The Importance of Hope to Resilience in Criminal Justice Diversion Programs

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A B S T R A C T A N D A R T I C L E I N F O R M A T I O N

The United States has the highest levels of incarceration in the world, and finding ways to address this ever-growing concern has value both to system-involved individuals and broader society. "Diversion" programs are a pre-trial option that provides rehabilitation and personal development as alternatives to incarceration. Hope is an asset to coping with adversity, and studies have revealed that people who have lower levels of hope are at greater risk of becoming involved in the criminal justice system. One characteristic linked to success in navigating diversion programs is psychological resilience, with hope theory suggesting a hopeful mindset is an antecedent of that resilience. The current study ($N = 52$) evaluated this theory by testing a model of hope as a driver of resilience. Participants were receiving various diversion-related services in the Heartland of the United States. Participant surveys included established measures of both hope and resilience. First, item scores' principal component analysis (PCA) revealed that hope and resilience operated as unique psychological constructs within the sample. A subsequent path model analysis of hope as a predictor of resilience indicated that, as theorized, hope accounted for 17.2% of the variance in resilience across both race and gender. The results support that hope is essential to psychological resilience among diversion clients. The results suggest that future research into hope theory-based interventions with diversion clients is worthwhile.

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The Impact of Hope on Resilience

The United States has the highest number of incarcerations in the world in terms of both the total number of incarcerated persons and the proportion of the incarcerated population (Pettus-Davis & Epperson, 2015). In addition, approximately 2.5% of the resident adults were under some form of correctional supervision by the end of 2019 in the U.S. (Minton et al., 2021). Mass incarceration in the United States is a function of the cultural reliance on incarceration as the primary means of deterring criminal behavior (Widra & Herring, 2021).

Each day, formerly incarcerated people attempt to reintegrate back into their communities but face challenges such as obtaining stable employment, permanent housing, support, and adjusting to new circumstances (Crutchfield & Weeks, 2015; Gunnison & Helfgott, 2013; Petersilia, 2003; Stojkovic, 2007). Evidence-based reentry policies and programs that have been enacted in recent years have been shown to improve outcomes for people released from prison (Gelb & Velázquez, 2018). Research findings suggest that quality community-based diversion programs can be an effective alternative for reducing recidivism for certain criminal offenders, and diversion programs have proved to be highly effective as an alternative to traditional carceral interventions (Hodgkinson et al., 2021; Rogers, 2015). Although diversion programs hold promise to reduce the reliance on incarceration as a deterrent, navigating diversion programs and avoiding recidivism is fraught with challenges. Such challenges require released individuals to draw upon the psychological strength of resilience to overcome (Hodgkinson et al., 2021). Typically, psychological distress leads to the development of coping techniques, some of which are healthier than others (Duggal et al., 2016; Smith et al., 2015). Thus, understanding potential antecedents of resilience is vital to assist diversion program participants in achieving success.

Despite the difficult conditions formerly incarcerated people face, many believed they could be successful citizens and expressed hope for their future even in prison (Visher & Eason, 2021). Most formerly incarcerated adults who remain hopeful were employed before their incarceration and had families that provided them support (Visher & Eason, 2021). Hope is defined as cognitions regarding one's expectations and ability to attain essential goals, with an emphasis on a person's agency and capacity to reach and achieve those goals (Bernardo, 2010; Synder, 2002). Further, hope theory suggests a hopeful mindset contributes to psychological resilience (Snyder, 1994). Existing literature suggests that hope and resilience are both cognitive constructs that individuals engage in when facing adversity and stress, and both are associated with better physical and mental health outcomes in adults (Duggal et al., 2016; Kylma, 2005; Ong et al., 2018; Rydén et al., 2003). In the forensic population, increases in hope are typically correlated with greater empathy and decreased feelings of loneliness (Marshall et al., 1998).

However, little research exists that empirically compares the relationship of hope and resilience to other variables measuring well-being. Of the limited empirical research comparing the two psychological states, findings suggest hope is more strongly linked to global well-being over resilience (Munoz et al., 2020). Even less is known about these psychological constructs among adults with criminal justice system involvement, specifically those in diversion or other types of reentry and reintegration programs. Consequently, this project aims to test a model of hope as a driver of resilience among a sample of diversion program participants to begin to examine this gap in the literature. If hope were found to be an important contributor to resilience, such a result would provide evidence of the utility of employing hope theory within diversion programs. This study's results will be significant in the field of criminal justice as well as public safety and public health.

Literature Review

Diversion Programs

Policymakers have consistently searched for more effective programs to reduce criminal justice system involvement. Diversion programs propose a way to respond to criminal offenses without resorting to criminal sanctions (United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime [UNODC], 2018). Diversion programs are a type of pre-trial sentencing in which criminal offenders are provided a rehabilitation programing rather than incarceration. Diversion programs are a central component of what some have called "smart" decarceration programs, which are proactive, transdisciplinary, and empirically driven (Pettus-Davis & Epperson, 2015). Rather than relying on incarceration to reduce recidivism, diversion programs utilize behavioral interventions to address potential root causes of criminal behavior (Feucht & Holt, 2016; Pettus-Davis & Epperson, 2015). A Pew study found that 17 U.S. states that enacted diversion programs reduced imprisonment of nonviolent offenders, did not jeopardize public safety, and decreased crime rates (Pew Research Center, 2012). Also, a Mears and colleagues (2016) study highlighted that diversion programs show great promise in helping us hold people accountable for their actions and address their needs without unnecessary involvement in the

criminal justice system. Diversion programs provide stabilizing support services to equip and support individuals through community partnerships. This process refers to educational, mentoring, assistance, or supervision programs (UNODC, 2018). Those community-based services may include case management services, justice system navigation, employment support, housing, education, substance abuse, mental health services, assistance with government benefits, and other family support services. Diversion programs are also tools to decrease existing racial and economic disparities in the criminal justice system (Pettus-Davis & Epperson, 2015). However, traversing diversion programs is not easy, often requiring participants to overcome longstanding obstacles, such as experiences of trauma and substance abuse, which have led to encounters with the criminal justice system (Hodgkinson et al., 2021). Thus, finding ways to successfully assist more individuals in the criminal justice system to navigate diversion programs has value to both offenders and society.

The Importance of Resilience to Diversion Clients

Given the obstacles offenders face, protective factors or characteristics that allow them to overcome or endure adversity and barriers are essential for developing better diversion programs. While variability exists as to how resilience is conceptualized (Southwick et al., 2014), at its core, resilience involves the ability to bounce back after encountering obstacles (Smith et al., 2008; Snyder, 2000b). The ability to recover from obstacles and resume pursuing one's goals by way of resilience is characteristically linked to success for adults navigating diversion programs (Hodgkinson et al., 2021).

Resilience is positively associated with other characteristics such as psychological well-being, physical well-being, and personal well-being such as economic stability (Chmitorz et al., 2018; Djalante et al., 2020; Sagone & De Caroli, 2014; Souri & Hasanirad, 2011). Resilience is a protective factor for criminal justice involved people, and self-acceptance and resilience mediate the association between social support and mental health (Huang et al., 2020). Resilience is thought to promote the use of coping strategies when facing psychological distress and adversity (Smith et al., 2015). The internal psychological characteristics of resilience have been further described as including other established constructs such as self-efficacy, humor, patience, optimism, and faith (Connor & Davidson, 2003). Individuals with high resilience positively cope with uncertainty, conflict, and failure (Avey et al., 2010). A resilient individual can adapt to significant changes and positively cope with adverse events (Duggal et al., 2016). Resilience has also been characterized as the

presence of external factors, such as the presence of individuals, families, and community support (Zimmerman, 2013). Thus, identifying potential antecedents of resilience may have value to those seeking to assist diversion clients in avoiding recidivism.

Rooted in the positive psychology literature, a potential antecedent of resilience is hope (Snyder et al., 1991). Should a hopeful mindset contribute to resilience among diversion clients, such a finding would support a future line of research into hope theory-based interventions that could be beneficial to helping offenders avoid recidivism.

Hope Theory

A hopeful mindset is a variable that has been consistently linked with resilience (Munoz et al., 2020; Ong et al., 2018; Snyder, 1994). Hope is not a new construct, with literature dating to antiquity regularly mentioning the value of hope in times of crisis (Peterson & Seligman, 2004). However, only since the relatively recent growth of the positive psychology subdiscipline (Seligman & Csikszentmihalyi, 2000) has hope emerged as a measurable psychological state (Snyder et al., 1991).

One of the more well-known theories of hope describes hope as a cognitive state that consists of three main tenants: goals, pathways, and agency (Snyder, 2002; Snyder et al., 1991). Goal setting is the cornerstone of hope theory as the cognitive endpoint to planned behavior (Snyder, 2000b, 2002). The agency dimension of hope reflects a mental assessment of one's ability to initiate and sustain action towards the desired goal ("*I can do it*" or "*I am ready*"). To achieve the goal, one must also have viable pathways to goal attainment. The pathways dimension involves the identification of viable routes to goals ("*I can think of new strategies*"). A hopeful individual can consider potential barriers and identify workable solutions or processes to find alternative pathways when needed. Agency and pathways thinking are iterative, forming an individual's overall hope level (Snyder et al., 1991). Pathways and agency are reciprocal, influencing each other. Success in pursuing pathways toward a goal fuels motivation and desire (agency) to sustain plans. Likewise, energized and intentional thinking about goals encourages planning and strategizing to achieve the goals (pathways thinking).

Research among vulnerable populations, such as survivors of intimate partner violence (Munoz et al., 2017), childhood trauma survivors (Munoz et al., 2020), and children in the child welfare system (Hellman & Gwinn, 2017), has consistently demonstrated that hope is an asset to coping with adversity. In addition, studies have revealed that

people who have lower levels of hope are at greater risk to become involved in the criminal justice system (Martin & Stermac, 2010; Webster, 2004).

Hope and Resilience

Hope theorists have long recognized a close relationship between hope and resilience (Ong et al., 2006, 2018; Snyder, 2000b). Hope and resilience positively affect well-being, mood, and functioning (Greiner et al., 2005; Kylma, 2005). The studies indicate that individuals with higher hope can counter the adverse effects of mental health issues and that resilience is a protective factor against depression (Gooding et al., 2012; Rydén et al., 2003). Hopeful individuals have cognitive processes to engage in alternative strategies to achieve desired goals when faced with barriers (Ciarrochi et al., 2007; Duggal et al., 2016; Goleman, 1996; Luthans et al., 2010). Research supports that hope has been robustly associated with people's subjective perceptions of resilience (Gillespie et al., 2007; Gooding et al., 2012). One study conducted among adolescents found that hope and resilience play a significant role in predicting ethical behaviors (Sagone et al., 2020; Webster, 2004). A systematic review of published articles indicated that hope and resilience had been linked in over 99 studies (Ong et al., 2018). Although hope and resilience are commonly referenced together when describing goal-directed action in the face of challenges, much is still unknown about the relationship between them. Because of the similarities in descriptions of hope and resilience, the constructs are often described as part of the same conceptual framework. To wit, Saleebey (2000) noted, "Hope is also very much a part of the strength's perspective and the recovery and resilience movements" (pp. 132–133). In other cases, the terms hope and resilience are used interchangeably when referencing overcoming challenges (Duggal et al., 2016; Ong et al., 2006). Yet, while acknowledging that resilience and hope are closely linked, Snyder (2000a) contended hope is a distinct "two-component model" (p. 30) that describes a mindset that drives goal-directed action in the face of adversity, and that it is fundamentally independent of resilience. Some theorists even describe hope as a "source" of resilience (Ong et al., 2018) based on the theory that hope sustains goal-directed action in the face of obstacles (Snyder, 2000b).

Given that both hope theory and resilience have been linked to coping with adversity yet are often used interchangeably, the current study has value in clarifying the relationship between resilience and hope in a sample of diversion program participants. If so, this understanding may help providers to better assist vulnerable populations in the future. The current study posed the following research questions: *Is hope a distinctly different psychological state from resilience, and, if so, does hope account for unique variance in psychological resilience over and above demographics?*

Method

Procedure

This current study included secondary analysis of de-identified data and did not meet the criteria for human subject research and was conducted with the permission of the Institutional Review Board for the Protection of Human Subjects of the University of Oklahoma. Data were collected from a group of justice-involved individuals to explore the relationship between hope and resilience in a mid-sized metropolitan area of the United States. To qualify for inclusion in the study, the participants needed to be both receiving qualifying services and within the metropolitan jurisdiction. We defined "*diversion client*" as an adult person who is in either a pre-trial or probation phase of the criminal justice system and is engaged in programming designed to improve their wellbeing and avoid future involvement in the criminal justice system. Participants were diverse with a varying range of ages, racial populations, and genders. While the collection of diversion related services could vary across participants, they were constrained by an overarching goal to empower individuals through the provision of different resources such as employment, justice navigation, substance abuse treatment, and housing assistance to enhance the adjunction of the individuals in society. Participants were all individuals over 18 years old and actively involved in diversion services.

The survey was administered during the second consultation meeting with the clients, and various trained service providers were granted access. The duration of the collection of data was approximately five minutes. Participants were administered a survey by the service provider using a web-based questionnaire. Before completing the study, participants were briefed on the voluntary nature of their participation and its confidentiality.

Participants

The total number of participants in the present study was *N=52*. The demographic breakdown of the study included 50% of respondents who self-identified as white while 50% reported minority status. Gender-wise, 69% reported as male while 31% reported as female. The mean age of the sample was 38 years (SD = 11.7).

Measures

Adult Hope Scale (AHS)

To measure the adult level of hope, the AHS (Synder et al., 1991) was used in the present study. The AHS includes a 12 item self-report scale with items (e.g., "I can think of many ways to get out of a jam") and responses ranging from 1 (definitely false) to 8 (definitely true; Snyder et al., 1991). Each item is measured using an 8-point Likert scale. Of the 12 items, four items of the AHS measure the "agency subscale," four items of the AHS measure the "pathway subscale," and the remaining four items are fillers. Overall hope scores are by summing the agency and pathway subscales for total scores ranging from 8 to 32 (Munoz et al., 2017). The AHS has been used in hundreds of studies. A reliability generalization study of the AHS scale indicates that the scale has consistently shown good internal reliability across samples per accepted alpha thresholds (Hellman et al., 2013).

Brief Resilience Scale

The Brief Resilience Scale (BRS; Smith et al. 2008) was used in the present study. The BRS is a six-item self-report scale with items (e.g., "I tend to bounce back quickly after hard times") and responses ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree; Smith et al., 2008). On the scale, the total score ranges between 6 and 30, with higher scores indicating greater resilience (Satici et al., 2020). The BRS scale has exhibited good internal consistency (α=.80-.91; Smith et al., 2008).

Data Analysis

The data analysis consisted of a principal component analysis (PCA) and a subsequent path model. Based on the pattern of participants' responses, the PCA was used to evaluate if measures of hope and psychological resilience appeared as unique components. If so, the resulting recovered components from the PCA would then be entered into a path model that included hope and other demographic variables as independent variables driving resilience. The model was specified based on the existing theory that hope is an important contributor to resilience (Ong et al., 2018).

The demographic variables of the model were age, gender, and race. Age was entered as a continuous variable. The demographic variables race and gender were modeled as dichotomous, that is, for race, 0 = white, and 1 = minority status, and for gender, 0 = male, 1 = female. A two-tailed alpha threshold was set at $p < .05$ for all analyses. All calculations were performed with SPSS software add-on Amos 19 using maximum likelihood estimations.

Based on the described theory of hope being a vital contributor to resilience within the path model, resilience was modeled as the dependent variable. Demographic variables and hope were modeled as contributors to resilience. The demographic variables of the model were age, gender, and race. Age was entered as a continuous variable. The demographic variables race and gender were modeled as dichotomous, that is, for race, 0 = white, and 1 = minority status, and for gender, 0 = male, 1 = female. A two-tailed alpha threshold was set at $p < .05$ for all analyses. All calculations were performed with SPSS software add-on Amos 19 using maximum likelihood estimations.

Endogeneity

As is the case with all statistical models, the theoretical model of hope as a contributor to resilience modeled in the current study is only an estimate of the variable relationships in the population. The complexity of variable relationships in the population invariably results in important variables being omitted from every statistical model tested via a sample (Tomarken & Waller, 2005). As a result, statistical models often contain errors of estimation or "bias." This phenomenon is known as endogeneity (Harring et al., 2017).

While the seriousness of the error introduced by endogeneity is a source of debate, with some calling endogeneity a "phantom menace" (Clarke, 2009), we erred on the side of caution by empirically accounting for endogeneity. We accomplished this by placing into the model a phantom variable representing the correlated error introduced by our omission of important predictors of resilience. To represent the correlated error associated with endogeneity, the variance of the phantom variable was fixed to 1 (Harring et al., 2017). Moreover, the correlations of the respective phantom variable to other independent predictors were set at the standardized value of $r = .30$. In contrast, the correlation of the phantom variable to the dependent variable of resilience was set at an $r = .50$. Such robust correlations were selected for the phantom variable based on the assumption that we omitted important variables that contribute to the resilience of diversion clients. If hope remained correlated with resilience after including robust correlated error via the phantom variable, such a result would strengthen the conclusion that hope influences resilience for diversion clients.

Model Power

General power guidelines for regression-based path analysis suggest that a model should have 10 cases per independent variable (Field, 2013). Using that standard, the current model had five independent

variables, indicating our sample of an $N = 52$ was adequate. However, to supplement such general principles of power, we performed a *post-hoc* power analysis to determine if the sample size was sufficient for the model to adequately identify relationships in the population (Faul et al., 2009). For a regression model with five independent variables, an observed R^2 of .385, and a *p-value* < .05, a sample of $N = 52$ produces a statistical power of .99. This value well exceeds the power threshold of .80, widely accepted as adequate (Cohen, 1988).

Results

Principal Components Analysis

Considering the theoretical similarities between hope and resilience, we began with a principal components analysis (PCA) on the DHS and the BRS items. The PCA was used to determine if each respective group of items per scale measured a distinct component within the sample of diversion clients. If the items loaded as distinct components, this would suggest that the items measure the different psychological states of hope and psychological resilience.

Given the sample size consisted of an $N = 52$, before recovering components, testing was done to evaluate the adequacy of the variance in the sample to support a PCA. The Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin test (KMO)

verified the sampling adequacy for a PCA, with results indicating a KMO = .732 considered adequate under the heuristics of Hutcheson and Sofroniou (1999). Bartlett's test of sphericity $\chi2$ (91) = 214.9, $p < .001$ was also significant, indicating that correlations between items were sufficient for a PCA (Colley & Lohnes, 1971).

Having established the variance in the sample was adequate for a PCA, we moved on to interpret the results of an oblique rotation of the items. Since theory suggests hope and resilience are different psychological states and that hope consists of the two distinct dimensions of agency and pathways thinking, we specified *a priori* a three-component solution. An oblique rotation was considered appropriate because previous research and theory suggested correlating recovered components. Furthermore, a threshold of .42 was used as the floor for assigning items to respective components based on heuristics that consider .42 to be a "fair" sized loading on a component (Comrey & Lee, 1992). Items were considered to "cross load" on a component when there was < .20 difference between an item's loading on one component compared to the item's loading on one more other component (Nunnally & Bernstein, 1994). A scree plot was also used as a supplementary method of identifying components.

Table 1 contains the PCA results. An examination of the pattern matrix indicated that the first of the three components recovered consisted of all

Table 1: Principal components analysis using oblique rotation ($N = 52$)

Scale	Items	Component I	II	III
AHS	I can think of many ways to get out of jam.	-.150	.668	.343
AHS	I energetically pursue my goals.	.620	.076	-.104
AHS	There are lots of ways around any problem.	.080	.678	.048
AHS	I can think of many ways to get the things in life that are important to me.	.252	.584	.044
AHS	Even when others get discouraged, I know I can find a way to solve the problem.	.028	.709	-.104
AHS	My past experiences have prepared me well for my future.	.624	.369	-.104
AHS	I've been pretty successful in life.	.742	-.183	.095
AHS	I meet the goals that I set for myself.	.695	-.050	.132
BRS	I tend to bounce back quickly after hard times.	.266	.233	.312
BRS	I have a hard time making it through stressful events.	.153	-.475	.684
BRS	It does not take me long to recover from a stressful event.	.072	.353	.550
BRS	It is hard for me to snap back when something bad happens.	-.035	.200	.781
BRS	I usually come through difficult times with little trouble.	.823	.084	-.138
BRS	I tend to take a long time to get over set-backs in my life.	.704	-.050	.179

Notes. Cross loading items are shaded, identified by exhibiting < .20 difference between a loading score on one component compared to the item's loading score on a second component (Nunnally & Bernstein, 1994).
Adult Hope Scale (AHS); Brief Resilience Scale (BRS).

the AHS agency items and two BRS items ("It does not take me long to recover from stressful events" and "I usually come through difficult times with little trouble."). All items loaded above .42 on the first component and accounted for 31% of the total variance. The second component consisted of all the hope pathways items loading over .42, with the second component accounting for 13.1% of the total variance. The third component consisted of the remaining BRS items loading > .42 and accounted for 9.9% of the variance. Collectively, the three components accounted for 60% of the total variance of the items. It is important to note that one item of the BRS, "I bounced back quickly," did not load above .42 on any component.

An examination of the structure matrix of the PCA was consistent with the pattern matrix, and the scree plot also supported three components before the point of inflexion. An examination of the internal consistency of the items loading on their respective components indicated each exceeded the value of .70.

Collectively, the results of the PCA suggest that hope and resilience were distinct components among this sample of diversion clients. However, based on the results, a total of three BRS items were removed from further analysis, with two being removed because they loaded on the hope agency component and another because it failed to load on any component. Removing the three BRS items led to a simple factor structure between the three components.

Path Model

Before reporting the results of the path model, the statistical assumptions of regression modeling were tested and met (Pedhazur, 1997). The zero-order correlations of the variables are presented in Table 1.

Moving to interpreting the results of the path model, the demographic variables of age, race, and gender were not significantly correlated with resilience. In contrast, Hope was significantly correlated with resilience (β = .28, p < .001). According to heuristics commonly cited in the social sciences (Cohen, 1988), the $f2$ = .139 of variance accounted for by hope in the model was near the moderate threshold. The degree of variance in resilience accounted for by hope was notable because we fixed the influence of omitted variables as "large" (Cohen, 1988). Even under the presumption that we omitted important other predictors of resilience, hope exhibited a significant correlation with resilience. This result strengthens the conclusion that hope is an important contributor to resilience in the diversion program population. See Table 2 for the empirical values of the path model.

Table 2: Summary of hierarchical regression analysis for predictors of psychological resilience among a sample of diversion clients (N = 52)

Variable	B	SE B	β
Step 1			
Race	.534	.595	.125
Gender	.988	.627	.220
Age	-.004	.025	-.023
Step 2			
Race	.136	.559	.032
Gender	.988	.627	.202
Age	.002	.023	.099
Hope	.122	.038	.422*

Notes. R^2_{adj} = .011 for Step 1; ΔR^2_{adj} = .172* for step 2.
*p < .01.

Discussion

This study examines the relationship between hope and resilience among diversion clients. Per our theoretical expectations, the distinctiveness of the states of hope and resilience was reflected in the results of PCA. Moreover, in the regression model, hope accounted for significant variance in the dependent variable of resilience across demographic variables. While research has sought to identify ways to increase psychological resilience among those recently incarcerated (Crawford et al., 2015), it is more often focused on other populations who face adversity, such as those recovering from substance addiction (Rudzinski et al., 2017) or adults with exposure to child maltreatment (Meng et al., 2018). More research is needed to understand better how to enhance resilience via intervention in diversion programs. Such research has value because some studies have demonstrated that resiliency may be malleable and a potential target outcome of interventions (Chmitorz et al., 2018; Crawford et al., 2015).

The present study findings reveal that hope is a significant factor in increasing resilience among diversion clients. Identifying hope as a source of resilience among diversion clients aligns with previous research that suggests individuals with higher hope can have better physical and psychological well-being (Duggal et al., 2016; Thompson & Spacapan, 1991). Overall, the findings of this study should be helpful to both researchers and professionals who implement programs for diversion in criminal justice. Existing studies found that resilience is a protective factor against mental health and positively influences the quality of life as a buffer against the negative impact of stressors (Duggal et al.,

2016; Ong et al., 2018; Rydén et al., 2003; Wu, 2011). Diversion clients can face obstacles in adjusting to new circumstances after they release, and they might have a history of trauma in their life, mental health issues, and substance abuse (Gunnison & Helfgott, 2013; Petersilia, 2003). Furthermore, in the context of reentry, research has shown that resilience-promoting strategies, such as having a positive mental framework, patience, and adjusting to obstacles, were contributors to successful community reentry (Hodgkinson et al., 2021; Kim et al., 2016). The studies revealed that increasing psychological resources in interventions in the reentry programs reduced re-offending and criminal thinking (Ford & Hawke, 2012; Forgays & DeMillio, 2005; Hoogsteder et al., 2018).

Theory and research suggest that hope is something we can grow and share (Edey & Jevne, 2003; Moore, 2005; Snyder , 2000a). Yet there is little empirical research comparing hope and resilience in criminal justice system involvement. There is little research in general about relevant psychological constructs for adults participating in diversion programs or similar reentry and reintegration programs. Thus, this study investigates how hope could account for variance in psychological resilience across demographic groups among diversion-related individuals. Also, the data add to research on resilience promotion by identifying a new target outcome for interventions seeking to promote resilience: the development of a hopeful mindset.

Practice Implications

This study is noteworthy because there are limited studies in the literature that include hope, resilience, and justice-involved individuals in the criminology field. Firstly, the current study suggests the utility of hope theory in practice settings that involve diversion clients, especially for providers seeking strategies to help their clients remain goal-focused during the stress of reentry. Hope theory-based interventions have been developed for use in various contexts that have shown promise as practical tools for hope promotion (Cheavens et al., 2006; Counts et al., 2017; Feldman & Dreher, 2012; Hellman & Gwinn, 2017; Hellman et al., 2021; McIntosh et al., 2021; Thornton et al., 2014). Such interventions characteristically include activities to help participants find workable goals, identify pathways to their goals, and promote participants' agency via activities such as positive self-talk (Chan et al., 2019). Secondly, the study suggests future research on hope-based interventions with diversion clients is a worthwhile endeavor because such interventions may prove helpful in increasing resilience. This benefits successful reintegration and has been shown to improve outcomes for people released from prison while improving public safety and health in the broader society (Visher & Eason, 2021).

Limitations

Despite the potential of our findings that suggests hope is an important contributor to resilience among diversion clients, the study contains several potential limitations. First, the sample was taken from a single diversion program in the Central United States. While ethnicity and age were used as covariates, various organismic variables and both risk and protective factors not included in the model may moderate the variable relationships in the population. While our use of the phantom variable accounted for important confounds omitted from the variable, a better understanding of the specific omitted variables would aid in developing better intervention modalities in the promotion of hope and resilience with diversion clients. Future researchers in different regions may assist in exploring the relationships between hope and resilience.

The current study was cross-sectional, creating limitations in establishing the direction of the linear relationships between variables. While theory (Ong et al., 2018; Snyder, 2000) predicted hope as an antecedent of psychological resilience, it could very well be that psychological resilience is sometimes needed to hope. Future research using multi-wave longitudinal designs is needed to further test the directional relationship between hope and resilience. The current study is only consistent with theories (Ong et al., 2018; Snyder, 2000b) that hope contributes to resilience; the results do not prove such as assertion. Finally, other measures of the constructs of hope (Herth, 1991) and resilience (Friborg et al., 2003) may produce different results based on different operationalizations of both hope and resilience. Future research is needed to test this assumption.

Conclusion

Despite potential limitations, the results of the current study offer promise by revealing that hope and resilience are unique psychological states among a sample of adult diversion clients. Past that, the findings further illustrate how hope leads to resilience. The American justice system needs to focus on decreasing incarceration, and evidence-based intervention, reentry programs, diversion programs, and community service programs can effectively achieve this goal. Moreover, hope-based interventions could be helpful to determine justice-involved clients' goals and a sense of purpose in their lives. Eventually, having more hopeful, and thus resilient, individuals

can change individual lives and thereby initiate change at the community and national levels as well.

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