

Objective: This randomised controlled trial examined whether individuals with severe mental disorders (SMD) in a high-unemployment context benefit in mental health, functional and vocational outcomes when receiving the Individual Placement and Support (IPS) model, compared to vocational rehabilitation (VR).

Method: A total of 557 individuals (ICD-10 F20–F29 or F31–F32.3) were screened. 63 met inclusion criteria and voluntarily participated. They were randomly assigned to IPS or VR groups. Assessments were conducted at baseline and six months. The study was ethically approved, registered and conducted with blinded evaluations.

Results: IPS participants achieved significantly higher rates of competitive employment and showed greater improvements in global functioning compared with VR. Other mental health and functional outcomes showed no significant group differences. However, participants who obtained employment reported greater improvements in quality of life. No adverse events, such as hospitalizations, were reported. Competitive employment rates were 16 times higher in IPS. No adverse effects, such as hospitalizations, were reported. Dropout rate was 31.7%.

Conclusion: IPS notably improves employment outcomes and several mental health indicators. These encouraging results, despite a short follow-up and modest sample, demonstrate IPS's potential for wider use. Future analysis may address the effect of longer jobs and of other qualitative data.

Adverse events: No adverse events derived from the intervention were detected during follow up

Table 1. Baseline characteristics of the sample and comparison of participants n(%).

Variable	Baseline sample (n = 32)			VR group			IPS group			
Sex				0.250			1.000			0.191
Man	23 (72)	18 (58)	41 (65.1)		14 (73.7)	9 (69.2)		12 (50)	6 (85.7)	
Woman	9 (28)	13 (42)	22 (34.9)		5 (26.3)	4 (30.8)		12 (50)	1 (14.3)	
Age groups (years)				0.186			0.310			0.856
18–25	-	3 (10)	3 (4.8)		-	0		3 (12.4)	0	
26–35	11 (34)	7 (23)	18 (28.6)		6 (31.6)	5 (38.5)		6 (25)	1 (14.3)	
36–45	12 (38)	15 (48)	27 (42.9)		7 (36.8)	5 (38.5)		11 (45.8)	4 (57.1)	
46–55	9 (28)	6 (19)	15 (23.8)		6 (31.6)	3 (23.0)		4 (16.7)	2 (28.6)	
Previous work experience	29 (91)	30 (97)	59 (93.7)	0.317	17 (89.5)	12 (92.3)	1.000	23 (95.8)	7 (100)	1.000
Level of education				0.160			0.465			0.819
Primary	9 (28)	12 (39)	21 (33.3)		7 (36.8)	2 (23.2)		9 (37.5)	3 (42.9)	
Secondary	7 (22)	1 (3)	8 (12.7)		3 (15.8)	4 (30.8)		1 (4.2)	0	
Baccalaureate	3 (9)	1 (3)	4 (6.4)		1 (5.3)	2 (15.5)		1 (4.2)	0	
FP (vocational training)	12 (38)	15 (48)	27 (42.9)		7 (36.8)	5 (38.5)		12 (50)	3 (42.9)	
University	1 (3)	2 (7)	3 (4.8)		1 (5.3)	-		1 (4.2)	1 (14.2)	
Hospitalizations in the last 6 months prior to the start of the study	-	1 (3)	1 (1.6)	0.492	0	0	1.000	1 (4.2)	0	1.000
No medical problems	14 (44)	15 (48)	29 (43.0)	0.712			0.538			0.078
Diagnosis				0.556			0.538			0.078
Schizophrenia	20 (62)	13 (42)	33 (52.4)		10 (52.6)	10 (79.9)		9 (37.5)	4 (57.1)	
Bipolar disorder	5 (16)	6 (19)	11 (17.5)		4 (21.1)	1 (7.7)		7 (29.2)	0	
Personality disorder	2 (6)	3 (10)	5 (7.9)		1 (5.3)	1 (7.7)		1 (4.2)	2 (28.6)	
Recurrent depressive disorder	-	1 (3)	1 (1.6)		0	0		1 (4.2)	0	
Disorder delusional ideas	2 (6)	2 (6)	4 (6.4)		2 (10.5)	0		0	1 (14.3)	
Schizoaffective disorder	3 (9)	4 (13)	7 (11.1)		2 (10.5)	1 (7.7)		4 (16.7)	0	
Others	-	2 (6)	2 (3.2)		0	0		2 (8.3)	0	

VR, Vocational rehabilitation (train-then-place); IPS, Individual Placement and Support.

Table 2. Evaluation of individual placement and support(IPS)/Vocational Rehabilitation(VR) strategies on evolution of mental health and functional outcomes

	Control group (VR) (n = 19)		Intervention group (IPS) (n = 24)		p -value			
	Basal	6 months	Basal	6 months	Time	Group	Time x group	
Quality of life	4.8 (0.9)	5.0 (1.0)	5.2 (0.8)	5.5 (0.8)	0.034	0.108	0.438	
GAF	57.74 (8.32)	59.2 (8.3)	63.8 (10.8)	68.0 (9.0)	0.002	0.009	0.114	
PANSS	Positive	15.16 (5.1)	10.8 (3.7)	14.9 (7.3)	11.9 (5.1)	<0.001	0.804	0.308
	Negative	18.7 (6.4)	13.83 (5.2)	19.4 (7.9)	13.2 (5.7)	<0.001	0.704	0.985
HADS	General	37.8 (11.1)	29.4 (9.1)	36.0 (12.3)	28.7 (8.3)	<0.001	0.659	0.740
	Anxiety	5.0 (3.7)	4.2 (2.8)	4.5 (3.7)	4.1 (2.7)	0.244	0.704	0.676
Self-concept	Depression	4.3 (3.4)	4.1 (4.0)	4.3 (3.5)	3.5 (3.6)	0.231	0.793	0.485
	Global	9.3 (6.4)	8.3 (6.3)	8.8 (6.6)	7.63 (5.8)	0.176	0.731	0.916
GSDS total	Academic	7.1 (1.3)	6.7 (1.0)	7.4 (1.8)	7 (1.54)	0.042	0.460	0.911
	Social	6.5 (1.9)	5.8 (1.5)	6.5 (2.1)	6.7 (2)	0.287	0.403	0.014
	Emotional	5.9 (2.4)	6.0 (1.6)	6.1 (2.5)	5.8 (1.63)	0.673	0.961	0.612
GSDS total	Family	7.6 (1.8)	7.8 (1.7)	7.4 (2.2)	7.4 (2.1)	0.606	0.589	0.064
	Physicist	5.3 (2.6)	4.7 (1.8)	5.6 (2.5)	5.4 (2.47)	0.108	0.486	0.268
GSDS total	10.3 (4.0)	9.9 (3.7)	9.2 (4.6)	9.3 (4.6)	0.647	0.501	0.400	

Figure 1. Flow diagram

