



The influence of temperament on the pre-dispositions to and recovery from substance use disorders from the Tibb perspective

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INTRODUCTION

Temperament is one of the foundational concepts Tibb Practitioners use in their clinical approach as it is believed that people are unique and they should be diagnosed and treated as individuals. Tibb divides people into four distinct temperamental types according to Bhikha and Saville (2014:10), namely Sanguinous, Biliary, Melancholic and Phlegmatic.

Substance abuse is a relevant problem in the 21st century, especially with The Naked Truth (2012) statistics mentioning that 15% of the South African population has a drug problem while drug consumption in South Africa is twice the world norm.

Statistics like this along with the fact that the Ibn Sina Institute of Tibb has a memorandum of understanding in place with the Sultan Bahu Drug Rehabilitation Centre, lead to the question whether there is a link between temperament and pre-disposition to substance abuse.

Previous research conducted by Lee and Jung (2012) as well as Unseld *et al.* (2012) indicates that a link may exist between temperament and possible prediction of substance abuse. Gravotta (2012) furthermore states that "initiation, self-control, and relapse can be all very different experiences depending on personality features".

This lead to research being conducted at the Sultan Bahu Drug Rehabilitation Centre in Cape Town, supervised by the clinic administrator of the Tibb Medical Centres of the Ibn Sina Institute of Tibb.

AIM OF THE RESEARCH

The aim of the research was to determine whether there is a link between temperament and substance abuse.

SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

Determining the link between temperament and substance abuse will make it possible to understand who is more prone to addiction and will allow for guidance in treatment to improve recovery based on the temperamental theory.

RESEARCH OBJECTIVES

- Determining which temperamental type is more prone to addiction;
- Determining the prognosis of recovery from addiction in different temperamental types; and
- Determining whether incorporating Tibb principles in treatment will improve the recovery of patients.

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

Main research questions:

- Is there a link between temperament and pre-disposition to and recovery from substance abuse?

Sub-questions:

- Which temperamental type is more prone to addiction?
- Which temperamental type is more prone to relapse after rehabilitation?
- Will the recovery of patients be improved by incorporating Tibb toolsets in the treatment?

HYPOTHESES

1. There is a link between temperament and substance abuse.
2. Melancholics are more susceptible to addiction due to the quality of coldness as opposed to a Sanguinous individual.
3. Sanguinous individuals can be treated for addiction more successfully without relapsing as opposed to Melancholics.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Qualitative research was conducted in Cape Town within the three centres of the Sultan Bahu Drug Rehabilitation Centre located in Mitchells' Plain, Bonteheuwel and Hanover Park. Trained counsellors from the Sultan Bahu Drug Rehabilitation Centre conducted initial screening interviews with the clients entering their six-week programme during which the Tibb questionnaire (Annexure A) was completed by the counsellors after asking and observing the clients. The progress of these individuals were tracked throughout the programme and at the end they were once again interviewed and the same Tibb questionnaires were completed by the counsellors again in order to track the before and after results of temperament.

PARTICIPATION

227 first interview questionnaires were received of which 190 could be used and 40 second interview questionnaires were received of which 38 could be used.

LIMITATIONS OF THE RESEARCH

Numerous limitations to the research were observed of which the biggest limitation is identified as the lack of participation in the second interviews. A conscious effort was made to minimise limitations, but nothing could be done to increase the number of second interview participation.

FINDINGS AND CONCLUSION

The influence of temperament on the pre-disposition to and recovery from substance use disorders from the Tibb perspective have been investigated, but the findings were not as expected. The study had many limitations of which the most pressing was the fact that only 20% of participants of whom first interview questionnaires were completed, also completed second interview questionnaires.

There were 190 participants in the first interviews and of those only 38 (20%) took part in the second interviews. Many reasons for this can be given like proper tracking of participants were not done by Sultan Bahu or many of the participants did not complete the programme and dropped out. This is seen not only as a major limitation to the research, but also as a too small percentage of participants to make outright conclusions based on these findings which is seen as inconclusive.

When looking at the research questions the following observations can be made.

Is there a link between temperament and pre-disposition to and recovery from substance abuse?

No clear link between temperament and pre-disposition to substance abuse could be found and it rather seems that regardless of temperament, people get involved in using substances due to circumstances they find themselves in with their friends and peer pressure being the major cause.

Heroin appears to be the substance of choice amongst all the temperament types.

No definite link between temperament and recovery from substance abuse could be found and it seems like people recover better when getting help from a programme instead of doing it on their own. Recovery does not seem to be dependent on temperament, but rather on the assistance from others regardless of temperament.

Which temperamental type is more prone to addiction?

No definite answer to this question could be found in the research and it seems that regardless of temperament, it is more external circumstances, such as peer pressure, socio-environmental circumstance etc. that lead people into substance abuse.

Which temperamental type is more prone to relapse after rehabilitation?

The dominant Phlegmatic temperament appears to be the ones relapsing sooner than people of other temperaments which might be due to their nature of being introverts and instead of talking about their problems, they would rather just start using substances again.

On the other hand, the Melancholic temperament (dominant and sub-dominant) has the tendency to stay free from substances for longer periods before relapsing, which might be due to their nature of overthinking everything and once they made up their minds that substance abuse is not beneficial for them and they receive the necessary help to overcome it, they tend to follow through with the decision.

Will the recovery of patients be improved by incorporating Tibb in the treatment?

Whilst no clear link between temperament and substance abuse could be established, the importance of people knowing their temperament as well as the role of lifestyle factors could play, assist in dealing with drug addiction. Some participants did show interest in the handouts referring to temperamental evaluation. It therefore stands to reason that being aware of a person's temperament will enable people to understand themselves better and may empower them in dealing more effectively with addiction as will information about the Tibb six lifestyle factors, namely: Air and breathing; Food and drink; Sleep and wakefulness; Movement and rest (exercise); Emotions; and Digestion and elimination.

Healthy living can contribute positively in overcoming the use of substances by increasing wellness and getting in a healthy living routine again that will assist in breaking the bad routine they have fallen into. This can be appreciated since the way of breaking a bad habit is to replace it with a good one and what better one than living a holistic, healthy lifestyle.

When looking at the hypotheses, it could unfortunately not be proven.

Hypothesis 1: There is a link between temperament and substance abuse:

No clear link between temperament and substance abuse could be established.

Hypothesis 2: Melancholics are more susceptible to addiction due to the quality of coldness as opposed to a Sanguinous individual:

This hypothesis could not be proven due to no clear link that could be established between temperament and substance abuse.

Hypothesis 3: Sanguinous individuals can be treated for addiction more successfully without relapsing as opposed to Melancholics:

This hypothesis seems to be incorrect as the research indicated that Melancholics lasted for the longest period of time without using substances before relapsing.

It is therefore concluded that although no clear link between temperament and substance abuse could be established, it might be due to a too small participation in the second interview questionnaires which resulted in no clear findings to answer the specific research questions or satisfying the research objectives.

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