Empowerment theorists are in some agreement that measuring empowerment is challenging.*
- Empowerment is a broad construct.
- Definitions should merely be a guide.
- Multilevel, interdependent construct.
- Empowerment measures should differentiate between a process and an outcome.
- Empowerment is context specific.


Measurement Challenges

Empowerment Theory

- What is empowerment?
  - The process by which people, organizations and communities gain mastery over their lives (Rappaport, 1984).

Psychological Empowerment (Zimmerman, 1995):
- Intrapersonal
- Interactional
- Behavioral

Study Overview

- Test a modified measure of empowerment among women in recovery from substance use.
  - 296 participants, all were women.
  - Average age was 39.31 years (SD = 10.28)
  - Caucasian (67.9%; 195) and African American (24.4%; 70).
  - Median length of time in recovery from substance use of 12 months (M = 23.69, SD = 31.94).
- Participants completed survey by mail and online and were entered into a raffle for their participation.

Analyses

- Exploratory Factor Analysis
  - Three factor model explained a total of 46.91% of the variance
    - Factor 1 (12 items) accounting for 28.73% (Eigenvalue = 5.75);
    - Factor 2 (4 items) accounting for 11.21% (Eigenvalue = 2.24)
    - Factor 3 accounting for 6.97% (Eigenvalue = 1.39) of the variance.
Results

- Factor 1: Self perception (12 items)
  - Perceived power and competence, autonomy, self-nurturance, assertiveness, cultural awareness, personal strength, leadership

- Factor 2: Participation (4 items)
  - Helping behavior, participation in community activities

- Factor 3: Resource Knowledge (4 items)
  - Awareness of community resources

Discussion

- Factor structure consistent with Psychological Empowerment framework (Zimmerman, 1995).

- Method Effect
  - Empowerment ≠ Negatively worded items.
  - Similar finding with Socio Political Control Scale (Peterson, et al., 2006).

- Qualitative vs. Quantitative
  - Questions developed based on qualitative research.
  - Two-step approach
    - Qualitative → Quantitative

Future Directions

- Further testing of Women in Recovery Empowerment Scale (Wires) with other groups of women.

- Examine context-specific factors of empowerment.

- Multilevel measurement of empowerment.

References


