

Title: The Therapeutic Alliance in Individual Resiliency Training for First Episode Psychosis: Relationship with Treatment Outcomes and Therapy Participation

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Abstract: The therapeutic alliance, or the relationship between the client and provider, has long been considered an essential part of treatment. Despite a large body of work examining the alliance-outcome relationship, very few studies have examined it within individuals with first episode psychosis (FEP). Given the dearth of research examining alliance and outcome in FEP in tandem with the sizeable rise in specialized FEP programs throughout the United States, the potential benefits of this work are substantial. As such, the present study examined the therapeutic alliance and its relationship to treatment outcomes and therapy participation in a sample of 144 FEP clients who received specialized FEP treatment at U.S. clinics. Furthermore, the present study extended prior literature by utilizing an observer-rated alliance measure and by examining between-therapist and within-therapist effects of alliance on outcomes. Results indicated that a better therapeutic alliance was related to improved mental health recovery, psychological well-being, quality of life, total symptoms, negative symptoms, and disorganized symptoms at the end of 24 months controlling for the baseline measure of outcome and treatment-related covariates. Additionally, the between-therapist effect of the alliance was significantly related to better mental health recovery whereas the within-therapist effect of the alliance was related to better quality of life, total symptoms, and negative symptoms at the end of treatment controlling for the baseline measure of outcome and treatment-related covariates. Future work should consider examining mediators of the alliance-outcome relationship as well as how changes in the alliance relate to changes in outcomes over time.