

Boys in Recovery: An Exploration of Prosocial Behavior in Residential Treatment

Hannah Siciliani | Department of Psychological Sciences | PSY 498A Senior Capstone: Applied Projects

Project Question:

•Does an implemented schedule of prosocial activities improve the behavior of youth boys in residential treatment?

Introduction

The DePaul Residential Youth Program aspires to provide both an educational and recreational program that teaches the causes and negative consequences of substance abuse as well as how to create a more positive and healthy life. It is designed to create opportunities to learn and practice the skills needed to become responsible adults.

Prosocial involvement is the tendency for people to act voluntarily to benefit others and has been regarded as a cardinal virtue of all societies. The involvement of adolescents in prosocial activities functions to make adolescents aware of and able to accept the social norms and moral standards of society. (Lam, 2012)

Both empathic concern and perspective taking are higher in a high prosocial-low aggressive profile, implicating that those who frequently engage in prosocial activities have lower tendencies to exhibit aggressive behavior (Berger, Batanova, & Cance, 2015). Aggressive behavior is just one of the antisocial behaviors frequently observed in boys in residential treatment at DePaul.

At DePaul Treatment Center, a day a schedule of activities, school and individual and group counseling assists young people to make the transition to a life free from substance abuse.

This study explores the effectiveness of an implemented schedule of prosocial activities on improvements in antisocial delinquent behaviors.

Methods

The intention was to collect two full weeks of data on how each of 8 boys (ages 14-17), behaved throughout each day of the two week time frame of the study. Data was collected from daily charts filled out by residential counselors on each boys' level of participation in various activities. The higher scores (scores of 5) represent a boy's success in participating in the activity (engaging in a prosocial activity) and indirectly measures each boy's treatment success in regard to improvements toward more positive and healthier attitudes. (Examples of daily activities are shown in the table). Lower scores represent little to no participation as well as expressing inappropriate behaviors (excessive cursing, crossing boundaries, not following directives, exerting aggression, etc.)

Following, the school teacher and residential counselor were to be asked questions regarding each boy's overall behavior and personality, which represented a second variable on attitude and behavior.

Correlational data between daily activity scores and the informal report of the boys' behavior would be computed on SPSS.

Time	Schedule	Structure Score
3:00-4:00	Snack & Art	0 1 2 3 4 5
4:00-5:00	Organized Recreation	0 1 2 3 4 5
5:00-6:00	Dinner/Meds/Chores	0 1 2 3 4 5
6:00-6:30	Personal Time/Gratitude Meeting	0 1 2 3 4 5
6:30-8:30	Personal Time/ Meeting/Family Visit	0 1 2 3 4 5

Predicted Results

Because of COVID-19, data collection did not occur, thus there are no results to report.

Hypothesis: Those who engage in prosocial activities tend to score higher on attitude and behavior.



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Discussion

Given the limitations of collecting data due to COVID-19, I propose that my results would answer the following questions:

Who needs help with social integration and who needs more attention in regards to social attitudes?

Who is aware of their behavior? Who is not?

Who are the outliers? (are some boys very antisocial or are some very outgoing or kind?)

Which activities are beneficial? Which are not?

References

- Lam, C. M. (2012). Prosocial involvement as a positive youth development construct: a conceptual review. Retrieved from <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC3353316/>
- Berger, C., Batanova, M., & Cance, J. D. (2015, December). Aggressive and Prosocial? Examining Latent Profiles of Behavior, Social Status, Machiavellianism, and Empathy. Retrieved from <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed/25987411>