

Exploring the impact of a transdiagnostic cognitive behavioral therapy-based intervention on a group of Malaysian adolescents with problematic drug use and emotional problems

ABSTRACT

Introduction: Adolescents with problematic substance use frequently have anxiety and depression and tend to have “unhealthy” lifestyle such as having poor dietary patterns and physical inactivity. The overall aim of the present study was to explore the impact of a Transdiagnostic Cognitive Behavioral Therapy-based Intervention (“Super Skills for Life” – adolescent version; SSL-A) on emotional problems among adolescents with problematic substance use and to identify demographic factors which influence the intervention outcomes. Method: A total of 108 adolescents (M = 16.30 years, SD = 1.6) with problematic substance use who showed high levels of anxiety and depression participated in this study. They completed a set of questionnaires to measure substance use, mental health problems, cognitive emotion regulation strategies, loneliness, and lifestyle and habits at pre- and post-intervention. Results: The adolescents reported less emotional symptoms and more prosocial behavior after the intervention. These adolescents were also consumed less substance and used less maladaptive emotion regulation strategies after participating in SSL-A. Females compared to males showed more treatment gains (i.e., reduction in loneliness and improvement in psychological health and self-esteem) after the intervention. Conclusion: This study provides empirical evidence for the utility of the SSL-A in reducing emotional problems and substance use among adolescents with problematic substance use.