A Study of the Solution to Ease Substance Abuse and Depression Among Homeless Youth

The main goal of my research was to find an effective intervention that would help cease substance abuse and depression among homeless youth and help find ways to keep them in school. By doing this I could efficiently compare the different interventions and see which worked best. I then could share my knowledge on this topic to help educate other Social Workers. "A hypothesis is a tentative and testable prediction about how changes in one thing are expected to explain and be accompanied by changes in something else. A statement of something that ought to be observed in the real world if a theory is correct" (Rubin & Babbie, 2014). In my study I hypothesized that the Community Reinforcement Approach treatment will reduce substance abuse and depression in homeless youth better than the standard treatment at the drop-in center, referred to as treatment as usual. The reason I believe that this approach would be more successful is because it was more individualized than the TAU.

The homeless youth in CRA were asked questions to identify where they needed the most help, those in the TAU were not. CRA was also more organized. The workers helped find resources for the children, they gave them homework assignments to help maximize their potential, and basically helped them along the process. The members in TAU pretty much just received their food, shelter, and resources that they had to request themselves. This research has made it clear to me that drop in-centers do not really offer the help necessary to give these youth a brighter future. They just help by giving them the essentials they need until they are asked to leave the shelter. This does not educate these children on what it takes to have a prosperous life.

An independent variable is a variable whose values are not problematical in an analysis but are taken as simply given. An independent variable is presumed to cause or explain a dependent variable (Rubin & Babbie, 2014). In my research design the IV would be treatment conditions. Attributes are characteristics of a person or thing (Rubin & Babbie, 2014), in my study the attributes were CRA and TAU. Operationalization is extension of conceptualization process developing specific research procedures. Often will be missing from qualitative studies. The process of operationalizing is just simply how it is measured. In my study it was operationalized through a self-report survey. A self-report survey is simply a source of data in which research subjects all respond in writing to the same list of written questions or statements that has been devised to measure a particular construct (Rubin & Babbie, 2014). The level of measurement would be ordinal because it had questions like sometimes, always, and never. An ordinal measurement describes a variable whose attributes may be ranked ordered in some way (Rubin

---

& Babbie, 2014). A demographic questionnaire was distributed to each participant. It was designed to characterize and compare participants.

A dependent variable is a variable that is assumed to be depended on, or be caused by another (independent variable) (Rubin & Babbie, 2014). In my study there were two different dependent variables that applied they were substance abuse and depression. The attributes of substance abuse would be the different types of drugs such as marijuana, coke, and meth. Substance abuse was operationalized by self- report interview which was given to the youth by the mentors. Substance abuse was measured by the Form 90 and would be considered an ordinal measurement. The quantity and frequency of drug and alcohol use was measured by this. Frequency would be the data quantification. Frequency is defined as the description of the number of times the various attributes of a variable are observed in a sample. (Rubin & Babbie, 2014).

The attributes of depression would be the different classifications of depressions such as major depression, situational depression, atypical depression, postpartum depression. Depression was operationalized by self-report surveys. The depression was measured by Beck's depression inventory survey, this would be an example of a ration measurement. A ratio measure is a level of measurement that describes a variable whose attributes have all the qualities of nominal, ordinal, and interval measures and also are based on a true zero point (Rubin & Babbie, 2014).

In my study the unit of analysis was individuals. There are generally three types which include groups, individuals and social artifacts. The participants of this study were found in the only drop-in center for homeless youth in Albuquerque. There was several criteria they had to meet in order to be involved in this study. In order for them to be eligible for this particular study they had to be between the ages of 14-22, had lived in the metropolitan area for at least three months, with plans to remain for at least 6 months, met DSM-IV criteria for alcohol or other psychoactive substance use disorders, and meet criteria for homelessness as defined by Department of Homeland Security (DHS) as "a situation in which a youth has no place of shelter and is in need of services and shelter where he or she can receive supervision and care". There were no ethical considerations involved, the eligible participants signed the consent statement, which was approved by the local IRB.

My research design would be experimental because the youth were randomly assigned. This is the preferred method of research designs. Randomization is preferred for achieving compatibility in the experimental and control groups. The classical experiment tests the effect of an experiment stimulus on some dependent variable through the pretesting and post testing of the experimental and control group. The experimental group would be CRA and the control group would be TAU. Experimental research designs face problems of external validity. External

validity is extent to which we can generalize the findings of a study to settings and populations beyond the study conditions (Rubin & Babbie, 2014). Because of the strict criteria circumstances of my study, the findings may not reflect real life or generalize to other settings or populations beyond the condition. This also would be considered an obstructive observation. An obstructive observation is when the person (s) are aware that they are being observed. Depression and drug abuse are an example of a positive relationship, because when one goes up, the other follows. This study was a cross-sectional study because it occurred during a single point in time.