

A Comparative Study of Drug Addicts and Non-Drug Addicts on Self-Esteem, Self-Efficacy, and Stress-Resistant Personality

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Abstract

This paper is a report concerned with a comparative study of drug addicts and non-drug addicts on self-efficacy, self-esteem, and stress-resistant personality. A group of 46 drug addicts were recruited through Mandalay Drug Treatment Hospital and Care Myanmar Group to participate in a questionnaire study. 100 community members who live in Mandalay were also recruited as a control group of non-drug addicts to participate in a questionnaire study. Participants of both groups were asked to complete Mandalay general self-efficacy scale, self-esteem scale, and stress-resistant personality inventory. The mean differences of responses on each scale between drug addicts group and non-drug addicts group were examined by using t test. There were no differences between drug addicts and non-drug addicts on general self-efficacy and hardiness. However, the results of the present study showed that drug addicts were lower in self-esteem and optimism and more cynical than non-drug addicts.

Key words: Self-esteem, Self-efficacy, Stress-resistant personality

Introduction

Many researchers studied about drug abuse from different perspectives, especially, sociology, physiology, and psychology. From the physiological point of view, drugs cause physiological changes in the body, thus creating an irresistible desire behavior more or less. Dole and Nyswander (1967), the founders of methadone treatment program for heroin addicts, suggest people have difference levels of susceptibility. For those susceptible individuals, taking drugs develops in them a "drug hunger," continuing even if no physical dependence exists. The inner craving or drug hunger is linked to an individual's craving for sweets but on a more habitual basis.

Functionalist theory from sociological perspective focuses upon the social norms and conditions that foster drug use in a society, rather than upon the particular reasons why individuals use drugs. As we have seen, the use of some drugs is socially acceptable: alcohol, amphetamines, caffeine, cocaine, depressant, marijuana, narcotics, and tobacco are condemned by the society except for the moderate use for either medical, recreational, or therapeutic purposes.

Moreover, a rapid social change -- high technology, shifts in occupational patterns, lack of urban jobs for low-skilled minorities concentrated in cities, disappearing rural work opportunities-- helps to create social problems: poverty, alienation, greater social class

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disparities. The outside pressures of school, work and everyday life also put a great stress upon individuals and family well-being. For many people enmeshed in feelings of confusion, their societal role threatened by occupational dislocation or changing traditions, drugs offer an escape from unpleasant or difficult situations. Prevailing social norms about the drug use do not necessarily influence such individuals, since they either do not think themselves an integral part of a society or they are caught up among many social demands and seek drugs as refuge. The dysfunctions of alienation, confusion, ruthlessness, stress, anxiety, and unattainable goals occasioned by the social system can create in some individuals a sense of normlessness regarding drugs. Despite societal remonstrances, drugs are a tempting alternative for those caught in life's confusing demands.

However, many psychologists, as to why people abuse drugs, centers on personality weakness. Concentrating on the role played by childhood experiences in shaping adult personalities, psychologists note that a lack of sufficient love and affection impairs a child's personality development, causing an emotionally insecure for whom drugs provide solace, self-satisfaction, or escape from reality. In a comparison between a group of 45 young institutionalized male addicts and a controlled group of non-addicts, Gilbert and Lombardi (1967) found that distinguishing features were "the addict's psychopathic traits, his depression, tension, insecurity, and feeling of inadequacy, and his difficulty in forming a warm and lasting interpersonal relationship". Similarly, in a study of 112 drug abusers admitted to the Bellevue Psychiatric Hospital in New York, Hekimain and Gerson (1968) found that heroin users usually showed psychopathic characteristics.

Aye Thida (2003) studied drug abuse with the identifying drugs addicts' perceived parenting styles and comparing them with non-drug addicts' parenting ones. Aye Thida's study showed that the majority of drug users were children of authoritarian and neglectful fathers and indulgent mothers. Extensive studies of addicts have resulted in a composite portrait where researchers identify them as hostile, immature, dependent, maladjusted, manipulative, and narcissistics (Cowan et al, 1979).

The focus of the present study is on the personality weakness to explain why people abuse drugs. More specifically, the present study intends to compare drug addicts and non-drug ones on general self-efficacy, self-esteem, and stress-resistant personality in a questionnaire study.

Self-efficacy is the component of self-concept that deals with one's perceived abilities and competencies to deal with a given task (Bandura, 1977). In other words, the construction of perceived self-efficacy reflects an optimistic self-belief (Schwarzer, 1992). This is a belief that one can perform a novel or difficult tasks, or cope with adversity — in various domains of human function. Perceived self-efficacy facilitates goal-setting, effort investment, persistence in the face of barriers and recovery from setbacks. It can be regarded as the positive resistance resource factor. The present study will expect that drug addicts may be lower in self-efficacy than non-drug ones because drug addiction is a factor difficult to resist it for them. Moreover, the present study will also expect that the drug addicts may be lower in self-esteem than non-drug users because a drug addict may view himself as useless, inept, and unworthy due to the criticism of society, neighbors, and family members. Next, the

present study will hypothesize that the drug addicts are more susceptible to stress than non-drug addicts because of their personality weaknesses. In other words, the present study will expect that the drug addicts are lower in optimistic attitude and hardiness, and more cynical than non-drug addicts. Based on the above assumptions, the present study will compare drug addicts and non-drug addicts on general self-efficacy, self-esteem, and stress-resistant personality in a questionnaire study.

Method

Participants

A total of 146 group participated in this study; 30 drug addicts (heroin users) admitted to Mandalay Drug Treatment Hospital and 16 drug addicts (heroin users). who came to Care Myanmar Group in Mandalay for drug treatment were collected. 100 community members who live in Mandalay were recruited as a control group of non-drug addicts.

Measures

Mandalay General Self-efficacy Scale

The scale includes 12 items and is self-administered. Responses are made on 4-point scale with (1) absolute untrue (2) rarely true (3) fairly true (4) accurate true. Test-retest reliability coefficient was 0.71.

Mandalay Self-esteem Scale

This scale consists of 49 items and is self-administered. Yes or No response is made on each item. Test-retest reliability coefficient of the scale was 0.82.

Stress-Resistant Personality Inventory

This inventory was made up of three subscale; Cynicism Scale, Optimism Scale, and Hardiness Scale. The Cynicism Scale has a set of 10 items. The Scale Optimism consists of 10 items and the hardiness scale included 14 items. Responses are made on 5-point scale range from 1 (not at all agree) to 5 (very agree). Test-retest reliability coefficients were 0.83 for the Cynicism Scale, 0.80 for the Optimism Scale and 0.78 for the Hardiness Scale. Validity coefficients of the inventory were 0.67, 0.71 and 0.66 for the Cynicism Scale, the Optimism Scale, and the Hardiness Scale respectively.

Procedure

Patients who were admitted to Mandalay Drug Treatment Hospital and Care Myanmar for treatment were approached by the researcher and asked to participate in a questionnaire study. Participants were given an informed-consent form to read and sign. They then received a 7-page questionnaire to complete.

Similarly, participants of comparison group were approached by the researcher and asked to participate in a questionnaire study. They were also given an informed-consent to read and to sign. They also received 7-page questionnaire.

Next, the responses of both groups on each scale were scored and means differences between them on each scale were examined by t test.

Results

The results of present study can be seen in Table 1. According to the results, general self-efficacy did not differ between drug users and non-drug users in the present. This may be due to the weakness of the General Self-efficacy Scale used in this study. As a general measure, it does not seem to tap specific behavioral change. Therefore, in this application it is necessary to add a few items to cover the particular content of drug cessation self-efficacy.

However, self-esteem differed between non-drug addicts ($M = 34.4$) and drug addicts ($m = 30$), $t(144) = 3.69$, $p < .001$. Moreover, cynical attitude differed between

Table 1 "t" values and means of drug addicts and non-drug addicts on General Self-efficacy, Self-Esteem, Cynicism, Optimism and Hardiness

Descriptions of measure	Mean (M1)		"t" value	Significant level
	Non-Drug addicts N=100	Drug addicts N=46		
Self-esteem	34.40	30.00	3.96	***
Cynicism	33.50	36.70	-2.76	**
Optimism	40.50	38.50	2.02	*
Hardiness	50.50	51.30	-0.69	Not significant
General self-efficacy	34.20	34.10	0.10	Not significant

* $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$, *** $p < .001$

drug addicts ($M = 33.5$) and non-drug addicts ($M = 36.7$), $t(144) = -2.76$, $p < .01$. Next, optimistic attitude also differed between non-drug addicts ($M = 40.5$) and drug addicts ($M = 38.5$), $t(144) = 2.02$, $P < .05$.

Discussion

The results of this study show that drug addicts were lower in self-esteem than non-drug users. Self-esteem refers to the self-evaluations each individual makes. A person expressing high self-esteem believes himself or herself to be fundamentally good, capable,

and worthy, low self-esteem is a view of oneself as useless, inept, and unworthy. The opinion expressed by others probably shapes these attitudes, outsiders' opinions may sometimes bring about changes in one's self-esteem. Self-evaluations also affected by the characteristics of others with whom we compare ourselves (Brown et al., 1992). This definition of self-esteem and this finding seem to be consistent with the result of the present study. Drug addicts tend to view themselves as useless, inept, and unworthy responding to criticism of family members, neighborhood, and society on their drug abuse. For this reason, the finding of the present study that drug users were lower in self-esteem than non-drug users is reasonable.

Moreover, the present study tells us that the drug addicts' group was less optimistic, more cynical than the non-drug addicts' group. This finding is indirectly related to the finding of Aye Thida's study that in comparison to non-drug addicts, drug addicts were children of authoritarian or neglectful fathers and permissive indulgent mothers. This consequence appears to make them poorer self-esteem, socially withdraw, and more aggressive and drugs offer them an escape from unpleasant or difficult situations. Again, their drug abuse can be responded by others avoiding, criticizing and rejecting them. So, they become cynical toward others and less optimistic about the world.

However, hardiness did not differ between drug users and non-drug users. The drug addicts exhibited that they were as hardy as the non-drug addicts did in the present study. The drug-addicts exhibited a constellation of "hardiness" characteristics, for example, they said that they enjoy working hard, their decision affects their work life, they welcome change, they get really involved in whatever they do, other people can count on them, they like responsibility and so on. Although the present study expected that the drug-addicts may be low in hardiness, they seem to use their perceived hardiness as an ego-defense mechanism.

Eventually, the present study concludes that personality weakness or faulty personality development leads the youngsters to drug abuse and the consequences of drug abuse also lead the drug addicts to personality weakness, again.

Summary and Conclusion

This paper is a report which describes a comparative study of drug addicts and non-drug addicts on self-efficacy, self-esteem, and stress-resistant personality.

A group of 46 drug addicts was recruited through Mandalay Drug Treatment Hospital and Care Myanmar Group to participate in a questionnaire study. 100 community members who live in Mandalay were also recruited as a control group of non-drug addicts to participate in a questionnaire study. Participants of both groups were then asked to complete Mandalay General self-efficacy scale, self-esteem scale, and stress-resistant personality inventory. The mean differences between drug addicts group and non-drug addicts group on each scale were examined by using t test.

According to the results of the present study, there were no differences between drug addicts and non-drug addicts on general self-efficacy and hardiness. However, the results of the present study showed that drug addicts were lower in self-esteem and optimism, and more

cynical than non-drug addicts. To sum up, the present study concludes that personality weakness or faulty personality development leads the youngsters to drug abuse and the consequences of drug abuse also lead the drug addicts to personality weakness, again.

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