

Risk-Taking as a Potential Mediator of the Relationship Between Treatment Participation and Recidivism for People in Court-Mandated Substance Use Treatment

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Introduction

- Participating in substance use treatment has been linked to positive outcomes for individuals released from jail or prison (Belenko et al., 2004; Evans et al. 2012).
- Risk-taking is associated with an increased likelihood of continuing substance use post-release, failure to initiate community-based services, and recidivism (Rieser et al., 2019; Taylor et al., 2013; Vazsonyi & Ksinan., 2017).
- The purpose of the current study was to investigate the mediating role risk-taking had in explaining the relationship between engagement in substance use treatment and recidivism.
- This study extends the existing literature on the importance of treatment participation for individuals with substance use disorders involved with the justice system.

Method and Procedure

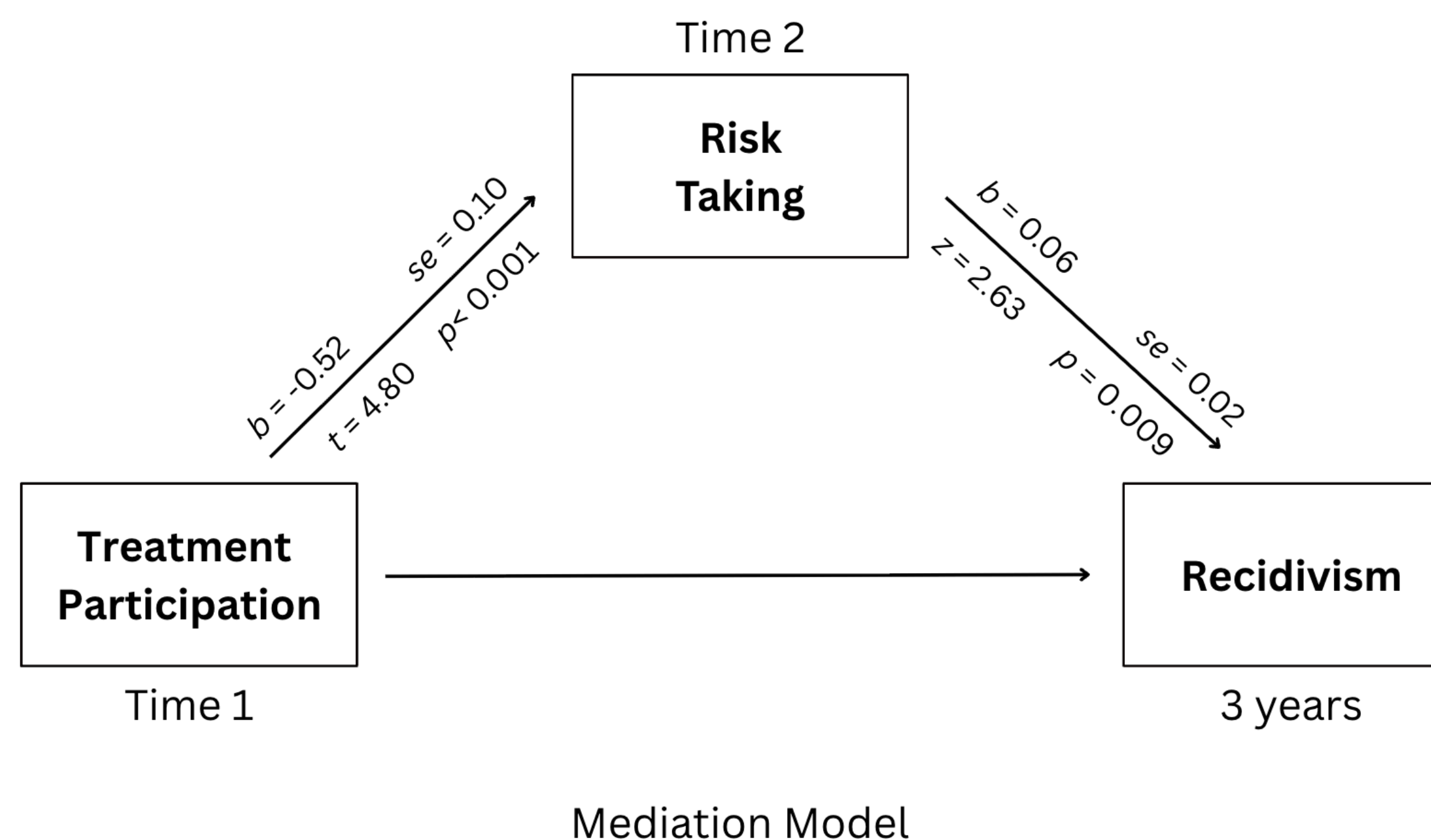
Sample

- The sample consisted of 455 individuals who were permanent residents at a correctional facility throughout their 6- to 12-month substance use treatment program.
- Participants were recruited from a correctional facility located in the southern United States.

Measures

- Demographics included participants' age, assigned sex at birth, race/ethnicity, criminal history, and duration in treatment.
- The TCU Treatment Engagement Form assessed treatment engagement, including treatment participation, which was examined as the primary outcome variable. This measure uses a 5-point Likert scale and was administered at the start of treatment.
- Recidivism was measured as any rearrest occurring 3 years following treatment. Data were gathered from public records, and was recorded dichotomously (No = 0 vs. Yes = 1).
- Risk taking was measured using TCU Social Functioning Form which includes a sub scale specifically measuring risk taking.

Figure 1 - Mediation Model of Treatment Participation, Risk Taking, and Recidivism



Results

Treatment Participation and Risk-Taking

- Treatment participation was associated with lower levels of risk-taking ($b = -0.52$, $se = 0.10$, $t = 4.80$, $p < .001$).
- For every one-unit increase in treatment participation, there was a -0.52 unit decrease in risk taking.

Risk-Taking and Recidivism

- By itself, risk-taking was associated with a higher chance of recidivism ($b = 0.06$).
- Together, the indirect effect of treatment participation on recidivism through risk taking was negative (-0.07, -0.01)

Mediation Model

- Risk-taking acts as a mediator between treatment participation and recidivism.

Discussion

Findings

- Increases in treatment participation was associated with a decreases in risk-taking.
- A reduction in risk-taking was associated with a lower rate of recidivism in the three years following release.
- Furthermore, treatment participation was associated with less risk-taking, which in turn was associated with lower rates of recidivism.
- These results suggest that risk-taking mediated the relationship between treatment participation and recidivism following release.

Limitations

- Recidivism was used as the primary outcome; however, it could be bias due to public records limiting data to Texas and only including arrests.
- While statistical significance was observed, the effect sizes for those associations reported were relatively small.
- The data in this study represents a convenience sample collected from a correctional facility in the southern United States. These results should be replicated and extended to further elucidate risk-takings impact on both short- and long-term post-release outcomes.

Future Directions

- There is potential to study recidivism closer to date of release such as at one year.
- Future studies should consider the impact of other factors in recidivism such as post-release support systems and employment.
- This study may inform researchers and clinicians that justice treatment programs should continue to focus on reducing risk-taking and impulsive behaviors.

References

A big thank you to Dr. Thomas Sease for providing guidance for me during this study!

