drug treatment programme. The selection of appropriate strategy, therefore, needs to depend on the extent of the problem, severity of drug abuse, the range of individual's coping resources etc. Hence the present study aims to evaluate the differences if any in the levels of physical, cognitive, social and spiritual coping resources of men and women addicts. It also aims to measure their evaluative attitudes towards the self in social, academics, family and personal areas of experiences, sample consisted of 15 male and 15 female drug addicts from a residential treatment programme. Tools for data collection included coping resources inventory, self esteem inventory as well as a semi structured a questionnaire. Results indicate significant differences between the two groups in social as well as spiritual coping resources. Women exhibited higher levels of guilt and shame as compared to men. Some gender specific treatment suggestions based on the evaluation of treatment programme by the male and female addicts have been highlighted.

INTRODUCTION

In treatment of drug dependence complex and challenging process and involves a broad set of multiple responses. It is now universally accepted that abstinence is not the sole criterion of successful outcome. Reduction or cessation of drug taking is just an aspect of recovery. The improvement must be reflected in the subject's total functioning. The term treatment is thus defined as a process that begins when Psycho-active substance users come into contact with a health provider or other community service, and may continue through a succession of specific interventions until the highest attainable level of health and well being is reached.

In other words the objective of treatment is to achieve "whole Person Recovery" which emphasizes physical, emotional and mental rehabilitation, culminating in a physically, socially and economically self dependent life for the recovering addicts. It is, therefore, imperative that the rehabilitation aspect should receive more focus in the programme of 'prevention of Alcoholism and substance Abuse' (Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment, 1999). The nature of impairment and the individuals coping resources and strategies dictates the particular focus of rehabilitation.

OBJECTIVES OF THE PRESENT STUDY

The present study aims to evaluate the differences in the levels of physical, cognitive, social, spiritual and emotional coping resources of the men and women addicts.

The present study aims to measure evaluative attitudes of men and women drug addicts towards the general self, social self peers, academic and family.

Finally, the ultimate goal of treatment of substance abusers is to rehabilitate them and help them to lead productive and healthy lives. In the direction of evaluating the effectiveness of rehabilitation efforts, an attempt was made to examine the evaluations made by men and women drug addicts themselves in terms of their expectations from rehabilitation, the major worries and problems faced by them during rehabilitation, the changes observed in themselves as a result of rehabilitation in a Therapeutic Community and finally their suggestions to increase the effectiveness of the rehabilitation programme.

DESIGN

The study was conducted on 15 men and 15 women drug addicts who were admitted in a residential rehabilitation programme. The coping Resources Inventory (Dr. Prabhu, 1989) was used to assess the level of coping resources of both the men and women addicts on 5 dimensions namely cognitive, social, emotional, spiritual / philosophical and physical. The level of self –esteem in both groups was assessed using the self-esteem Inventory (coppersmith, 1981). The Adult form used, had the following subscales – General self, Social Self peers, Home-parents, School-Academic. The subjects’ evaluation of the Rehabilitation programme was assessed through open-ended questions as well as informal interviews with them.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Effective treatment strategies must begin with an understanding of the existing differences between men and women drug addicts on various facets of drug use. Towards this end, the present study attempted a comparative analysis of men and women addicts with respect to certain psychosocial dimensions. Interestingly, it was noted that the respondents, especially the women addicts felt more to interact, and responded with much less inhibitions during informal interviews, to yield individual and interesting insights into their drug use which perhaps would have been missed had data only been collection with the help of standardized questionnaires. The men and women addicts have been compared on the following variables.

COPING RESOURCES : DIFFERENCES AMONG MEN AND WOMEN ADDICTS

Table – 1

Showing the mean, SD and ‘t’ value for different dimensions of coping resource inventory.

Dimension	Men		Women		‘t’	P Value
	Mean	SD	Mean	SD		
Cognititive coping resources	25.07	3.71	21.80	5.29	1.96	NS
Social coping resources	34.93	7.21	27.93	5.66	2.95	P<0.01
Emotional coping resources	43.13	9.22	38.27	6.36	1.69	NS
Spiritual coping resources	32.27	3.99	26.97	3.29	4.36	P<0.01
Physical coping resources	26.73	4.85	29.33	2.99	1.80	NS

COGNITIVE COPING RESOURCES

The results obtained on the basis of this area of coping resources do not reveal significant differences between the two groups of subjects namely the men addicts and the women addicts (t=196, N.S.).

However, the men addicts received higher mean scores (M=25.07) as compared to the women addicts (M=21.80) indicating relatively higher levels of cognitive coping resources than the women addicts. This perhaps could be a function of the levels of education received by the two groups 46.60 % of the women addicts were illiterate as compared to none of the men addicts. Furthermore, the men addicts were not only higher in terms of number with respect to education, but they also had access to higher education – 33.30% of the men addicts were graduates. As determined by who (1993), the access to education is an important determiner of cognitive coping resources. Research by Suffet (1999) also found that men were more likely to be educated than women, at intake to a treatment programme.

SOCIAL COPING RESOURCES

The scores on this dimension revealed a significant difference between the men addicts and the women addicts ($t=2.95, p<0.01$) with men addicts scoring higher than women addicts. Higher scores on this dimension indicate the greater degree to which individuals are imbedded in the social networks that are able to provide support in times of stress.

For the men addicts this was evident in their reported evaluation of their current rehabilitation (Therapeutic Community) setting. During the course of the interview all the men addicts reported receiving an immense amount of support from their fellow addicts also undergoing treatment, stinsonetal (1979) also found that emphasis on peer group interaction in a treatment center affects treatment of peer support in a treatment. Programme large percentage of the men addicts in the present study also reported that they were extremely influenced by the 'core group' of ex-drug addicts who served as role models for the subjects. In addition, these persons helped to guide the men addicts through the rehabilitation programme with acceptance and encouragement. This acceptance by the leaders of the rehabilitation programme in turn might have proved to be a valuable support system for the men addicts. these supportive relations between the men addicts undergoing rehabilitation together might be an extremely valuable factor in contributing to the significant higher social coping resources of the men addicts in comparison to the women addicts.

EMOTIONAL COPING RESOURCES

Emotional coping resources indicate the degree to which individuals are able to accept and express a wide range of affect, based on the premise that a range of emotional response aids in ameliorating long-term negative consequences of stress. The results obtained do not indicate a significant difference between the two groups (men and women addicts) in this area of coping resources. The relatively higher score of men addicts as compared to the women addicts however indicates relatively higher emotional coping resources.

One of the factors contributing to the obtained results could be the difference existing in the current rehabilitation programme for the men and women addicts. In a T.C. Programme, subjects are actively encouraged to accept as well as express their feelings to one another. This procedure was more thoroughly followed in the male rehabilitation programme as compared to the programme to women addicts. Such a structure schedule also took into account regular weekly feedback sessions wherein the T.C. members were encouraged to share their individual experiences and resultant feelings with the other members for an increased feeling of mutual trust as well as resolution of certain feelings or problems.

Men addicts therefore reported a stronger sense of attachment with their T.C. peer group in comparison to the women addicts. This strong sense of attachment in turn might have led to an increased amount of trust placed in each other by the men subjects in terms of being able to honestly express feelings an emotions without the fear of negative judgment. Such relations were found to be lacking in the programme for the women addicts. The reported dislike and distrust in each other In addition, they reported an increased need to keep aspects of their drug abuse limited to themselves. They did not express a need to share their feelings with each other as a consequence of the increased amount of guilt and shame they felt as a result of using drugs in comparison to the men addicts.

SPIRITUAL / PHILOSOPHICAL COPING RESOURCES

Spiritual – Philosophical coping resources are the degree to which actions of individuals are guided by stable and consistent values derived from religious, familiar or culture traditions apart from personal philosophy. The scores on this dimension revealed a significant difference between the men addicts and the women addicts ($t=4.36, p<0.01$) with men adding scoring higher than the women addicts. The results obtained are supported by the expressed views of both the groups men addicts and women addicts, regarding the relative importance and necessity of spirituality as helpful in their assent rehabilitation programme 79.90% of the men addicts reported spirituality or faith in God as the most useful part of rehabilitation in keeping them away from drugs. The same view regarding this dimension was expressed in comparison by only 13.30 of the women addicts.

This difference in opinion could perhaps be influenced in part by the prevalence of a high degree of emphasis on spirituality in the T.C. programme for the men addicts as compared to the programme for the women addicts. In addition, informal interviews with the subjects revealed that each and every male addicts believed firmly in the role of spiritual powers as helpful in their recovery from drug addiction. Although the women addicts did believe in God, they revealed that they were not regular in relation to activities like prayer or meditation in striking contrast to the views of the men addicts.

The reliance on a personal philosophy or the formation and modification of existing values played an important role in the lives of men addicts after they had been admitted into treatment 53% of the men addicts expressed the importance of availability of time for introspection as extremely helpful during rehabilitation since they expressed that this time allowed them to take stock of their lives, their past and their present and look to spirituality to help them through rehabilitation and into a drug free future.

PHYSICAL COPING RESOURCES

Physical coping resources refer to the degree to which individuals enact health promoting behaviour believed to contribute to increased physical well being.

The results (t-1.80 N.S.) do not indicate a significant difference between the two groups (men and women addicts in this area of coping resources. However, the relatively higher physical coping resources in a trend different from the other dimensions of the inventory wherein men addicts have scored higher as compared to the women addicts.

One reason for the lower scores of the men addicts could be due to the fact that a large percentage of them used drugs intravenously as reported during the informal interviews as compared to the women addicts, who use drugs orally. Also, men addicts displayed more negative health habits such as smoking cigarettes as compared to the women addicts. This in turn, might have led to a decreased incidence of skin infections, boils, blisters and blood related diseases in the women addicts as compared to the men addicts leading subsequently to higher scores in comparison to the men addicts.

Thus, although the women did not actively or regularly practice health promoting behaviours such as physically exercise, the fact that they had not only used drugs for a shorter period of time, the average time span of drug-use by the women was shorter as compared to that for the men addicts, but also the use of fewer types of drugs and abstinence from intravenous use might have contributed to their relatively higher scores on this dimension.

SELF ESTEEM

TABLE - 2

Showing the Mean, SD and 't' value for self-esteem related to 'General self, Social, Home-parents

Dimensions of SEI	Men		Women		't'	P
	Mean	SD	Mean	SD		
General Self	4.87	2.70	3.80	1.52	1.31	NS
Social	2.60	1.30	2.07	1.39	1.71	NS
Home parents	2.47	1.81	2.00	1.31	0.82	NS
School Academic	1.33	1.05	0.87	0.99	0.62	NS

NS - Not Significant

According to purchased et al (1987), as a rule drug addicted people - both men and women addicts show a distinctly diminished estimate of the value of their selves. This view has been supported by the resent study

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whose both the men addicts and the women addicts displayed scores towards the lower range of values indicating poor self esteem.

Both the men and women addicts during the course of conversation revealed that they did not feel very positive about themselves when they thought of their drugs habits. For the men addicts, low self-esteem was even more evident if they had been unemployed due to drug abuse. Since both groups were part of the same drug subculture due to which they had been leading, largely unproductive lives (as revealed by them), the felt that they had “let down” their families and their friends and therefore had an extremely poor self evaluation. This finding carries important implications for treatment programme : inclusion of self-esteem building sessions or counseling would go a long way in helping both the men and women addicts to re-accept themselves.

An important feature revealed in the course of present study was the incredibly, high levels of guilt and shame that the women addicts carried with them. They viewed themselves as persons who were guilty because according to the subjects, they had committed a crime or sinned against these significant others by taking drugs. All the women addicts felt they had let their families down and brought shame upon their parents. They displayed a large amount of guilt related to the fact that “being women, how could we abuse drugs,” thus bringing to light an important underlying concept.

CONCLUSION

1. In the cognitive coping resources the more difference between male and female is not signified.
2. In the social coping resources difference is signified that male gets more support than female.
3. Emotional coping resources shows parallel results and there are not any difference.
4. In the spiritual coping, it is found that male have more spiritual than female.
5. The difference in the physical coping resources is not found of male and female.
6. I have not found significant differences in the self esteem of male and female.

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