Reviewer's report

Title: Analysis of the emotional experiences of Japanese Alcoholics Anonymous members striving for sobriety

Version: 0 Date: 06 Mar 2019

Reviewer: Reviewer 2

Reviewer's report:

PEER REVIEWER ASSESSMENTS:

OBJECTIVE - Full research articles: is there a clear objective that addresses a testable research question(s) (brief or other article types: is there a clear objective)?

Yes - there is a clear objective

DESIGN - Is the current approach (including controls and analysis protocols) appropriate for the objective?

Yes - the approach is appropriate

EXECUTION - Are the experiments and analyses performed with technical rigor to allow confidence in the results?

Yes - experiments and analyses were performed appropriately

Statistics - Is the use of statistics in the manuscript appropriate?

N/A - there are no statistics in this study

INTERPRETATION - Is the current interpretation/discussion of the results reasonable and not overstated?

No - there are major issues
OVERALL MANUSCRIPT POTENTIAL - Is the current version of this work technically sound? If not, can revisions be made to make the work technically sound?

Maybe - with major revisions

PEER REVIEWER COMMENTS:

GENERAL COMMENTS: Overall, this presents as a unique and interesting qualitative study examining factors associated with sustained recovery in members of Alcoholics Anonymous (AA) in Japan. It appears to have been well-constructed and well-conducted. Issues related to ethics, recruitment, and consent were sound. Authors described a specific methodology that received significant input from the progenitors of this approach, as well close oversight by recognized experts throughout the process.

REQUESTED REVISIONS:

1. The terms, "abuse" and "dependence" have generally fallen out of favor in the literature surrounding substance use and related disorders.

2. The word, "media," is plural, and associated verbs should match.

3. Page 5, lines 107-110 is an incomplete sentence.

4. It is unclear why DSM-IV-TR would have been used, even in "a supplemental role," since DSM-5 was published in 2013.

5. On an historical note, AA was founded in 1935, not 1934.

6. The statement, "those addicted to drugs and alcohol have low emotional intelligence and find it difficult to understand and regulate their emotions," could and should be stated more tentatively.

7. For some time now, AA and many other programs, particularly those centered on the 12 Steps, have been referred to as "mutual-help," rather than "self-help," groups.

8. The authors referred to "companions" having served important roles in support of participants. How did these individuals compare to more readily recognized, traditional roles in AA culture, such as other members of the fellowship, or "sponsors?"
9. There were a number of elements, generally considered to be fundamental to the program of Alcoholics Anonymous, that appear to have been unknown, under-appreciated and/or unaddressed by the authors, resulting in missed opportunities at best, and misinterpretations and/or questionable conclusions at worst.

   A. The authors frequently made reference to issues related to "emotional regulation." Over a span of decades, many of the writings of Bill Wilson (Bill W.), one of the co-founders of AA, focused on "emotional sobriety," a concept that certainly warrants reference, inclusion, and discussion on the part of the authors.

   B. While the authors allude to "something beyond human wisdom," on more than one occasion, a role for "spiritual, disciplined efforts," discussion related to a "Higher Power" or "God," which are embedded in the 12 Steps, and fundamental to AA as a "spiritual program of action," designed to treat "a spiritual malady," was conspicuously absent.

   C. Similarly, in the context of AA, the notion that individuals in recovery reach "their goal by their own power," rather than through the support of the AA group, or reliance on a Higher Power or God, is antithetical.

   D. Based on certain of their own assertions (e.g., 9B, above), the statement by the author(s) that "the use of 'God' in the 12-step program seemed unnecessary," appears to be an unfounded conclusion.

Note: This reviewer report can be downloaded - see attached pdf file.
Are the methods appropriate and well described?
If not, please specify what is required in your comments to the authors.

Yes

Does the work include the necessary controls?
If not, please specify which controls are required in your comments to the authors.

Yes

Are the conclusions drawn adequately supported by the data shown?
If not, please explain in your comments to the authors.

No

Are you able to assess any statistics in the manuscript or would you recommend an additional statistical review?
If an additional statistical review is recommended, please specify what aspects require further assessment in your comments to the editors.

Not relevant to this manuscript

Quality of written English
Please indicate the quality of language in the manuscript:

Acceptable

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