



Personality-Targeted Intervention Effects on Pandemic Distress and Coping Drinking in Undergraduates:

A pilot study of UniVenture

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ABSTRACT The COVID-19 pandemic led to marked emotional distress for many undergraduates. Effective interventions that are accessible during lockdown are needed. Personality-targeted interventions are associated with reductions in distress pre-pandemic (Conrod, 2016). This pilot examined whether delivery of UniVenture (a personality-targeted intervention for undergraduates) would be associated with reductions in general anxiety and/or COVID-specific distress when delivered remotely during the pandemic. Ninety-one undergraduates with elevations on the Substance Use Risk Profile Scale were recruited from five universities. Participants were delivered a personality-specific group-based intervention over two facilitated, distance-delivered sessions involving goal-setting and coping skills training. Pre-intervention and one-month post-intervention, participants completed the Generalized Anxiety Disorder-7 and subscales of the COVID Stress Scales-Brief (Taylor et al., 2020). A set of 4(group)*2(time) repeated measures ANOVAs with completers (85.7% retention) showed pre- to post-intervention reductions for general anxiety and COVID-specific danger/contamination concerns, and a group*time interaction for COVID-specific reassurance-seeking. Supplementary dependent-sample t-tests in each personality group revealed pre- to post-intervention reductions in: general anxiety and COVID-specific economic worries for the anxiety-sensitives; COVID-specific reassurance-seeking for the hopeless; and COVID-specific danger/contamination concerns for the sensation-seekers. Findings largely replicated in intent to treat analyses using multilevel models. Results suggest promise for UniVenture as an accessible intervention to help at-risk undergraduates manage distress during a global pandemic.

OBJECTIVE To examine if our UniVenture intervention has effects on three COVID-relevant outcomes during COVID-19 pandemic

1. COVID-Specific Distress (Brief CSS [Taylor et al., 2020])
2. General Distress (PHQ-9 [Kroenke et al., 2001]; GAD-7 [Spitzer et al., 2006])
3. Coping Motivated Drinking (BAMM; Bartel et al., in press)

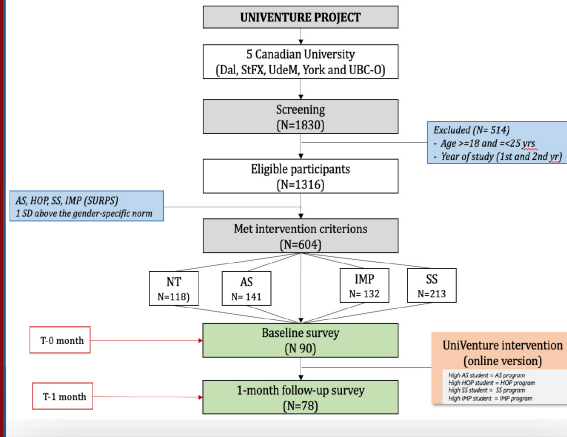
METHODS AND MATERIALS

- Before-after (pre-post) study [Pre (N = 90); Post (N = 78)]; pre-intervention and 1 month after intervention completion
- University undergrads 1st and 2nd year with age between 18 – 25 yrs
- Pre-post survey carried out online using REDCap - a web-based survey tool.
- UniVenture program – a targeted intervention for 4 personality risk groups (hopeless [HOP], anxiety sensitive [AS], impulsive [IMP], and sensation seeker [SS]); motivational enhancement and skills training; 2 online group sessions- a week apart [Feb- April 2021].

Five study sites:



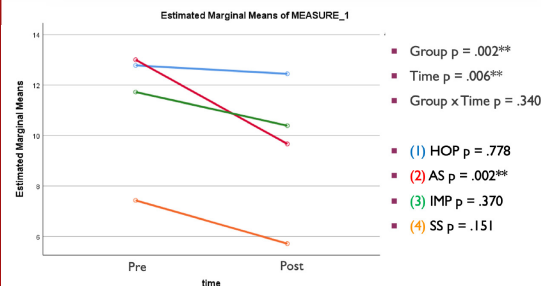
STUDY FLOWCHART



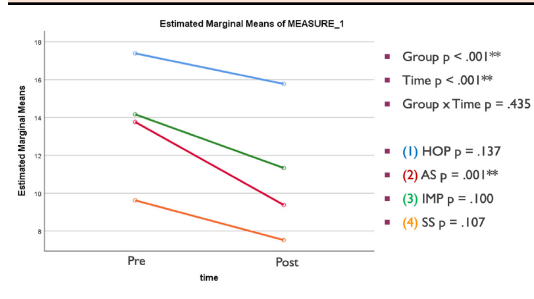
ANALYSIS

- Analyses performed on the pilot participants (N = 90) retained at follow up (N = 78)
 - HOP (n = 18)
 - AS (n = 21)
 - IMP (n = 18)
 - SS (n = 21)
- 4 x 2 ANOVAs with repeated measures (Note: Likely underpowered for detecting interactions)
- A priori planned comparisons (Pre to post comparisons for each personality group separately)
- Replication with multilevel models (MLM)

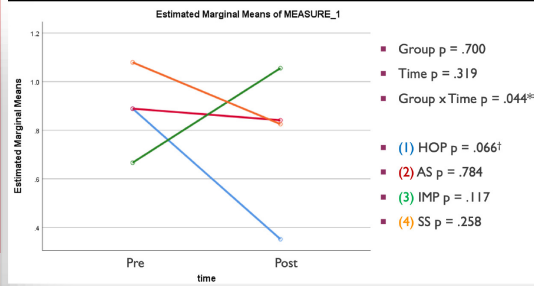
General Anxiety (GAD-7; Spitzer et al., 2006)



General depression (PHQ-9; Kroenke et al., 2001)



COVID-19 distress: reassurance seeking (CSS-B; Taylor et al., 2020)



SUMMARY

- Overall, from pre to post, significant decreases in general anxiety, general depression, and COVID-specific danger and contamination fears (and in covid-specific xenophobia in MLM)
- Also, some expected personality-specific effects
 - AS showed decrease in general anxiety, general depression, and COVID-specific socioeconomic worries
 - HOP showed decreases in reassurance seeking and coping-depression drinking
- Additionally, an unexpected personality-specific effect
 - SS showed decrease in danger and contamination fears (not replicated in MLM)
- Online personality targeted intervention UniVenture shows promise in reducing pandemic distress (both COVID-19 specific and general), particularly for AS and HOP students
- RCT is indicated next step; currently taking place through UniVenture [www.univentureproject.org]

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

