

# The Moderating Effect of Substance Abuse Treatment Engagement on the Connection Between Support from Program Participants and Substance-Related Recidivism for Justice-Involved Women

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## Reasons for Studying the Effects of Justice Involved-Women's Substance Abuse Treatment Experiences

Many justice-involved women are either ordered or strongly encouraged to complete a substance abuse program during parole or probation. Substance abuse treatment engagement is a dynamic process that involves the experiences of program participants and their perceptions of the way that treatment is delivered. This study examines the prediction of substance-related technical violations and arrests from (a) a three-dimensional measure of substance abuse treatment engagement—treatment satisfaction, treatment participation, and counselor rapport—and (b) support from peers in the treatment program.

## The Research

This study focuses on 204 women on probation or parole who attended a substance abuse treatment program in the first nine months of supervision. Data were collected in face-to-face interviews and from official records of violations and arrests. Generalized linear mixed-effects modeling was used to assess the main effects and the interaction effect of within-program peer support and other indicators of engagement as predictors of substance-related technical violations and arrests.

- *Substance-related technical violations* are violations of supervision requirements but are not new crimes. Examples of this type of violation can include admitting to drug use, testing positive for a substance, or even refusing to take a drug test.
- *Drug-related arrests* are arrests for crimes involving drugs. These crimes can include arrests for driving under the influence, possession of a substance, manufacturing drugs, and selling drugs.

The predictor variables are measures of needs and performances in substance abuse treatment programs. This study uses the four subscales of therapeutic engagement from the Texas Christian University Criminal Justice Evaluation of Self Treatment, which include:

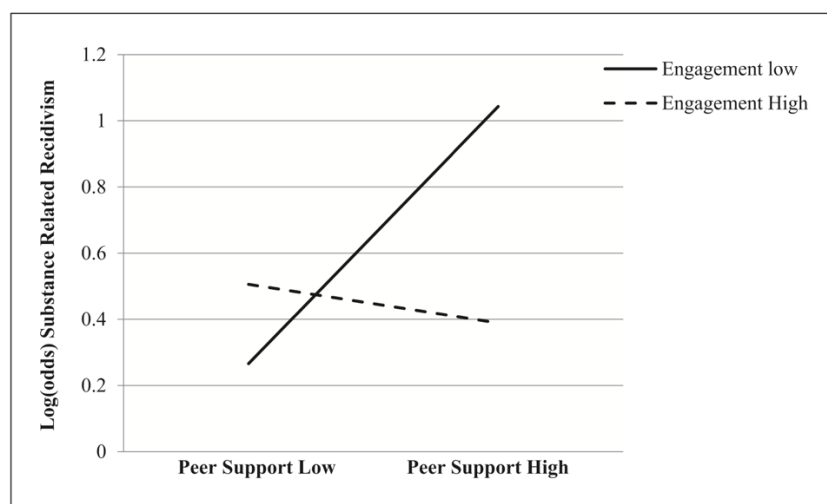
- *Treatment participation* is a 12-item scale which measures participants' involvement with treatment and asks questions related to their willingness to talk about their feelings during counseling sessions, the participants' progress with drug and alcohol problems, and acquiring knowledge during treatment to analyze and plan ways to solve their problems.
- *Treatment satisfaction* is a seven-item scale which measures participants' perceptions regarding the convenience of the counseling session schedule, the organization and overall functioning of the treatment program, and employee efficiency.
- *Counseling rapport* is a 12-item scale including questions related to the participants' trust in their counselors, the counselors' sensitivity to participants' problems, and counselors' helpfulness in assisting the participants in developing self-confidence.

- *Peer Support* is a five item-scale including questions related to peers in the treatment program caring about the participant and her problems, being helpful, and sharing similar substance abuse problems, and the participant's ability to build positive and trusting relationships.

The first three subscales are combined to create a three-dimensional measure of substance abuse treatment engagement.

## Results

The analysis predicting the number of substance-related recidivism incidents from the control and substance abuse treatment process variables suggest no significant main effects for the three-dimensional measure of substance abuse treatment engagement or peer support. However, there was a statistically significant interaction effect between the two treatment process variables (see Figure 1 from Goodson et al., 2020). The simple slopes analysis revealed that when the three-dimensional indicator of substance abuse treatment engagement is high (i.e., one standard deviation above the mean), peer support is not significantly associated with substance-related recidivism. But, when the three-dimensional measure of substance abuse treatment engagement is low (i.e., one standard deviation below the mean), peer support is significantly positively associated with substance-related recidivism.



**Figure 1.** Plot of the interaction between treatment engagement and peer support on substance-related recidivism where low and high are defined as  $\pm 1$  SD from the mean.

## Implications

For women who do not engage in treatment, building positive relationships with other treatment group members could have unintended negative consequences. For people unlikely to engage in treatment, participation may be contraindicated.

Source: Marva V. Goodson, Merry Morash, and Deborah A. Kashy. The Moderating Effect of Substance Abuse Treatment Engagement on the Connections Between Support from Program Participants and Substance-Related Recidivism for Justice-Involved Women. *International Journal of Offender Therapy and Comparative Criminology*, vol. 64, no. 12, 1217-1235, 2019.