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## Experiential avoidance and emotional dysregulation as therapeutic dimensions in alcohol use disorder treatment: Findings based on three months dialectical behavior therapy skills training

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**Statement of the Problem:** It is shown that how Experiential Avoidance (EA) plays a role in several psychopathological disorders, such as substance use disorders. Additionally, EA seems to be related to Emotional Dysregulation (ED), which is implicated in alcohol and substances use. Dialectical Behavior Therapy (DBT) Skills Training (ST) showed promising results in treating several clinical conditions characterized by problematic behaviors related to ED, including Alcohol Use Disorder (AUD). Consistent with the empirical research, this study aims to evaluate the improvement of EA and alcohol-related dimensions of ED (ARD-ED) during 3-month DBT-ST program. Further, we tested the mediating role of EA between ED and treatment outcomes.

**Methodology & Theoretical Orientation:** We proposed an observational study including 110 AUD patients consecutively admitted to the treatment. We administered AAQ-II (EA measure), DERS (ED measure) and SPQ alcohol subscale (alcohol addiction severity [AAS] measure) at the beginning and at the end of treatment. Abstinence maintenance (consecutive days of abstinence [CDA]) was assessed by random weekly urinal toxicological screening. Data analysis was based on dependent t-test with a covariate (baseline level for each dimension), linear regression and mediational analysis based on computation of Sobel test for indirect effect (using bootstrap procedures).

**Findings:** 86 patients concluded the program. EA, ARD-ED and AAS significantly improved during the program, independently of baseline levels. We demonstrated significant associations between EA, ARD-ED and AAS at the beginning and at the end of treatment. The improvement in EA partially mediated the relationship existing between pre-post change in DERS strategies/impulse levels and improvement of AAS during the treatment. Baseline levels of EA predicted the number of CDA at the end of treatment.

**Significance:** This is the first study which shows how DBT-ST might be effective in reducing EA levels in AUD patients. EA and ED might be considered relevant therapeutic dimensions in AUD treatment.

### Biography

Marco Cavicchioli has expertise in "Study and evaluation of psychotherapeutic processes". Particularly, his interests are related to the explanation of underlying processes implicated in Dialectical Behavior Therapy (DBT) efficacy. In this context, he is studying the role of some dimensions strictly associated with DBT model, such as emotional dysregulation and mindfulness, as well as other aspects not primary implicated in DBT, such as experiential avoidance, motivation for change and group dynamics. Eventually, these fields of study are leading him in evaluating the efficacy of DBT in other clinical setting, especially in substance use disorders treatment.

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