



Substance Use Disorder and Future Life Prospective

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An important topic in my researches activates regards the study processes of career construction and future life design in individuals with Substance Use Disorders. My interest in addictions fields has been with me throughout my university course, and it is still with me in my future life designing as a young researcher. This interest linked to the place I come from, a small town where it is straightforward to go into contact with different addictive substances and, at the same time, challenging to find interventions for prevention and treatment. As I approached the career and professional planning issues in the last year of a university, I asked me if and what role career counseling could play to ensure a better present and future quality of life for people with SUD. With great surprise, I realized that the studies on these issues were very few.

The few studies found showed as people with SUD that experienced employment and social inclusion are more likely to continue in therapy, have greater therapeutic success, experience fewer relapses (Platt, 1995; Richardson, Wood, Montaner, & Kerr, 2012; Shepard & Reif, 2004) and experience higher levels of life satisfaction (Foster, Marshall, & Peters, 2000). However, other studies showed as unfortunately, to have a SUD puts people at high risk for not being able to plan for their own future life, thus exacerbating difficulties in obtaining employment or being socially included. People with SUD experience numerous barriers in their next life planning. They encounter obstacles at the personal or individual level, such as a lack of work experience, underdeveloped career goals, limited self-esteem, limited problem-solving skills, low levels of social skills, and the tendency to make non-adaptive decisions (Platt, 1995; Richardson et al., 2012; Sgaramella et al., 2015). However, they also experience barriers at the therapeutic program level, often related to the rigidity of treatment regimens (Richardson et al., 2012). Problems in the labor market resulting from economic crises experienced by the general public can introduce additional barriers, as can societal prejudices against people with SUD (Earnshaw, Smith, Chaudoir, Amico, & Copenhaver, 2013; Graham, 2006). The significant number of barriers and challenges that people with SUD experience when planning and trying to design a satisfying future life underlines the relevance of vocational designing with people with SUD (Shepard & Reif, 2004).

For these reasons and based on the Life Design paradigm, in my researches, I investigated the role of career adaptability and positive dimensions, such as self-determination and courage, on life satisfaction in adults with SUD.

In one of my study, that I have submitted for this Award, for instance, attention was focused on career adaptability and self-determination and their relationship with life satisfaction in individuals with SUD. Study findings suggested that career adaptability predict self-determined behavior both in choices concerning everyday life and leisure time and in options concerning future personal construction, leading to increased levels of life satisfaction. Instead, in other studies, I had, for example, focused my attention on the analysis of perceived courage and courage stories of people with SUD. These studies showed that courage was a predictor of the satisfaction on the life of people with SUD and that, in particular, psychological courage, was an essential resource for people with SUD to face all challenges related to addiction treatment and professional and personal design after treatment.

From a theoretical perspective, these studies contribute to extend results previously described by Life design approach and to generalize them to people with SUD, who have not much considered in past studies. Following this approach, these results showed that career adaptability resources, self-determination, and courage could also represent for people with SUD a set of resources necessary to be able to invest in life designing their future. From an applied point of view, the results obtained in these studies provide useful information to plan interventions to increase life satisfaction and core ability for designing future in people with SUD.

Let me conclude by thanking ESVD executive board for giving me this Award. Receiving this Award filled me with joy and pride. This Award is, for me, a big incentive to continue with these studies.