Reviewer’s report

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

Version: 1 Date: 09 May 2019

Reviewer: Reviewer 2

Reviewer's report:

PEER REVIEWER ASSESSMENTS:

OBJECTIVE - Full research articles: is there a clear objective that addresses one or several testable research questions? (Brief or other article types: is there a clear objective?)

No - there are minor issues

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

No - there are minor issues

EXECUTION - Are the experiments and analyses performed with sufficient 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?

No - there are issues with the statistics in the study

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

Yes - the author's interpretation is reasonable
OVERALL MANUSCRIPT POTENTIAL - Has the author addressed your concerns sufficiently for you to now recommend the work as a technically sound contribution? If not, can further revisions be made to make the work technically sound?

Probably - with minor revisions

PEER REVIEWER COMMENTS:

GENERAL COMMENTS: In general, the authors have graciously received and responded to feedback. However, since peer review is often an iterative process, certain revisions and additional text warrant further clarifications and editing, as reflected below.

REQUESTED REVISIONS:

See comments below.

ADDITIONAL REQUESTS/SUGGESTIONS:

Dear Author(s),

Thank you for your gracious acceptance and response to constructive feedback. Since peer review is often an iterative process, additional items have now emerged that warrant further clarification and editing.

1. Abstract
   a. Page 1, line 20: To better reflect the title of this manuscript, consider changing "emotional problems," which is pejorative, to "emotional experiences."

   b. Page 2, line 28, and throughout: Since feelings are inherently subjective, the phrase, "gaining the ability to feel things objectively" is confusing and problematic. For clarity and consistency, please re-examine and revise this element. The paper often refers to regulating emotions. Other options may include gaining objectivity, insight, or awareness.

   c. Page 2, line 29: Rather than "accepting things gracefully," which is a bit awkward, and a demanding standard, perhaps, more simply and straight-forwardly, "an attitude of acceptance" suffices, and better reflects AA literature.

2. Background
a. Page 3, line 49: It appears that the use of the word, "alcoholism" remains a challenge throughout this manuscript. This is generally not considered to be an appropriate clinical term, either by DSM-5 or ICD-10 standards, and whenever the authors are speaking, from a clinical perspective, alternatives such as alcohol use, alcohol misuse, alcohol use disorder ought to be implied. In contrast, in the context of AA, most recovered individuals refer to themselves as alcoholics, and this terminology ought to be used then, e.g., when directly referring to AA, and later in the paper, when quoting participants. One option may be to add a footnote on the first page of the manuscript, to explain the author's (authors') differential use of these terms throughout the article.

b. Page 4, line 72: Change "their" to "his or her" drinking problem, to match the subject, individual.

c. Page 4, line 73: Periods (and commas) should be inside quotation marks.


e. Page 4, lines 86, 91, and 96: The repeated use of the phrase, "information-giving" does not seem to capture the action, and is a bit awkward.

f. Page 5, line 92: "...first step meeting" needs to be hyphenated as first step-meeting, to avoid potential confusion with first-step meeting.

g. Page 5, line 93: Insert "in" between AA and Japan.

h. Page 5, line 94: "all over" is too casual. Replace with "across."

i. Page 5, line 100: Again, a new paragraph is required here.


k. Page 5, line 102: May wish to specify, "in Japan," since there is a rich literature regarding these aspects elsewhere.

l. Page 5, line 107 and throughout: The subtitle of the title page of the text, "Alcoholics Anonymous," refers to "How Many Thousands of Men and Women Have Recovered from Alcoholism." Some stalwart AA members find the term "recovering" to be inaccurate and, in some cases, irritating, or even offensive.

m. Page 5, line 112: Other studies have interviewed recovered members of AA. Change "one of the few" to "one of relatively few."

n. Page 5, line 113: Since you are referring specifically to "AA members," use this term rather than "alcoholics" here.
3. Methods

a. Page 6, line 120: The more detailed description of the study design belongs here (see 3.g. below)

b. Page 6, line 124: Unless the journal requires otherwise, it seems that ethical considerations belongs between study design and participants.

c. Page 6, line 126: Why were women excluded from this study? This is a serious issue, one that would preclude publication in some journals, and ought to be addressed here and/or as a limitation in the discussion section.

d. Page 6, line 126: Screening tools do not have the capacity to "diagnose," which is a formal clinical process.

e. Page 6, line 132-135: The descriptive statistics used here do not fit the conventions of research. Age should be reported as mean and range values.

f. Page 6, line 134: Similarly, length of sobriety should be in years, not months.

g. Page 6, line 136: It appears that the use of a structured or semi-structured interview was part of the study design, and might better belong in that section (page 6, line 120), followed by the rationale. The actual questions used ought to be made available, perhaps as an appendix.

h. Page 7, line 150: Since this is the first mention of the list, the table should be referred to here.

i. Page 7, line 158: Did you mean "an existing study that employed a similar method"?

j. Page 8, line 166: Commas should bracket the name, and then subsequent commas in that sentence should be eliminated.

k. Page 8, lines 168-169: This verbiage (chaotic data, eliminates the self) is cryptic, and very unclear. If these are terms that Kawakita used, then they need to be placed in quotes, and explained.

l. Page 8, line 179: Eliminate the word, "qualitatively."

m. Page 9, line 200: Eliminate the words, "continuously."

4. Results

a. Page 10, line 216: Eliminate the word, "verbatim."
b. Page 10, line 222: Replace "a" with "as."

c. Page 10, line 224: The participants had already achieved sobriety. Perhaps they were working toward continued sobriety? Also, replace "endless" with "iterative."

d. Page 11, lines 246-248: This sentence is unclear.

e. Page 12, line 273 and elsewhere: The use of "alcohol use disorder" seems inauthentic here. Since these are direct quotes from participants, it is assumed that the term "alcoholism" better applies.

f. Page 12, line 281: Place a comma after "contrary."

g. Page 12, line 282: To eliminate the problem with possessives, change "their" to "the."

h. Page 14, line 328: Rather than launching directly into quotes, it seems that the term, "contradictory self," requires some explanation.

i. Page 15, line 345: Rather than "much do," which sounds awkward, consider, "due, in large part, to..."

j. Page 15, line 349: Since their perceptions may have been faulty, may wish to say, "because they felt they have never been acknowledged by others (e.g., their parents)"

5. Discussion

a. Page 16, line 372: As noted earlier, especially here, since the context is individuals in AA, the term "alcoholism" does apply, and is appropriate.

b. Page 16, lines 377-378: As noted earlier, the terms for items 1 and 2 warrant revision and consistent application throughout.

c. Page 17, line 381: Change "spiritual, disciplined" to "disciplined, spiritual"

d. Page 17, line 385: Change "enraptured" to "enamored"

e. Page 17, line 393: Change "sponsors at AA" to "sponsors in AA"

f. Page 17, line 398: Change "participants regulated" to "participants strove to regulate"

g. Page 18, lines 409-413: This is a long, convoluted, and unclear sentence.

h. Page 18, line 416: Change "among Japanese" to "among some Japanese" AA members

i. Page 18, line 423: Most, if not all, AA historians would agree that AA was born in Akron, not New York, after Dr. Bob re-established his sobriety, hence the date of of June 10, 1935. Delete "program" here, which took time to develop.
j. Page 19, line 432: Again, the term, "alcoholism" is more appropriate here.

k. Page 19, line 436: Use "addiction professionals"

l. Page 19, line 444: Change "the effort of" to "the challenge to"

m. Page 20, line 20: Since this is not a common term, even among clinicians, offer a brief definition for alexithymia.

n. Page 20, line 458: Again the word alcoholism is better here, since you are directly referring to AA.

o. Page 20, line 459: A discussion section usually includes limitations--which virtually every study has, including this one--followed by a brief section on how the current study contributes to the literature.

6. Conclusions: These is virtually nothing in the data, as presented, to warrant these conclusions as they relate to health care professionals in general, and nursing in particular. If the author(s) wishes/wish to make this point, then it belongs at the end of the discussion section. Conclusions should relate only to findings derived directly from the study.

Are the methods appropriate and well described?
If not, please specify what is required in your comments to the authors.

No

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

No

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

Yes

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.

I am able to assess the statistics

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