Impact of Holistic Health Model on Recovering Addicts

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ABSTRACT: As drug addiction is prevalent all over the world, it demands a multidimensional approach to address different aspects of addiction. This study explores the "Impact of Holistic Health Model on Recovering Addicts," which covers biological, psychological, social, and spiritual aspects of the recovery process. By using a qualitative research design, Semi-structured interviews were conducted with 10 male participants with an age range between 20 and 40 years. All of them were in sobriety for at least two years. Braun and Clarke's (2006) thematic analysis framework was used to analyze the data. The findings highlight eleven major themes that emerged from the transcribed interviews. These include physical challenges, psychological issues, healthy lifestyle, belief system, family dynamics, peer pressure, professional growth, therapeutic support, medications, follow-ups, and relapse prevention. Participants reported that practicing healthy activities, rebuilding social bonds, improving interpersonal relationships, self-awareness, emotional regulation, a strong belief system, and sticking to treatment and follow-ups facilitated their reentry into society and a sober life. By integrating holistic health approaches in the treatment programs, long-term recovery and personal development are promoted.

KEYWORDS: Substance Use Disorder, Holistic Health Model, Recovering Addicts, Challenges in Sobriety Phase, Thematic Analysis

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Introduction

Substance Use Disorder is a complex and chronic condition that affects multiple aspects of an individual, including physical health, psychological, social, and spiritual well-being (American Psychiatric Association, 2013). Relapse remains a common challenge despite the availability of various treatment modalities (Miller & Rollnick, 2012). About 6.7 million people are drug users in Pakistan, of whom 4.25 million are considered in need of treatment. Approximately 78% of drug users in Pakistan are males aged between 25 and 39 years (UNODC, 2013). Traditionally, the focus of addiction treatment has been on behavioral interventions and detoxification. This gap is addressed by the Holistic Health Model, which integrates physical, emotional, mental, social, and spiritual health (Myers et al., 2000). This model recognizes that recovery extends beyond abstinence and restoring balance in all areas of life (Dossey & Keegan, 2013). The treatment is seen as a whole-person recovery, not just quitting drugs. According to studies, individuals report higher levels of self-awareness and resilience when treatment incorporates holistic health practices (Laudet, 2008). Long-term sobriety and life satisfaction are observed by social and spiritual support elements (Kelly et al., 2018).

Substance Use Disorder

According to DSM-5-TR, the substance use-related disorders have 10 classes of drugs, which include alcohol, caffeine, cannabis, hallucinogens, inhalants, opioids, sedatives, hypnotics, or anxiolytics, stimulants, and tobacco. All these drugs directly activate the brain reward system. The term "Substance Use Disorder" is used to describe the state of chronically relapsing and compulsive patterns of drug addiction. Substance Use Disorder is defined as a cluster of cognitive, behavioral, and physiological symptoms which indicate that the person continues using the substance despite any other substance-related problem.

History of Drug Addiction

The history of drug addiction and substance use disorder shows a long journey from ancient times to commercial abuse, criminal punishment, and moral issues towards scientific understanding. It includes many ongoing challenges like stigma, societal pressure, and access to treatment and policy-making in different countries. Substance use is as old as civilization. Natural plants and substances were used by ancient people for different purposes like healing, medication, and recreation, and they were not considered addictive at that time.

Causes of Drug Addiction

There are multiple causes of drug addiction, which involve a combination of biological perspectives, including genetic and neuroscience insights. The psychological perspective highlights behavioral, cognitive, and psychodynamic factors. The socio-environmental perspective includes environmental and social factors. The public health perspective focuses on population-level factors of drug addiction.

Biological Perspective

The biological perspective shows that drug addiction is deeply rooted in genetic and biological mechanisms of an individual. An individual's vulnerability to substance use is influenced by genetic dispositions (Goldman et al., 2005). Some individuals are more susceptible to drug addiction due to their inherited genetic traits, which affect the body's ability to process and respond to drugs (Duncan, 2012).

Psychological Perspective

The psychological perspective of drug addiction is influenced by cognitive, behavioral, and psychodynamic factors. It emphasizes that addiction is a complex interplay of behaviors, thoughts, personality, and life expectancy, not just a biological disease.

Sigmund Freud originated the psychodynamic perspective from his works. Drug addiction is viewed as a symptom of underlying psychological conflicts and unresolved problems that are rooted in childhood experiences. The development and maintenance of drug addiction is emphasized by the role of unconscious processes, past relationships, and defense mechanisms (Khantzian, 1986).

Socio-environmental Perspective

There are very powerful social and environmental factors that contribute to addiction. It includes peer influence or peer pressure, family dynamics like conflicts, neglect, cultural norms around drug use, socioeconomic disadvantages, and marginalization, such as in LGBTQ+ or minority populations. In those environments where drug use is normalized, people are at higher risk of becoming addicted.

Treatment of Drug Addiction

Treatment approaches for Substance Use Disorder (SUD) have existed for centuries and evolved over time. Here are detailed historical and modern treatment strategies discussed below:

Ancient & Pre-Modern Era.

Alcohol and opium were used in Ancient civilizations for medical and recreational purposes. Addiction was viewed as moral and spiritual weakness at that time, and it was treated with herbs, rituals, or punishment. Sobriety and mental health were based on religious teachings. There were different treatments used, such as herbal remedies, religious fasting, spiritual rituals, and purification (Courtwright, 2001). For detoxification, plant-based medicines were used.

Modern Treatments (2000–2025).

The treatment programs moved towards integrated and evidence-based programs, and biopsychosocial and neurobiological models emerged. The integrated treatment models include Cognitive Behavioral Therapy (CBT), relapse prevention, Medication-Assisted Treatment (MAT), Trauma-informed care, and Harm reduction approaches like needle exchange programs and personalized care models. Digital interventions and telehealth solutions became common after the COVID-19 pandemic (NIDA, 2020).

Global Treatment (2025)

The best global treatments for substance use disorders are based on different perspectives like evidence-based models, country-specific models, and medical guidelines. It includes Medication-Assisted Treatment (MAT), Cognitive Behavioral Therapy (CBT), 12-Step Program, Therapeutic Communities (TCs), Harm reduction**,** Motivational Interviewing (MI), Dual diagnosis, and Telehealth and digital therapies (WHO, 2024).

Prevalence

The World Drug Report 2022 revealed an estimate of 284 million people in the age range of 15 to 64 years, which amounts to at least 5.6% of the population worldwide, who used drugs in 2020. Globally, the report estimates that 36 million people suffer from Substance Use Disorder (SUD), a condition characterized by drug-dependent patterns. There is a substantial treatment gap, as only 1 in 8 people receive appropriate treatment, especially in middle-income countries, which are home to 86% of people with Substance Use Disorders (UNODC, 2022).

In Pakistan, drug addiction is a serious public health crisis. According to the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, Pakistan has an estimated 6.7 million drug users as of 2024. The total number of drug addicts, as per a UN report, is 7.6 million; 78% of them are male, with an age range between 25 and 39 years, while the remaining 22% are female (Ministry of Narcotics Control, 2014). Pakistan is facing crises among youth and those people who are living in vulnerable regions. Pakistan Youth Change Survey mentioned that drug use in universities is alarming, with substances like ice, cannabis, and other prescribed medications (PYCA, 2016).

Recovery Process

The recovery process is developmental, and it takes time to continue life after treatment. It starts from abstinence to sobriety, going through a comfortable life while abstinent to productive living. (Gorski, 1986, p.83). Recovery occurs in stages depending upon the current stage of recovery, response to stress, and personality factors as well.

Stages of Recovery

There are six stages of recovery as mentioned by Gorski in his book Staying Sober. The Developmental Model of Recovery (DMR) proposes that completing specific recovery tasks in a specific order will lead to a successful recovery. The individual passes through all these stages in order to get back to normal life. It includes the pretreatment period, stabilization period, early recovery, middle recovery, late recovery, and maintenance period (Gorski, 1986).

Importance of Recovery

Recovery is a transformative process that includes abstinence, personal growth, social reintegration, and emotional healing. As Gorski mentioned in his book, staying sober, recovery progresses through structured stages that help individuals deal with triggers, craving management, and developing a sober lifestyle (Gorski, 1986). The importance of unconditional positive regard and self-acceptance, highlighted by Carl Rogers, emphasizes that genuine change and recovery flourish in an empathetic environment. Overall, these perspectives conclude that recovery is not just about quitting substance use but reclaiming one's life with dignity, physical and psychological well-being, and a clear aim of life (Rogers, 1992).

Rationale

According to the WHO global report 2019, an estimated 36 million people are affected by Substance Use Disorder. The relapse rate ranges from 40-60% globally. In Pakistan, the crisis is severe, as the Pakistan Bureau of Statistics and UNODC Pakistan data report (2024) mentions that 7.6 million people are drug users. Less than 30,000 people access structured treatment annually due to limited resources, post-treatment support, socioeconomic challenges, and stigma. A number of studies have been conducted on drug addiction and treatment plans, but there is a gap in understanding a wide range of issues of recovering addicts, especially their struggles and successes after treatment.
This study seeks to explore the protective factors in the light of the Biopsychosocial Spiritual Health Model. It is an aftercare study on coping with challenges, adopting healthy practices, and sticking to treatment, which is helpful for practitioners/therapists making follow-up plans, decreasing relapse rates, and providing recovery support for newly treated addicts. It focuses on every aspect of an individual's life who has been through Substance Use Disorder.

Research Objectives

The research objectives of the study include:

1. To explore the protective factors in recovering addicts.
2. To explore the biological, psychological, social, and spiritual coping strategies used in the recovery of addicts.
3. To explore the challenges in following the holistic health model.

Research Questions

The research questions of the study include:

1. What are the challenges faced by recovering addicts right after treatment?
2. How do lifestyle modifications prevent relapse in the post-treatment phase?
3. How does emotional stability affect recovering addicts?
4. How does spiritual growth contribute to long-term recovery?
5. How does reintegration into society progress during recovery?
6. What benefits do recovering addicts get from consistent treatment?

Methodology

This study is based on a qualitative research methodology, which is used to explore the protective factors of drug addiction in the light of the Holistic Health Model. It is helpful in gathering the in-depth views of the recovering addicts about their recovery journey. The qualitative research is suitable for investigating subjective phenomena that are emotionally complex and not easily quantifiable (Creswell & Poth, 2018). The challenges and coping strategies related to the lifelong journey of the recovering addicts require a method that can capture their personal experiences, meaning of recovery, and lifestyle changes.

Sampling Method

Purposive sampling method was used to select the participants who were in their recovery phase after getting treated at the rehabilitation centers. Purposive sampling involved selecting the participants who were relevant to the study. It helped narrow down the participants from the pool of participants willing to participate in the study.

Inclusion Criteria

The inclusion criteria used in order to select the participants include

- Only male recovering patients of Substance Use Disorder were selected to ensure more homogeneous data. They are commonly represented in the rehabilitation centers, making them more accessible for the research study.
- Participants who had undergone 100-day indoor treatment from a private hospital were recruited because it is a structured and holistic program that includes medical detox, lifestyle interventions, and psychotherapy.
- Participants aged between 20 and 40 years were chosen as individuals encounter significant life transitions during this developmental stage of life, such as pursuing education, career establishment, forming new relationships, and managing family responsibilities.
- Participants had a history of at least 2 years of sobriety, which ensured that participants were in a long-term recovery phase. It gave more meaningful insights into the effectiveness of holistic interventions.
- All the participants belong to a literate background, which enables them to understand the questions of the interview and have a better sense of self-awareness.
- Patients diagnosed with only Substance Use Disorder were included in the study, as it enhances the internal validity that all the changes are linked to addiction recovery, not with the unrelated psychiatric symptoms.

Exclusion Criteria

The exclusion criteria to eliminate individuals from the study include

- Recovering addicts diagnosed with any other disorder were not included in the study, as co-occurring psychiatric disorders may influence the recovery trajectories and also complicate the interpretation process.
- Recovering addicts with less than 2 years of sobriety were not included in the study, as it is considered a high-risk period for relapse, and participants are not considered stable in reflecting on their recovery journey.
- Recovering addicts younger than 20 were excluded as the adolescence stage involves continued brain development, increased risk-taking behaviors, and identity exploration, which influence recovery outcomes.
- Individuals above 40 years were not included in the study because they may face different life stressors like chronic illness and financial responsibilities, which influence their recovery experiences.

Demographic Characteristics

The demographic characteristics include age, gender, sobriety years, educational level, employment status, drugs used, treatment frequency, and voluntary treatment. The sample of this research consisted of 10 male participants.

The mean age of the participants was 29 years. Every participant was living a sober life, and their sobriety period varied from 2 to 10 years. They were all literate, and their educational level ranged from matric to master's. Six participants were currently running their own business, and four of them were employed. The participants were taken from different rehabilitation centers of Lahore. They were approached online and in person. All the participants were residents of Punjab, Pakistan.

Data Collection Method

The data were collected through semi-structured interviews in correspondence with the qualitative research method. This type of interview provides maximum insight and flexibility. A semi-structured interview was progressively developed in order to focus on the changes in lifestyles, personal and professional identity, social responsibilities, and self-perception after treatment. The interview protocol consisted of a demographic form and 18 open-ended questions, which were designed before conducting the interview. Questions were designed keeping the research questions in consideration. Interviews were taken in Urdu and English, depending on the convenience of the participants. They were conducted on a voice call and in person so that the comfort zone of the participants was not disturbed. On average, it took 30 minutes to complete each interview. For the in-person interviews, handmade biscuits were given as a token economy to each participant.

Procedure

The research process began with the approval of the topic by the Board of Studies, Psychology Department, Government College University, Lahore. After approval, the first step was to design an interview protocol for the research study. It is a roadmap for the interviewer by which the most relevant information is elicited from the interviewee. Then the search for the participants was started using purposive sampling. Different rehabilitation centers of Lahore were reached online for the sample collection. Contact numbers of the participants were shared by them after taking permission from each participant. They were reached out for interviews by phone calls and in-person meetings as per their ease. 10 participants met the inclusion criteria of the research. Participation in the study was completely voluntary. The participants were informed about the purpose of the research before starting the interview and their right to withdraw at any time. Permission was taken verbally from the participants who gave an interview on a phone call, and a consent form was signed by in-person interviewees prior to the conduct of the interview. Keeping in check participants' level of comfort, interviews were conducted through voice call on WhatsApp and face-to-face. Permission to record the interview was taken from every participant. To maximize security and confidentiality, interviews were recorded on the interviewer's cell phone. After interview completion, the verbatim of each participant was transcribed from the recordings. Following that, the data were analyzed using Thematic Analysis to understand the experiences and personal perceptions of participants regarding their recovery journey.

Results and Interpretations

Results

A total of eleven master themes were extracted from the data, which include physical health challenges during treatment, mental and emotional strain, post-treatment healthy lifestyle practices, belief and value system, family dynamics, peer influence in recovery, professional development, therapeutic interventions, pharmacological support, post-treatment follow-ups, and actions for relapse prevention.

Interpretation

This research found that the biopsychosocial model of health has a deep impact on recovering addicts. Eleven major themes emerged after the analysis of the transcript along with 28 subthemes.

Physical Health Challenges during Treatment

This is the first major theme that emerged from the transcribed interviews of the participants. Recovering addicts face significant physical challenges during treatment that can affect their health, comfort, and ability to function normally. These difficulties occur after prolonged substance use, as the body needs time to adjust normally, and it can also slow down the recovery process if not addressed appropriately. Two sub-themes emerged, which include bodily withdrawal and health complications.

Bodily Withdrawals: The immediate physical symptoms that occur when the body is adjusting to life without drugs. As drugs alter the hormone levels of the body, it takes time to get back to natural hormonal balance. It includes loss of mobility, shivering, nausea, and headaches.

Health Complications: The body takes time to heal even after treatment ends, as drugs cause severe damage to the body as well as the brain. Long-term substance abuse can weaken the body's immune system, damage organs, and hence disturb the overall health of an individual. It leads to an exhausted body, weak physical movements, and loss of appetite.

Mental and Emotional Challenges

It is the second major theme of research. The psychological and emotional challenges are faced by recovering addicts right after treatment as their brain tries to adjust without substances. It is important to address the difficulties like mood, thinking, and overall mental stability of an individual. There are three sub-themes which include emotional instability, cognitive problems, and sleep-wake cycle.

Emotional Instability: The rapid and unpredictable changes in feelings and mood of an individual refer to emotional instability. It is often triggered by hormonal changes, stress, or any trauma faced by an individual. Participants mentioned that they feel emotional numbness, restlessness, frustration, irritability, and even sudden outbursts of anger.

Cognitive Problems: Cognitive problems involve difficulties with memory, decision-making, and thinking patterns of an individual. These are altered in drug users as their brain starts depending upon substances for a long time. Participants indicated that they faced memory issues along with reduced problem-solving skills. They stop making decisions on their own and depend upon their family to make choices.

Disturbed Sleep-wake Cycle: Substance use often disrupts sleep patterns, which leads to sleepless nights and insomnia. Participants mentioned that they faced difficulty falling asleep and sometimes an inability to get sufficient sleep. After treatment, the recovering addicts had problems with sleep management, which affects cognitive functions and unstable mood.

Post-treatment Healthy Lifestyle Practices

It is the third theme of research. A healthy lifestyle was adopted by every participant after their treatment. Recovering addicts change a lot of things after treatment that help them to remain clear-headed. It is important to work on every aspect of one's life so that holistic health can be achieved. Staying healthy is the basic need of an individual to fit in society. A healthy lifestyle involves four sub-themes: a nutritious diet, physical activities, behavioral modification, and personal resilience.

Nutritious Diet: Staying healthy and following a structured routine helps the individual cope with their life challenges as they progress in their lives. They all felt happy after adopting a healthy diet plan.

Physical Activities: Physical activities involve an exercise routine, healthy habits, and personal hygiene, which benefit the individuals in their recovery phase. It was mentioned by the participants that exercise restores overall fitness, improves sleep quality, reduces stress, and improves mood.

Behavior Modifications: Behavior modification involves adopting a positive routine, replacing harmful habits, managing stress, maintaining self-care, and building discipline in life. Participants indulged in many such activities through which their behavior was molded, and they learned to manage cravings and anger issues.

Personal Resilience: The participants shared their experiences of being in a sober life. They molded their way of thinking, enhanced willpower, and learned skill power in their recovery phase. They were psycho-educated about the substance use disorder.

Belief and Value System

It is the fourth major theme of the research study. The belief system involves a person's faith and his ritualistic routine by which he gains peace after connecting to God. This belief system not only includes religious beliefs but the way of living with spirituality. The participants cited that when there was no one, they moved to God and asked him to make them better human beings. This motivated them to be connected to the treatment and work on themselves in every way possible.

Faith: The participants specified that they had developed a strong belief about what is wrong and what is right. They work on their morals and learn to avoid bad actions. The faith in God helped them recover and change their negative perspective of the world into a positive one.

Ritualistic Routine: The participants highlighted the importance of practicing prayers and reading the Quran, which brings peace and solace in their lives. They felt motivated and hopeful when they started following the ritualistic routine after treatment. It also brought a stable routine and clarity of mind.

Family Dynamics

Family dynamics is the fifth major theme that emerged out of all the interviews. Every participant highlighted the importance of family support and social networks that help them in the recovery phase. Society plays a very crucial role in maintaining one's sobriety and making the person confident to live and move independently. The first thing encountered in society is the family and close relationships; after that come peer groups, educational and professional life.

Rebuilding Bonds: After treatment, the participants made a strong bond with their family members. They started spending more time with their family, especially their mothers, who brought peace into their lives and helped them grow.

Supportive Network: A common sub-theme across multiple participants was family motivation and their support, which motivated them to go for treatment. The comments highlighted that participants generally believe their nurturing relationships will suffer if they remain indulged in drugs.

Family Boundaries: Family boundaries act as a check and balance on the recovering addicts so that they stay protected from relapse and keep their recovery on track. Participants mentioned that their family played a role in maintaining their sobriety by not letting them go outside to meet old drug-using friends, setting strict rules by monitoring their daily activities, and involving other family members in tracking goals.

Peer Influence in Recovery

The friend circle and the company in which a person lives are very important, as they have a remarkable impact on one's personality. The person tries to adopt the same things to be perceived as cool. The company of an addict never lets him leave the drugs even if he wants to. Two sub-themes that emerged are social isolation and sober support.

Social Isolation: Almost every participant elaborated the fact that leaving bad company is mandatory to stay in a sober life. When you avoid bad friends and stop visiting those slippery places, then it is more obvious that you spend a healthy, happy life. The addict's friends and the places where they used drugs are the greatest triggers of relapse. They always attract them and break their sobriety.

Sober Support: There are some friends who play a vital role in an addict's life. They always stand by them and try to make the addict's life far better. The participants highlighted the fact that when an addict is accepted in a society without any judgment, shaming, or taunting, he develops a very clear and confident self-image.

Professional Development

Professional growth is the seventh major theme of research. It is the most important step to reintegrate into society and make a better identity. As all the participants were literate, they did not stop their professional life to grow. Having a goal-oriented life helped them move forward and stay busy in their professional life. Three subthemes emerged, which include educational progress, job security, and business establishment.

Educational Progress: Educational resumption is a significant need for every individual in society. It helps secure better opportunities in the future and brings self-confidence in an individual. The participants completed their education during and after treatment.

Job Security: A job is a basic need for individuals. Participants mentioned that they continue their jobs and indulge in work to maintain stability, focus on a productive routine, and earn money. This also helps them to build a better future and avoid relapse.

Business Establishment: After treatment, some participants established their business, which gives them a sense of purpose and something meaningful to focus on. By indulging in their own business routine, the relapse risk was reduced, lowering triggers and boosting self-esteem. Participants mentioned that their busy routine makes it difficult for them to engage in drugs.

Therapeutic Interventions

Support is not only from family, friends, or society but also from the therapist, their counseling sessions, and group therapies. The therapeutic sessions are an essential part by which a person learns about himself, his future goals, and shapes his personal as well as social identity. There are two sub-themes, which include indoor treatment and intervention.

Indoor Treatment: The rehabilitation centers provide a controlled environment in which the behavior of an addict is observed and molded. They were involved in individual as well as group therapies in the center. A basic routine was followed so that they could work on their personal perspective. It was clarified by the participants that living in rehab was far better than seeking outdoor treatment. It helps them shape their thoughts, behaviors, and actions.

Coerced Action: Some of the participants were against rehabilitation centers in a way that sending people to the center without their consent was wrong, as it could generate frustration, stubbornness, and maybe a lack of trust in near and dear ones. According to them, forceful intervention was not the solution to treat someone, as it destroys one's self-esteem. Later on, it was realized that intervention was for the sake of betterment.

Pharmacological Support

It is the ninth major theme. Medication plays a part in the early recovery of an individual. It is helpful in maintaining mood, anxiety, depression, pain relief, and the sleep cycle of a recovering addict. Many participants reported that adherence to medication helps them a lot. There are two sub-themes: effective medication use and avoiding medication.

Effective Medication Use: There are multiple uses of medication, as it helps in managing withdrawal symptoms, controls cravings, stabilizes mood, improves sleep and cognitive functions, and aids overall recovery. Almost every participant mentioned that medication use was beneficial in their early recovery period. It helps in managing their anger issues, anxiety, stress, and mental health.

Medical Side Effects: Avoiding medications is beneficial in many other ways, as it helps build natural coping skills and promotes long-term sobriety. Some of the participants mentioned that it is better to avoid medication due to its side effects and risk of dependency. One of the participants said it's compulsory to take medicines as prescribed because leaving them on your own causes severe physical issues. Medications are helpful in regulating the altered hormonal levels of the body.

Post-treatment Follow-ups

Follow-ups are the tenth major theme of research. The follow-ups remained a mandatory part in many participants' sober life. They went for follow-ups, attending individual as well as group sessions, which helped them a lot in maintaining sobriety. Some of the participants also attended NA meetings online due to travel issues, but it was beneficial to spare some time for the meeting. Staying connected with NA meetings after treatment helps a recovering addict manage their sober life in a better way.

Therapy is one of the essential elements in maintaining sobriety. Recovering addicts who remain connected to their therapists and seek help remain holistically healthy. Two sub-themes emerged: a supportive environment and recovery guidance.

Supportive Environment: A comfortable environment allows individuals to talk about their issues. The individual is able to communicate openly without the fear of being judged by others, which motivates them to share their problems. It was mentioned by the participants that being connected to the treatment and regular visits to rehab help them spend a useful time.

Recovery Guidance

The therapist played a significant role in a recovering addict's life. A good therapist is always available for the client to address their queries. As mentioned by the participants, the therapist motivated them to stay in touch with them regarding their health until or unless they feel fully comfortable.

Actions for Relapse Prevention

Relapse prevention strategies were adopted by every participant. Everyone had a unique way to handle their stress and triggers apart from medication; the participants indulged themselves in different activities so that their craving period ends and they remain sober. Different techniques were used depending upon the person and their situations. Three subthemes emerged, which include personal commitment, treatment continuity, and risk reduction.

Personal Commitments: Personal commitment refers to recovering addicts' own determination to prevent drug use. Firm decisions are made to avoid drug use and restart a new life with a healthy lifestyle and work. Individuals

continue to attend meetings and sessions even after their treatment ends. Many participants mentioned that they accepted life challenges after treatment and made amends to repair relationships and address the effects of past behaviors.

Treatment Continuity: Ongoing professional help and social support are the main focus after initial treatment, as there is a high risk of relapse in the early recovery period. Participants pointed out that being connected to the treatment guided them a lot in maintaining sobriety. Whenever they face problems regarding their drug addiction, they seek guidance from therapists. Long-term recovery is maintained by continuing prescribed medications, regularly visiting the rehab for meetings, and following the therapist's advice.

Risk Reduction: Risk reduction aims to explore the factors that are relapse-provoking and need to be minimized for a sober life. It includes recognizing triggers in the environment, managing drug cravings and urges, reducing sources to get drugs, and avoiding triggering places where there is a chance of getting drugs. Participants identified different high-risk cues and tried to eliminate them from their lives.

Discussion

Drug addiction is a very complicated issue that prevails in society. This study explored the impact of the Holistic Health Model on individuals recovering from Substance Use Disorder (SUD). It highlighted the experiences of the participants who suffered from addiction and are now living a sober life. Their insights about drug addiction varied before and after treatment. The research uncovered various dimensions of health, like physical, psychological, social, spiritual, and occupational, through the narratives of 10 recovering addicts, which contributed to sustained recovery. These findings align with the existing literature exploring the meaning of recovery and a sober life after a duration of substance use disorder. For many participants, the earliest stage of recovery was marked by significant physical strain. They described bodily withdrawals in vivid terms: intense sweating, shaking, body aches, and persistent fatigue that often left them feeling drained before the day had even begun. Alongside these acute symptoms, lingering health complications emerged, some as a direct result of long-term substance use and others due to neglect of basic healthcare during active addiction. Such experiences are consistent with findings from Kosten and O'Connor (2003), who noted that withdrawal symptoms, particularly in opioid and stimulant users, can lead to prolonged physical distress that may complicate early recovery efforts. One particularly disruptive issue mentioned by several participants was the disturbance of their sleep–wake cycle. Nights were often restless, interrupted by vivid dreams or physical discomfort, and mornings brought a heavy sense of exhaustion. This irregular rest pattern did not merely affect physical energy; it often influenced mood, concentration, and emotional regulation, echoing the observations of Brower and Perron (2010) that sleep disturbances in recovery are closely linked to relapse vulnerability. For those participants, the path forward required not only abstaining from substance use but also relearning how to care for their bodies through nutrition, hydration, and restorative rest. Even after physical symptoms began to subside, many participants found themselves facing intense psychological hurdles. Emotional instability was a recurring theme; some described feeling as if their emotions were "too close to the surface," shifting rapidly from anger to sadness, or from hope to frustration. Concentration was often elusive, with participants noting that everyday tasks took more mental effort than before. Such difficulties resonate with findings from Volkow et al. (2016), who reported that chronic substance use alters brain circuits responsible for mood regulation, decision making, and attention. Unwanted thoughts and intrusive memories of past experiences with addiction or incarceration sometimes resurfaced unexpectedly, triggering distress or cravings, which aligns with Khantzian's (2017) self-medication hypothesis explaining how unresolved trauma can sustain vulnerability to relapse. This psychological turbulence was compounded by sleep disturbances, which amplified feelings of anxiety and irritability, a relationship well-

documented by Arnedt et al. (2007). While some participants found these experiences overwhelming, others viewed them as part of the natural process of healing—a sign that suppressed emotions and unresolved trauma were being brought to light. Over time, with continued therapy, supportive relationships, and self-care practices, several participants reported a gradual increase in emotional stability and mental clarity, describing it as a hard-won but deeply rewarding milestone in their recovery.

Another theme generated out of the research was the healthy lifestyle of an individual, which proved to be the best way to maintain sobriety. The person grows emotionally and psychologically with time after getting treated. Adopting healthy practices such as clean eating, physical activities, behavioral modification, and personal resilience was the significant goal of a recovering addict. Ellingsen et al. (2020) showed that a single exercise session can be an effective way to reduce craving and prevent relapse. Florence et al. (2024) explored the results by content analysis, showing that physical activity was a way to take care of oneself. It was used as a protective mechanism against relapse and the improvement of health. It improves the treatment process and helps to develop healthy lifestyle habits. Furulund et al. (2024) investigated the healthy eating perceptions and barriers among individuals undergoing opioid agonist therapy. This study revealed that most of the participants viewed their diet as insufficient and also expressed a desire to move toward better health. One theme that emerged out of the study was the belief system of the individuals. It explored how the person makes a bond with supreme power and found peace in practicing the ritualistic acts. This idea was supported by Ghaferi et al. (2017), who conducted qualitative research on the biopsychosocial and spiritual model of addiction applied in an Islamic context. The results of the study showed that addiction was associated with a wide range of health, social, and spiritual factors. Neglecting religious practices resulted in social isolation. The most prominent factor that played a role in the life of recovering addicts was family dynamics. This corresponds to the concept of communities that influence their personal recovery (Bahl, 2022). The study stated how different communities impact the recovery process of an individual. Different communities offer different challenges to the recovery process. However, in the majority of cases, it was seen that family played a vital role in addiction recovery, while peer pressure, slippery places, and substance use-related communities had a negative influence on maintaining a sober life. Another aspect of the family was to maintain a close, nurturing relationship that benefits the individual in his sobriety period. The social relationships of recovering addicts help them get motivated and steadfast. Pettersen et al. (2019) conducted a narrative study in which they explored the influence of social relationships in the recovery of substance use disorder. The results showed that the most helpful relationships were recognized with a service provider, a sibling, or a peer. Veseth et al. (2019) discussed the stabilization and destabilization of close relationships. They discovered three broad themes: entangled difficult relationships, essential support and stability from people, and individuals becoming different people along the recovery pathway. Continuing professional life after recovery was a mandatory part, and it involved resuming education, a job, or business. Frone et al. (2022) address the conceptual and empirical work of how the workplace supports the recovery process. These issues were presented in different ways to promote better understanding of substance use recovery, occupational health, and an overview of the nature of substance use disorder. Secondly, a " workplace-supported recovery" definition was developed, and lastly, a heuristic workplace model was shown on how the workplace impacts the recovery process.

Another perspective that was confirmed through this research was the role of treatment towards recovering addicts. Being connected to the therapeutic interventions and regularly going for follow-ups helped the participants to maintain their sobriety. Healthy and productive goals for the future were learned through continuous meetings and group sessions. A study by Neale et al. (2014) revealed the importance of recovery from the service users' point of view. They recognized recovery as a personal journey that was more about coping than cure. A qualitative study

was conducted by Laudet et al. (2010) in which they identified the priorities needed for service development. The results showed several priorities, including two important paradigmatic shifts. The first one was the adoption of a sustained recovery management model, and the other was a coordinated multisystem approach that helped the agencies best meet an individual's needs in the recovery pathway. Participants expressed a range of experiences and attitudes toward medication during recovery. Some participants were cautious or reluctant to use medication, concerned about the possibility of substituting one dependency for another, a concern also highlighted in Monaghan et al. (2020). A few deliberately avoided medicinal interventions altogether, relying instead on behavioral strategies, physical activity, or alternative therapies to manage discomfort. These varied perspectives underscored a common thread: participants valued a treatment plan tailored to their personal needs and comfort level. Medication, where used, was most effective when accompanied by ongoing guidance from healthcare professionals and when the individual felt they had an active voice in the decision-making process. Everything discussed so far brought a healthy change in a recovering addict's life and the way he perceives himself. The major point that every participant mentioned was to seek treatment on their own. The willingness matters for a better recovery and a lower relapse rate. One of the participants also mentioned that addicts are not criminals, so it is inappropriate to bring them to the rehabilitation centers without their consent. Bazazi et al. (2018) mentioned in their research that involuntary interventions for the treatment of substance use disorder were less effective and more harmful than voluntary treatment. Their findings also suggested that forced abstinence during incarceration brought a higher risk of overdose after release from the centers. Consistent follow-up sessions emerged as one of the most valuable components of sustained recovery. These meetings, whether with therapists, medical professionals, or peer groups, provided ongoing recovery guidance, reinforced accountability, and offered a safe space to discuss challenges.

Implications

This research has practical implications for both practitioners and recovering addicts. It can be used in the fields of health, social, clinical, and counseling psychology.

- Within health psychology, it highlights the healthy lifestyle that an addict adopts after treatment. According to the Biopsychosocial and Spiritual Model of health, there are four aspects on which an addict works to bring a holistic change in his life.
- As it is a social experience for many participants, there is a need to work on the societal norms as well. Society plays a crucial role in the development of an individual.
- From a clinical perspective, it can be better used by the therapist and the practitioners who treat the patient by staying humble and steadfast throughout the treatment process. The role of therapies, counseling, individual and group sessions plays a major role in the recovery phase of an individual.
- This study highlights the holistic approach in the recovery phase, in which every aspect matters, whether it's biological, psychological, social, spiritual, physical, or emotional. An individual should work on every perspective to recover wholly.

Conclusion

This study critically illuminates the challenges faced by recovering addicts after 100-day indoor treatment. It reveals the holistic approach adopted by each participant to cope with their issues. The findings highlight the impact of family, friends, social community, professional and personal life on recovering addicts in their sobriety period. As a result, sobriety is maintained by several factors and support systems. It is a lifelong journey for an addict to stay sober and rebuild his life. It is observed that the willpower of an addict is the most influential tool in achieving a normal, healthy life. Prioritizing oneself and seeking treatment on their own helps them a lot in moving towards positivity

and a productive life. Other helpful coping mechanisms include family support and therapeutic interventions. These two support systems played a vital role in the life of recovering addicts. It is a lifelong journey for an addict to stay sober and rebuild his life. People who resume their life after treatment can have a better understanding of biological factors, including physical health; psychological factors, like coping mechanisms, mood management, and craving management; social factors, such as reclaiming personal and social identity in society; and spiritual factors, which involve forgiveness and forgiving those who sent them for treatment.

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