

INS Abstract

Homeless Men Living in Transitional Housing: The BrainWise Curriculum and Improvements in Executive Functions and Coping Self-Efficacy

Marilyn Welsh, Pat Gorman Barry, Amanda Jacobs, & Lindsay Beddes

The goal was to examine the effectiveness of a critical thinking skills curriculum, BrainWise, in terms of executive function (EF), coping self-efficacy, and problem solving as reported by homeless single adult males living in transitional housing.

The Treatment Group receiving BrainWise (N = 210) included men living at a transitional housing facility (diverse in age, ethnicity, and education). A smaller Control Group of men (N = 61) living in transitional housing (demographically similar) did not receive the BrainWise curriculum. Participants were administered the pretests and posttests of the following self-reports: 1) Behavior Rating Inventory of Executive Functions for Adults (BRIEF), Wasik Problem-Solving Rating Scale (WPRS), Coping Self-Efficacy (CSE), and BrainWise Knowledge Survey (BKS; survey of critical thinking skills taught in the program).

The four measures were in the acceptable range of reliability (internal consistency) at both the pretest and the posttest and showed adequate test-retest stability. Scores on the measures intercorrelated significantly and in the expected direction; e.g., problems with executive functions on the BRIEF predicted lower skills in BrainWise knowledge, problem solving, and coping self-efficacy. Examining the groups separately due to large sample size difference, dependent t-tests demonstrated significant Pretest to Posttest changes on ALL measures in Treatment Group (N=108) with the exception of the WPRS. In contrast, in Control Group (N=37), there were significant improvements in fewer BRIEF subscales, no changes in BKS, and CSE, and a significant decrease in WPSS.

The self-report measures were reliable in this very vulnerable population. Importantly, adding BrainWise to a slate of education programs yielded significant improvements in BrainWise knowledge, coping self-efficacy, and all subscales of the BRIEF executive function measure, as compared to improvements in only a small set of EF skills in the Control Group.

Objectives: Method: Results: Conclusions: