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Johansen, Michael, Leyland, Sandra, Davis, Paul and Ling, Jonathan (2023) A scale to measure moral disengagement for occupational gains: a scale for the use in illicit drug public health initiatives for vocational populations. In: Society for Social Medicine and Population Health Annual Conference 2023, 6-8 Sep 2023, Newcastle upon Tyne. (In Press)

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A scale to measure moral disengagement for occupational gains: a scale for the use in illicit drug public health initiatives for vocational populations

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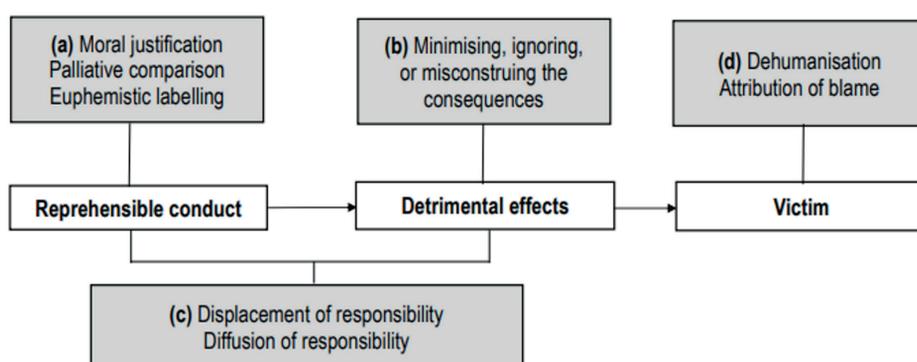
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Introduction

- Illicit drug use in the UK working age population has been deemed an economic and public health problem
- There is now evidence that illicit drugs used by employees are expanding at populational health level and Performance and Image Enhancing Drugs (PIEDs) are being used by vocational occupations (E.g., Military, police etc.).
- Despite risks to health and moral standing, there is limited evidence of PIEDs enhancing occupational performance in workplace settings.
- Moral Disengagement can explain the mechanisms that perpetuate this type of workplace misconduct.

Figure 1. Bandura's (1991) Social Cognitive Theory of Moral Thought and Action¹



Research aim

Aim was to develop a valid and reliable instrument for PIED use in occupational environments that not only reflects the multidimensional nature of moral disengagement but can also inform appropriate public health initiatives.

Methods

Questionnaire items were selected from validated scales²⁻⁵ and used a 7-point Likert scale. Recruitment used snowball sampling ($n = 84$) and resulting in 10 occupations being involved. Data analysis used IBM SPSS (v26.0).

Stage 1: Scale development

Item analysis

- Corrected Item-Total Correlation scores assessed for correlations
- Cronbach's Alpha

Principal Component analysis

- Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin Measure of Sampling Adequacy
- Bartlett's test of sphericity
- Data extraction via scree plot analysis (Eigenvalues)
- Direct Oblimin oblique rotation

Stage 2: Scale validation — Validity testing

- Pearson's Product-Moment correlation
- Independent t-test
- Power analysis using G*Power (Release 3.1.9.6)



Results

Table 1. Item analysis summary

Moral disengagement mechanism	α	Index of measurement error	N of items
Moral disengagement (items 01-04)	.832	0.32	4
Advantageous comparison (items 09-12)	.893	0.21	4
Diffusion of responsibility (items 15-17)	.802	0.32	3
Euphemistic labelling (items 05-08)	.779	0.41	4
Displacement of responsibility (items 13-14)	.596	0.36	2
Distortion of consequences (items 18-20)	.891	0.21	3

Note the sample size ($n = 84$) and Cronbach alpha is denoted by the α symbol. Index of measurement error was calculated by squaring the correlation and subtracting from 1.00.

- Scale analysis resulted in 2 items removed and another 4 items removed due to cross loadings above .15 threshold⁶. Moral Disengagement for Occupational Gains Scale concluded with **14 items**.
- Validation of scale with The Propensity to morally disengage scale⁷ using Pearson's Product-Moment correlation indicated an 'excellent'⁸ rating ($r = .462, n = 84, p = .0025$).
- Independent t-test analysis confirmed that total scores did not significantly differ between scales for PIED users and Non-PIED users but did for Moral Disengagement for Occupational Gains Scale ($t(80) = 4.844, p = .000006, 95\% \text{ CI } [.73, 1.75]$).

Discussion

The Moral Disengagement for Occupational Gains Scale demonstrated psychometric properties supporting use as a valid and reliable measure of moral disengagement for use in public health to support population level evidence-based initiatives and manage drug misuse at work.

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