

The Evaluation of a Social Problem Solving Skills Program for ‘at risk’ students

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Research Purpose: This project considers the influence of social problem solving skills on student engagement and mental health. It is envisaged that students’ superior perceived adaptive problem solving skills, would be associated with better academic adjustment (i.e. student engagement and GPA) and fewer endorsement of mental health symptoms. In order to assess this a Social Problem Solving Program originally developed by D’Zurilla & Nezu (2007) will be implemented through USQ Student Services in S1 2009 for identified students at risk of developing mental health problems and/or dropping out of university. The individualised 8-week program will be delivered by USQ postgraduate students and formally evaluated. This project will evaluate the program.

Research Description: *Key variables*
Perceived problem solving ability
Student engagement
Academic adjustment
Mental health variables (e.g. stress, depression etc.)

This project will be the evaluation of the Social Problem Solving Skills Program as mentioned above. It is envisaged the student will have their data by early June 2009.

Particular theories that the student would expected to draw upon or theories that have been used to develop the proposed project

- Problem Solving theory (D’Zurill & Nezu)
- Problem and Emotion focused coping
- Positive and negative affect
- Organisational / Occupational Health and Stress
- Student Engagement

D’Zurilla, T. J., & Nezu, A. M. (2007). Problem solving therapy: a positive approach to clinical intervention (3rd ed). New York: Springer Publishing Company.

Participants: (a) *Approximately how many participants will be needed*
50

(b) *Where will they come from*
Recruited through USQ student services

(c) *The role that the student will play in recruitment*
Working with student services to recruit participants

Methodology: *Questionnaires that will be used*
Problem Solving Inventory
Student Engagement Questionnaire
Study and Well Being
Positive and Negative Affect Schedule
Student Stress Strain and Coping Scale (or Student Adaptation to College Questionnaire) (this is dependent on numbers and cost)

Data collection information (i.e., where data collection will occur)

Pre and post program evaluation

The role that the student will play in data collection

Recruiting participants, analysing data, input of data.

If data collection is going to be shared with another project

1. Yes – supervisors doctoral studies

Data Analysis:

Broad type of analysis (i.e., quantitative/qualitative)

Reliability

t-test

The level of analytical independence that you expect from the student

Medium

Brief overview of statistical/data tasks that the student will be expected to perform (e.g., data screening, checking psychometric properties of questionnaires, separating participants into particular groups based on questionnaire responses, etc)

Screening (i.e. Univariate and Multivariate outliers), reliability of questionnaires, t-test

Student friendliness:

Include in this section

(a) Whether project is suitable for external/on campus students.

Student needs to live in SEQ and be capable of travelling to Toowoomba on a regular basis.

(b) If the student needs to travel for data collection, make this clear in this section.

Yes this would be preferable – but isn't it required if they don't live in Toowoomba?. It will also give the student exposure to a clinical program.

(c) Supervision expectations (e.g., weekly, fortnightly, face-to-face, etc)

Weekly – face to face and phone. E-mail in between sessions will be strongly encouraged

Further reading:

Baker, S. R. (2003). A prospective longitudinal investigation of social problem-solving appraisals on adjustment to university, stress, health, and academic motivation and performance. *Personality and Individual Differences, 35*(3), 569-591.

Heppner, P. P., & Petersen, C. H. (1982). The development and implications of a personal problem-solving inventory. *Journal of Counseling Psychology, 29*(1), 66-75.

D'Zurilla, T. J., & Nezu, A. M. (2007). *Problem solving therapy: a positive approach to clinical intervention* (3rd ed). New York: Springer Publishing Company.

Expected research outcomes: APS Conference Presentation 2010

Entry level Journal Article?

Ethics:

- Ethical approval will be sought by supervisor; or
- Ethics approved – number

Resources:

- Project able to be funded within \$150 departmental limit
- Project not able to be funded within \$150 departmental limit – additional funds will come from:

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