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Recovery Capital as Prospective Predictor of Sustained Recovery, Life Satisfaction and Stress among Former Poly-substance Users

Abstract

Many recovering persons report quitting their drug use because they are "sick and tired" of the drug life. Recovery is the path to a better life, but that path is often challenging and stressful. There has been little research on the millions of recovering persons in the United States, and most research has focused on substance use outcomes rather than on broader functioning domains. This study builds on our previous cross-sectional findings that recovery capital (social supports, spirituality, religiousness, life meaning, and 12-step affiliation) enhances the ability to cope with stress and enhances life satisfaction. This study (a) tests the hypothesis that higher levels of recovery capital prospectively predict sustained recovery, higher quality of life, and lower stress one year later, and (b) examines the differential effects of recovery capital on outcomes across the stages of recovery. Recovering persons (N = 312), mostly inner-city ethnic minority members whose primary substance had been crack or heroin, were interviewed twice at a one-year interval in New York City between April 2003 and April 2005. Participants were classified into one of four baseline recovery stages: under 6 months, 6-18 months, 18-36 months, and over 3 years. Multiple regression findings generally supported the central hypothesis and suggested that different domains of recovery capital were salient at different recovery stages. The study's limitations are noted and implications of findings for clinical practice and for future research are discussed, including the need for a theoretical framework to elucidate the recovery process.

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