Reviewer's report

Title: Relationship between craving and personality in treatment-seeking women with substance-related disorders

Authors:

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Reviewer: Dr Samuel A Ball

Level of interest: A paper whose findings are important to those with closely related research interests

Advice on publication: Accept after discretionary revisions

Abstract

1. The correlation between the craving measures is an insignificant piece of information with regard to study aims and does not need to be mentioned in the Abstract.

Background

2. The authors might want to consider adding on the following phrase at the end of the last sentence of the Background section "...controlling for several potentially relevant mediating variables (depression, anxiety, substance use, age, and education)."

Methods

3. The A subscale of the Barrett scale may get confused with the A scale of the NEO. The authors might change the Barrett scales to AI, MI, and NP.

Results

4. Rather than use the +/- notation after each mean, consider using the more accepted method of noting standard deviations (SD=10.0) throughout the Results section.

5. The presentation is imbalanced by describing the Impulsivity means in the text (but not the NEO or TCI) instead of in Table 1 where they should be listed.

6. The authors should state how the craving scores were combined. Was the higher of the two taken or a mean score used?

7. It would have been helpful to have had a much more detailed letter of response from the authors. The lack of details about the changes made it a bit difficult to understand the rationale for the analytic decisions made with regard to stepwise procedures. In my prior review, I had suggested entering your covariates as a block and then all personality scales as a second block (or perhaps do one model for NEO, one for TCI, and one for BIS) to also be able to see if personality contributes
significantly to craving above and beyond what the other variables predict. The authors should at least detail in a cover letter what they felt was wrong with this approach and why they adopted an alternative that is a little hard to grasp and kind of redundant. Specifically, it is unclear what understanding is gained by first correlating the various predictors with the criteria (craving) and then performing a regression that includes only those with significant correlations.

8. The authors are encouraged to drop the separate analysis of N5. Most personality researchers do not regard this as an appropriate measure of impulsivity and instead rely on the domain or facets of Conscientiousness to get at what most conceptualize as constraint (low impulsivity or disinhibition).

Discussion

9. Similar to my Abstract section comment, the correlation of your craving measures should not lead off the Discussion section. It is an important, but minor detail with regard to your study aims.

10. I may be repeating myself, but this study in no way addresses the issues raised in the last paragraph on obsessive-compulsive features and should be dropped. Perhaps this could be replaced with a bit more coverage on the main findings.

Tables

11. See comment above about including BIS in Table 1.

12. Table 2 should be replaced with stepwise regression analyses summary.

Competing interests:

None declared.