

ADVENTURE THERAPY IN THERAPEUTIC COMMUNITY FIDES – QUANTITATIVE OUTCOMES OF THE RESEARCH

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The report represents quantitative outcomes from a grant project of the students of Ostrava University. The project took place in the years 2015 and 2016 and analysed 168 clients' statements.

Abstract: The report represents quantitative outcomes from a research focuses on the analysis of the opinions of the clients of therapeutic community of the adventure therapy. Among the most significant the clients described getting new experience, increasing the responsibility for themselves and their decisions, improving the cooperation abilities, the possibility to solve problems in new ways. Following the activities they were thinking about the values in life, they realized greater resistance to stress and they said this experience will be useful after the treatment ends. Based on the verification of the set hypotheses four were confirmed which described differences in client's opinions of their self-respect development, the ability to cooperate, independence and the ability to consider life values, the verification took place during the first and third phase of the treatment.

Keywords: adventure therapy, therapeutic community, client of therapeutic community, drug addiction, opinions analysis

Introduction

Most people need transcendent experience. For some it is only reality escape, for others it is a need to view life from other than mundane perspectives. People who we worked with during our two-year research study (student grant project of the Pedagogical Faculty of the Ostrava University) are among those who were repeatedly looking for this kind of experience in drug use. Their hobby gradually became an addiction. One possibility how these people can become free and get rid of the addiction is treatment in a therapeutic community.

There are a number of methods and means how to support clients in their treatment and prepare them for life out of the closed community. One possibility is the adventure therapy which our research focuses on.

Ten students of MA social pedagogy and two academic workers participated in this research. It took place in Therapeutic Community Fides where both the clients and workers were present. The design of the research was mixed, its goal was to find out the clients' opinions of the adventure therapy. One part of the project – the quantitative analysis of the clients' opinions will be presented in this article.

1 Research problem

The preparation and realization of the adventure therapy (in the therapeutic communities the expression "stress activity" is sometimes used) is demanding in both special personal requirements (both mental and physical) and safety ensuring during these activities. Some therapeutic communities consider adding these activities into their programmes. The analysis of the opinions of clients who take part in these activities may be the beginning of deeper observation of the therapy benefits. From the point of view of subjective individual perception of a client in therapeutic community a qualitative research was realized which aimed at deeper understanding of the clients' experience. Quantitative research was focused on the benefits of the adventure therapy and the verification of their significance. The research of the efficiency and use of the adventure therapy in the drug addicts' re-socialization is lacking in the Czech Republic. The only exception is the research of Romaněnko (2012), Rataj's chapter (In Nevšimal at al, 2007) focused on stress activities in therapeutic communities in the Czech Republic or the texts of Kirchner and Hártl (2011). As opposed to abroad where there is a lot of research focused on the adventure therapy used in

working with the risk groups including the drug addicts (e.g. Bandoroff, 1989; Crisp, 1998; Paxton, Mc Avoy, 2000; Autry, 2001; Caulkins et al, 2006; Tucker, Norton, 2012; Gass, Gillis, Russell, 2012; Norton et al, 2014; Revell, Duncan, Cooper, 2014; Bowen, Neil, Crisp, 2016).

1.1 The research goal, research questions

The goal of the research was to get the opinions of the clients of the therapeutic community Fides on the efficiency of the stress activities in particular phases of the treatment. In this article the quantitative part of the research is presented, two research questions were set:

Research question 1: What are the prevailing opinions of the clients of the Therapeutic community Fides Bílá Voda of the curative efficiency of the adventure activities shortly after their ending?

Research question 2: How do the opinions of the clients of the Therapeutic community Fides Bílá Voda (TK Fides) differ in individual treatment phases?

1.1 Basic concepts definition

Among basic concepts used in this research there are adventure therapy, therapeutic community and the opinions of a client. Adventure therapy is used mainly abroad. Therapeutic communities in the Czech Republic call these activities mentally and physically stressful activities. They are regarded to be the key elements of the adventure therapy. For the needs of the research we work with the stress activities definition in therapeutic community by RichteroVá at al (2015), the definition is as follows: „*Stress activities are part of the treatment process, they are psychically and physically demanding and they are realized in the form of several day long trips of touristic-sport-learning character.*” (Comp. Rataj M. In Nevšimal at al. 2007). These activities in TK Fides focus mostly on hiking, cycling, cross-ski running, water sport etc. Clients as well as responsible workers in any treatment phase take part in them.

Kirchner, Hátllová (2011) prefer using the term adventure therapy in the Czech environment. They describe it as a therapeutic school which emphasizes the experience in nature, it is both physically and psychically demanding and is connected with risk, danger and adventure. Romaněnková (2012), KelleroVá and Ješina (2013) also prefer using the term adventure therapy. The authors Kirchner and Hátllová (2011) or Svatoš and Lebeda (2006) work with this concept in experience pedagogy. Gass (2012) works with the use of adventure therapy abroad and describes it as adventure activities which are prescribed to activate the moving of clients on affective, behavioural and cognitive level. There are synonyms to adventure therapy coming up abroad too, mainly within the cultural and environmental context. Still adventure therapy is used most frequently. Unlike in Australia, New Zealand, Canada and some parts of the USA, where „wilderness therapy is used”.

Therapeutic community (TK) can be defined according to Kratochvíl (1979) in two ways – in broader form of organization of the treated unit and in more narrow sense as an independent psychotherapeutic method. TK Fides located in Jeseník district in the village Bílá Voda represents the broader definition. TK Fides is a part of Mental Health Hospital Marianna Oranžská. It focuses on the treatment of the drug addicts (except the alcohol addicts) and is for clients over 18 years of age. Making the decision to start the treatment and life in this community is absolutely voluntary and is divided into three phases. The first phase – takes 4 weeks, the second phase 18-20 weeks and the third phase 16-18 weeks. TK Fides applies bio-psycho-socially spiritual approach in the addict care. It provides environment free of drugs and presents everyday reality with all its aspects. The goal of the treatment is drug abstinence, gaining view of

one's life, self acceptance, acceptance of the environment and total attitudes change in different aspects of life (Milby at al. In Johnson, 2010).

The research part of the work focuses on acquiring the clients' opinions. Drug addiction profoundly influences attitudes, values but also opinions of the addicts. Value orientation moves to a different level as opposed to the majority's. One of the goals of the therapy is to help clients to find new life priorities. As for the question what an opinion is and how to define it, there are considerable contradictions among the experts. Everybody agrees that it is not a synonym of attitude and that it must be kept distinct. An opinion in a certain way displays attitude mostly in verbalized expression. Unlike attitude it is less stable and is affected by number of factors. There are disagreements in the question of the opinion's components. Some authors understand opinion as neutral, subjective claim that the person regards as truthful. According to this definition, opinion only has one part and that is cognitive. When the clients' opinions were analysed, it proved they were formulated subjectively, they are convinced about their truthfulness, they have some information about the object and moreover evaluation and emotions manifestation was projected. This research prefers the definition of an opinion described in Velký sociologický slovník (1996), it says that opinion is composed of two parts – rational and emotional (Velký sociologický slovník, 1996; Hayesová, 1998).

2 Research methodology

The reality in quantitative research is rendered by means of the variables; the values of the variables are gained by measurement. The primary goal is to find how the variables are spread, what relationships there are among them and why (K. F. Punch, 2008, p.12). The advantages of quantitative research are clearness, brevity, systemic nature of the outcomes, accuracy (Chráska, 2011, p. 237). The philosophical base is new positivism and basic elements of empiricism (sense experience brings us to knowledge) and rationalism (the importance of logic thinking and indisputability of deductive thinking). There is objective reality that we can explore and is independent on our feelings and persuasions (Gavora, 2011, p. 37).

2.2 Research method

The key method of the quantitative part of the research was a questionnaire made of 41 entries. The first part of the questionnaire is made of the entries 1-21 which are about basic demographical data of the respondents. The second part of the questionnaire is made of the entries 23-40 which find out the respondents' opinions in defined areas after they take part in the adventure activity. E.g. entry 22 was focused on four areas; perceived activity, the feeling of self-realization, work success and feeling of personal comfort. The entry 41 was made for qualitative working of free answers of respondents. Their task was to give personal experience after adventure activity.

The validity and reliability of the questionnaire was found out in pre research. Content validity was consulted with experts from the field of addictology and direct work with clients in therapeutic community. After pre research some entries of the questionnaire were reformulated to be better understandable for the respondents. Reliability was checked by the Cronbach alfa in entries with scale answers. The value of Cronbach alfa after the first adventure activity was 0,889 (Pindáková, 2015). At the end of the data collection after 11 adventure activities it was 0,709. The questionnaire can be regarded reliable, most authors regard the values around 0,700 as appropriate reliability border (Evangelu, Neubauer, 2014, p.78).

2.3 Sample – research respondents

The research sample was made of the clients of the Therapeutic community Fides in Bílá Voda. They participate in the middle term or long term treatment of the substance addiction. The condition of their participation in the research project was their adventure therapy participation. It was realized by means of

adventure activities which are part of the treatment in the therapeutic community. The respondents were over 18 years of age, both men and women. Those who decided to participate signed the informed consent.

The measurement unit was not the respondent but their testimony after the adventure activity. 168 testimonies were analysed altogether from all the clients from different treatment phases which were collected during the two year research (2015 – 2016). Middle term treatment was represented by 23 written testimonies, long term treatment by 145 testimonies. The data about the testimonies spread throughout the treatment phases were also important; 31 testimonies were made by clients in the first phase of the treatment, 96 in the second and the longest phase and 41 came from the clients in the third outcome phase.

2.4 Data collection and their analysis

Data collection for statistical evaluation was made by questionnaire. The respondents got a questionnaire shortly following their adventure activity, they answered it and handed it in. During the hypothesis verification of the middle values of the clients in the first and third phase were compared. Working with the middle values is similar to working with the number of answers. Acceptance of an alternative hypothesis we understand as acceptance of the option when the middle value of the first phase testimonies of clients is lower than the middle value of the clients in the third phase. During the data preparation for the hypothesis evaluation it was necessary to verify whether their spread corresponds with natural spread or not. This was done by means of statistical test chi square. The questionnaire entries 23-25; 27-35 and 37-40 had unnatural data spread. Therefore U-test by Mann and Whitney was made to verify the hypothesis.

3 Results

In the following chapter the results and interpretation of the answers to research questions will be presented. Relative and absolute frequencies were used in the statistical processing. Mann's and Whitney's U-test were used to verify hypothesis.

3.1 Results and interpretation

The first research question was to find out the prevailing opinions of the clients of Therapeutic community Fides about the effect of the adventure therapy. Figure 1 shows the evaluation of the entries 23-39 in the questionnaire, which processed the clients' opinions after they finished an adventure activity. The answers well – rather well (or much – rather much) were included in the positive scale. In neutral answers clients did not choose any offered option. In negative scale worse – rather worse (little – rather little) the clients described the deterioration after they finished an adventure therapy.

Fig. 1 Prevailing opinions of clients of the effect of the adventure activities after their ending

n=168 entry	Opinions	Positive scale		Neutral		Negative scale	
		n_i	f_i	n_i	f_i	n_i	f_i
23	Overcoming limits	96	0,57	48	0,28	25	0,15
24	Self-confidence	106	0,63	57	0,34	5	0,03
25	Self-respect	11	0,66	55	0,33	2	0,01
26	Independence	116	0,69	50	0,3	2	0,01
27	Tolerance to differences	118	0,7	47	0,28	3	0,02
28	New experience	138	0,82	24	0,14	7	0,04
29	Responsibility	136	0,81	45	0,27	3	0,02
30	The ability of cooperation	136	0,81	29	0,17	3	0,02
31	New skills	116	0,69	37	0,22	15	0,09
32	Negativism management	97	0,58	59	0,35	12	0,07
33	New ways for solutions	124	0,74	37	0,22	7	0,04
34	Thinking about values	134	0,8	30	0,18	3	0,02
35	Feelings in the group	118	0,7	42	0,25	8	0,05
36	Communication skills	116	0,69	49	0,29	3	0,02
37	New experiences	146	0,87	19	0,11	3	0,02
38	Stress resistance	121	0,72	40	0,24	7	0,04
39	Use for future	123	0,73	34	0,2	12	0,07

Rem. n_i - expresses absolute frequency of the respondents answers after they finished the activity, f_i - expresses relative frequency.

By choosing the neutral part of scale (on average 25% answers), the respondents said they did not notice any change in the given field. 71% respondents on average expressed in the positive scale and described improvement shortly after the activity. 4% of respondents marked the negative scale. The entries where the respondents realized the most benefits are: getting new experience (82%), realizing bigger responsibility for themselves and their decisions (81%), improvement in the ability to cooperate with others (81%), the ability to solve things in new ways (74%). Adventure activities helped the clients in thinking about life values (80%). Gaining new experience was marked in 87% of total answers. More than 70% answers marked the greater stress resistance and the ability to use new experience in future, in life out of the community.

The second research question focused on the differences in clients' opinions during different phases. Hypotheses were made based on the specialized literature, the hypotheses were further verified. Four hypotheses proved to be possible to accept. They say that in four aspects of clients evaluation of adventure activities there is statistically significant difference among the respondents who find themselves in the first and third that is the last phase. The clients in the third phase evaluate better the development of self-respect, independence, the ability to cooperate with others and considering life values during the last adventure activity than the clients in the first phase. The differences between clients of the first and third phase in other areas did not reach the statistical significance.

The hypothesis H3 concerned about the self-respect evaluation: H3_A: The clients of the first phase of the treatment evaluate the change in their self-respect after the adventure activity differently from the clients in the third phase.

Data to verify this hypothesis were gained in the questionnaire entry 25. The data was processed through U-test of Mann and Whitney. The result was 0.023 and based on its comparison with the level of significance 0.05 it was possible to accept the alternative hypothesis and claim that the clients in the first phase evaluate their self-respect change after the last adventure activity differently from the clients of the third phase. It was possible to accept H3.

Hypothesis H4 focused on the respondents' independence after the adventure activity: H4_A: The clients who found themselves in the first phase of treatment evaluate their independence change after the last adventure activity differently from the clients in the third phase.

The data to verify the hypotheses are to be found in the questionnaire entry 26. The acquired data were processed again by means of the U test by Mann and Whitney with the result 0.005. When compared with the significance level 0.05 it was possible to accept the alternative hypothesis. We can say that the clients in the first phase are less optimistic as for their evaluation of their independence than the clients in the third phase and that means during the treatment the independence evaluation improves.

The hypotheses H3 and H4 base on the knowledge of Zášková (2004, p.36), who says that in the personality of a drug addict there are so called inadequate ambitions as for the individual's possibilities, drug gives the addict the feeling of inner strength, self-respect, and self-confidence which he in fact lacks. The Rataj's claims (in Nevšimal, 2007, p. 168) and Kudy (2007, p. 66) inspired us too. They make a link between the number of adventure activities and the treatment phase and the increasing ability for self-respect and adequate evaluation of person's possibilities. Out of these premises we considered that clients in higher level of treatment will better evaluate their self-respect and independence than clients in the lower phase.

Hypothesis H11 evaluated the cooperation after the adventure activity: H11_A: The clients who find themselves in the first phase of the treatment evaluate the change in the area of cooperation differently from the clients who find themselves in the third phase.

We evaluated this data processing the data acquired from the entry 30 of the questionnaire. The data were evaluated by U test with the result 0.080, which was compared with the significance level 0.05. Alternative hypothesis was rejected. It can be said though that among the data of the research groups there is difference which only approaches statistical significance. Therefore we compared it with the significance level 0.1 which is commonly used in science and for this it was possible to accept H11.

Hypothesis H11 comes from the claim of Kooyman (2004), who says that a drug addict's personality goes during the treatment through the process of realizing how people handle their emotions. The author calls this a process of new identity the part of which is also identification with community life. The ability to take responsibility in interpersonal relationships is developed. Another base for hypothesis is the claim of Rataj (in Nevšimal 2007, p. 167), who points out that psychically and physically demanding situations that arise during adventure activity lead clients of the Therapeutic community to cooperation and make them face their ability to be considerate and tolerant to others. The Guide of the stay at the Therapeutic Community Fides states that one of the main targets that a client should meet by the end of the stay client is to be able to communicate plainly and sincerely. These claims compiled a hypothesis - that the clients' cooperation should improve.

Hypothesis 20 was about the consideration of the respondents' life values: H20_A: The clients of the first phase evaluate their life values after the last adventure activity differently from the clients in the third phase.

The values for the hypothesis were gained from the 34 questionnaire entry. The U test which followed provided the result 0.080, which was compared with the level of significance 0.05. Although the difference approaches statistical significance even here it is not possible to accept alternative hypothesis for the significance level 0.05. Just like above mentioned we decided to compare with the significance level 0.1 and that way the hypothesis could be accepted.

Hypothesis 20 was based on the claims that the value system of the addicted person changes as well as their emotional bonds to the close people become obsolete. The drug addicted person neglects their hobbies, duties and other values and spends most of their time with themselves and their drug (Nešpor et al., 2011, p. 25). Rataj (in Nevšimal, 2007, p. 168) describes the adventure activity environment as space where one rocks the bottom in both physical and mental sense. This situation leads to the confrontation with the core of their personality without any hypocrisy. Based on these two premises we consider that the adventure activities are space where one thinks over their values and the longer in the treatment the more they consider this aspect.

3.2 Research limits

This research can be regarded to be the initial research in the field of exploring the adventure therapy in therapeutic communities for the addicted in the Czech Republic. There are a number of limits that must be taken into account. Although when setting the independent variables the authors searched in the specialized literature they observed only those opinions of the clients that can be influenced by many factors. Therefore it may be more of a tentative view of how the clients perceive their experience from the adventure therapy and not objective reality. To collect data a non-standardized questionnaire was used. Although it was a quantitative research where a basic sample (all the chosen clients of a therapeutic community who underwent adventure activities in 2015 and 2016), a generalization is not

possible because only one therapeutic community was involved in the research.

The statistical hypotheses' testing does not show the adventure therapy efficiency either. It only shows all the used methods and treatment means in the therapeutic community.

4 Discussion and conclusion

The presented results of the quantitative part of the research correspond with some research studies. Autry (2001) describes that her respondents - girls from 13 till 18 years with risk behaviour improved their trust after the adventure therapy and that is both self-confidence and trust in others in group. The girls showed greater level of responsibility for themselves and they joined team work more. Paxton and Mc Avoy (1999) studied social psychological advantages of adventure therapy. They found improvement with their respondents in the field of self perception, feeling of being part of the group, and greater responsibility. The Romaněnko research (2012) was focused on the adventure therapy benefits from the point of view of the therapists. Again we find similarities with our results mainly in the question of the use of experience after the therapy ends. (Romaněnková describes this as gaining stimuli for their future free time activities), better self-confidence, responsibility, self-respect, breaking their limits and improving the physical condition. The adventure therapy is realized in very different ways. Although all mentioned research fulfils the main definition, the length and activities differ largely.

The results of the quantitative part of the research show that clients after the adventure therapy in the therapeutic community are aware of their benefits. There are also statistically significant differences in the opinions of the clients of the first and third phase of the treatment. The clients of the first phase assess their self-respect, independence, the cooperation ability and thinking about the life values differently from the clients in the third phase who are about to finish their treatment and leave the community. These results show not only the benefit of the adventure therapy but the benefits of all the complex treatment in therapeutic communities which aims at both quitting the addiction and the inner personality setting change.

We consider the results of the research as initial mainly because of the limits of this research mentioned above. At this moment the realization of the ongoing research project was approved. It will work with standardized tests and their application before and after the adventure therapy in six therapeutic communities in the Czech Republic.

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