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Reconstructing optimism in addiction recovery: spirituality, therapeutic community, and identity transformation

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ABSTRACT

Recovering from addiction is more than just stopping the consumption of substances; it is also about regaining a sense of self and future. One psychological resource that has been consistently recognized for its role in supporting recovery is optimism. On one hand, optimism can be thought of as a stable individual characteristic; but more importantly, it is closely linked to the social and spiritual settings of recovery. Therefore, the purpose of the research is to investigate how the concept of optimism gets reshaped by the experiences of the spiritual elements, therapeutic community, and personal identity transformation that are integral aspects of addiction recovery. For data collection, the method involved was qualitative interpretive and reflexive thematic analysis was utilized for the purpose of data analysis. Four participants were purposively selected to yield information-rich, in-depth accounts, following the information-power rationale for small-sample qualitative interview studies (Malterud et al., 2016) rather than a probability-based logic of generalization. Data were obtained through detailed semi-structured interviews of four subjects who either had undergone rehabilitation within spiritually-based therapeutic communities or were still doing their program. These data were subjected to an analyzing software called MAXQDA which allows a researcher to go through a series of coding procedures for data to find meaning, psychosocial-spiritual dynamics, etc., as a reflection of participants' life stories. Results showed that one's sense of optimism and being in control of their recovery are rooted in belief in oneself, motivation from moral and emotional values, a caring social environment, and hopes for a meaningful and fulfilling life ahead. Besides that, optimism works as a resource that can be transformed as it contributes to the development of personal confidence (self-efficacy), emotional equilibrium, spiritual well-being as well as community's common strength (collective resilience). This paper adds to the field of recovery science and offers optimism as a psychosocial-spiritual process which is dynamic, relational and contextual in addiction recovery context.



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Introduction

Substance addiction continues to be a major public health problem across the world, which greatly affects psychological functioning, interpersonal relationships, and existential wellbeing differently in various cultural contexts. Addiction recovery is a multifaceted process involving psychological, social, and existential levels of

human functioning. It is clear however, that while different pharmacological and psychosocial interventions have proven to be effective in decreasing the rates of drug use, long-term recovery is still hampered by the problems such as high relapse rates, the stigma of addiction, strained or destroyed human relationships, and post-recovery identity conflicts. Recovery science research literature in recent years reveals that recovery is not only defined by the quitting of substance use, but an individual's ability to construct new meanings in life, re-identify the self, and become future-oriented and empowered (Best & Laudet, 2021).

Under these circumstances, there is a growing scientific interest in positive psychological attributes like optimism, hope, and resilience. According to research, optimism is linked to more effective self-regulation, stress resistance, and improved mental health outcomes in various clinical populations (Carver & Scheier, 2014; Conversano et al., 2020). Optimism is the future-oriented psychological resource that allows addiction sufferers to continue through challenging periods, accept temporary failures of change, and be committed to change (Moos, 2021). In studies of individuals, those having more hope and optimism are less likely to return to addictive substances and have a better life after rehab (Schuman-Olivier et al., 2020; McKay, 2022).

Nonetheless, almost all the former studies regard optimism basically as an individual trait (trait-like constructs) assessed numerically and dissociated from the social, spiritual and cultural context in which recovery takes place, Carver et al. (2010), Scheier et al. (2021). Adopting this point of view has the drawback of restricting the depth of our knowledge of how people actually make up their optimism, how they maintain it and how they change their mindset in the course of their recovery process. A few scholars have even identified this flaw as one of the reasons for calling for a shift toward a different way of thinking about optimism. According to their view, optimism is a dynamic phenomenon which results from a combination of an individual's personal histories, relationships and more extensive meaning systems (Park, 2016; Wong, 2019).

In fact, while optimism has consistently been identified as a positive recovery resource, most of the current research focuses on the individual cognitive level of optimism and sees it as a personal rather than a social and spiritual component of the recovery process. Thus, very few insights are available into this area of how optimism is re-structured through real-life situations, therapeutic relationships, and changes in identity during the process of recovery from addiction.

It is not well explored in literature that how spirituality plays a role in fostering optimism during recovery phase. Spirituality could be one of the most important sources for a person to seek a life meaning and regulate his or her emotions while they are going through substance abuse treatment (Pargament, 2021; Brown et al., 2021). Through spirituality, the person is helped in understanding the suffering, getting rid of the remorse which has been bothering the person since then, and developing hope for betterment which is more reliable than before. Spiritual activities (e.g. prayer, reading a sacred scripture, participating in the religious community) are associated with greater psychological well-being and reduced stress of substance abusers who are on recovery (Kelly et al., 2020). However, the majority of these studies establish the correlation between being spiritual and having lower levels of psychological distress but few of them actually delve into the qualitative aspect of how individuals make spiritual practice their inner life, and how they experience spiritual practice as a source of optimism in day to day rehabilitation life.

Spirituality is only one element that supports recovery, the other being the social context. This paper focuses mainly on the Therapeutic Community (TC) model of addiction treatment, where human relationship, group solidarity, and social learning processes are the cornerstones for change of behavior and the transformation of self-identity (De Leon, 2020; Ashford et al., 2023). Latest studies suggest that group unity, counseling, and community participation have a significant role in determining if the recovery will work in the long term, perhaps even surpassing the role of purely technical and medicinal interventions (Bathish et al., 2024; Snodgrass et al., 2024; Pagis et al., 2025). On the Recovery Capital perspective, social support, mentorship (from alumni), feelings of belonging, community acceptance, etc., are regarded as the psychosocial resources supporting the patient's hope, believing and positive thinking (Best & Laudet, 2021; Galanter et al., 2024; Eddie et al., 2023).

Research published recently also shows that having strong community support and belonging helps a person see themselves as being recovering in a more positive way through shared experiences of empathy, emotional acknowledgment, and social learning (Kelly et al., 2023; Hoepfner et al., 2024). At the same time, the topic related to optimism as collective psychological energy has not been much studied via intensive qualitative methods that focus directly on the day-to-day experiences of individuals in recovery (Venuleo et al., 2020; Buckingham et al., 2023).

Identity transformation is yet another essential but only loosely tied aspect of optimism research. Addiction recovery not only involves a complete change of conduct but also a profound shift in identity. A person gets to let go of the old label which was "addict", a very shameful and sinful label with all its negative connotations, and become a new, "recovered individual" who deserves respect and has meaning in life (Best et al., 2016;

McIntosh & McKeganey, 2020). The transformation is deeply personal as it is related to how a person defines his or her self-image, views the personal past, and what is the person's role in the social setting. Addiction often leads to a shattered identity that is heavily rooted through social labels and negative life events. Therefore, without a serious effort to rebuild a person's identity, the behavioral aspects of therapy will most likely be superficial and thus the recovery will be short and easy.

Recent developments in recovery science point out that the construction of a new, post-recovery identity supported by the person's experience of meaningful life and social recognition may contribute significantly to recovery and also a great protection against relapse (Best & Laudet, 2021; Venuleo et al., 2020). Here, optimism is very much tied up with identity work since hope for the future can only be sustained if the person begins to perceive oneself as being changeable and one that deserves a change with a future that is realistic (Wong, 2019). This transformation of identity is especially important because it is often not sufficient to have a recovery that has no relapses if an individual has to also accept or internalize a new identity that one's community accepts and finds moral and a good future oriented. Through identity-based recovery model, qualitative researches suggest heavily that the sustainability of recovery is dependent greatly on whether a person manages to fully internalize a new identity, which is not only personally acceptable but also accepted and morally supported by the community of that person (McIntosh & McKeganey, 2020; Best et al., 2016). In this context, optimism acts as narrative device that connects the individual's experiences in the past with one's hopes for the future, thus enabling the person to tell a coherent and meaningful new life that is aimed towards a purpose. Owing to optimism being described as not merely being a positive outcome or expectation but in addition an internal narrative that describes "who I am now" and "where I am going", it plays an important role in forming a confident, steady, and empowering recovery identity.

From a modern recovery standpoint, optimism is a self-rebuilding exercise that enables the restoration of self-continuity, the enhancement of self-regard, and the cultivation of a less problematic orientation toward the future, following a period of destructive addictive behavior (Galanter, et al., 2024; Snodgrass, et al., 2024). Although this interpretation of optimism is very much an innovation in recovery discourse and research, it has been seldom taken up for detailed study, particularly with the focus on how the reconstruction of the self and optimism interact with each other, especially in community-based addiction recovery and spiritual contexts. The majority of the papers have analyzed individual psychological outcomes and have not discussed how optimism is shaped or negotiated through relational experiences, spiritual activities and social interactions within recovery communities (Pagis, et al., 2025). This research lacuna has made evident the need for more qualitative studies which will view optimism neither as just a psychological individual trait but rather as a process of narrativization and self-construction that is intimately connected with and shaped by other factors. Through such studies one can arrive at an understanding of recovery that is holistic, context-sensitive, and truly humane (Venuleo, et al., 2020).

There are clear gaps in our understanding of optimism and addiction. A good portion of the studies still consider optimism mainly as an unchanging personality trait, which leads to insufficient understanding of how optimism itself is built, negotiated, and rebuilt throughout and as a changing aspect of a person's recovery story through a complex web of psycho social-spiritual layers (Conversano et al., 2020). On one hand, we know that spirituality, therapeutic community, and identity transformation each have the potential to support recovery. However, there are still a few integrated studies that explore how these three factors interact and influence optimism in general, especially when we consider the non-Western community based rehabilitation programs which differ in language, belief, and cultural values. (cf. Best & Laudet, 2021) To address this gap, the present study adopts a qualitative interpretive design using reflexive thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2021), an approach chosen because it allows optimism to be examined as a context-embedded, meaning-making process rather than as a static, numerically measured trait, which is better suited than cross-sectional quantitative trait assessments for capturing how optimism is constructed and reconstructed within spiritual, relational, and cultural settings.

Individuals in recovery who provide the subjective voices and stories that help us to understand the creation of meaning, hope and new identities from the inside out, remain the least represented voices in the mainstream literature. In addition, quantitative designs and external perspectives have been the major themes of the literature so far. Studies published recently show that in most cases, the addiction recovery process has a significant contribution from spiritual experiences, social support and meaning-based coping strategies which develop gradually through the rehabilitation journey (Setiawan et al., 2024; Galanter et al., 2024). This finding clearly indicates that we are very much in need of in-depth research using the qualitative method, which gets the story from the point of view of an individual that is living out the events, so that optimism can be interpreted in a human and contextual manner, in line with the development of addiction recovery theories and practices (Venuleo et al. 2020).

Not only did this study move beyond the common idea of optimism as simply a person's attitude or fixed mindset by considering it as a dynamic psychosocial spiritual development. They also looked into how optimism gets changed or redeveloped through the recovery process from drug addiction by means of spirituality, therapeutic groups and identity transformation. They use a qualitative method to explain the story.

More particularly this paper wants to give a richer account of how optimism can be perceived both as a kind of spiritual practices-based, communal relationships-based and identity-based recovery resource. In other words, it wants to present the role of optimism as a transformative recovery resource that is rooted in spiritual practices, communal relationships and developing recovery identities. The study intends to examine three primary research areas through their qualitative data: (1) the individual's interpretation of optimism while undergoing recovery, (2) the reasons, if any, why optimism serves as a resource for lasting recovery and (3) the ways in which optimism is fostered and sustained in a rehabilitation setting that is structured and spiritual and communal in nature. On the whole, through presenting optimism as a changing, living and contextualized phenomenon, the research is likely to provide theoretical as well as practical value for recovery science, as well as for rehabilitation programs that are humanistic, empowering, and sustainable. Specifically, this research work could lead to the creation of a comprehensive addiction rehabilitation program that integrates spiritual meaning-making, peer support, and identity reconstruction as key intervention components of sustainable recovery.

Method

Research Design

This work is a qualitative interpretive research employing reflexive thematic analysis to get insight into how a person's hope is reborn throughout the recovery from addiction. We chose an interpretive methodology mainly as we were not interested in numerically quantifying optimism levels but rather to get a deeper understanding of what subjective meanings, lived experiences, psychological as well as spiritual-dynamic changes that individuals undergoing drug rehabilitation pass through. This interpretive method allowed the researchers to get an insight into how the participants constructed and related their hopes, spirituality, and therapeutic community, and identity transformations through their personal stories told in the context of recovering. Data were analyzed using reflexive thematic analysis technique suggested by Braun and Clarke (2021). We have selected this method as it allows great interpretive potential in finding and interpreting developing patterns of meaning in the data contextually.

This idea fits the direction of the research where, optimism is being characterized not only as a personal quality but as a dynamic, interactive, and evolving psychosocial-spiritual component of the recovery path from addiction. Therefore, these themes are viewed as creations of meaning that come about when personal experiences, social conditions, spiritual acts, and the researcher's reflection combine in the stage of data interpretation (Braun & Clarke, 2021; Creswell & Poth, 2018). This type of study design also corresponds with the trend in qualitative health studies and understanding recovery in relation to drug use, where the recovery process is seen as a way that people reconstruct their life meaning, social bonds, and identity (Best & Laudet, 2021; Slade et al., 2021).

Participants

Four subjects in or beyond recovery of addictions at a rehabilitation program that used primarily therapeutic communities as the method were selected for the study. They had a past of drugs and alcohol dependence as well as the experience of living in the same rehab facility. Inclusion criteria were being adult, having spent several months in rehabilitation program, able to verbally reflect on his/her recovery experiences and willingness to give informed consent. Through purposive sampling, participants were chosen in such a way to include a diversity of recovery experiences and their involvement in therapeutic communities. A small number of participants was deliberately chosen with a view to getting very in-depth data and rich information which is in principle aligned with the methodological characteristic of the interpretive qualitative approach that values depth over statistical validity (Creswell & Poth, 2018; Braun & Clarke, 2021). Sample adequacy was evaluated using the information-power framework (Malterud et al., 2016), whereby a narrowly focused study aim, a specific and information-rich participant group, and an in-depth, iterative analytic strategy jointly justify a small sample size; data generation continued until no substantially new patterns of meaning emerged across the four accounts. Credibility and transferability were supported through the researcher's sustained reflexive engagement with the transcripts, an iterative audit trail linking codes, subthemes, and themes (documented in MAXQDA), and the use of participants' own language in reporting findings, consistent with Lincoln and Guba's (1985) trustworthiness criteria.

Data Collection

Data collection was carried out via in-depth, semi-structured interviews that were developed to investigate the participants' personal understanding of optimisms, spirituality as a factor in healing, aspects of therapeutic community dynamics, and identity transformations throughout recovery. The interview guide was open-ended and flexible allowing the researcher to tailor questions to the participant's stories and explore spontaneously generated themes. The researcher conducted individual interviews that lasted from 60 to 90 minutes, depending on the participants' availability, and used the language with which the participants were most familiar. Informed consent was obtained for recording the interviews and subsequently transcribing them word-for-word. Maintaining strict ethical standards included informing participants about the purpose of the study, protecting participants' privacy, keeping participants' data confidential, using pseudonyms, and making sure participants know that they were allowed to stop taking part at any time.

Data Analysis

Data analysis was carried out via reflexive thematic analysis based on a method described by Braun and Clarke (2021). Firstly, the analysis was initiated by going through the audio transcripts of the participant's interviews repeatedly in order to get a general picture of participants' views towards optimism, spirituality, social relationships, and addiction recovery. Then, the researcher identified significant meaning units through the participants' stories and assigned them labels that is, the researcher did the first level of coding. Codes that were associated with each other were sorted into subthemes and from these emerged the main themes that reflected the central pattern of understanding and that were in harmony with the study's objectives. Throughout the process the researcher kept reflecting and iterating, going back and forth between the transcripts, codes, and themes for consistency and in-depth interpretation. In order to systematically organize, manage, and classify the data, the MAXQDA software was used to support the data analysis. Consistent with Braun and Clarke's (2021) guidance on reflexive thematic analysis, coding was treated as an organic, interpretive process rather than a fixed procedure to be checked for agreement between independent coders; inter-rater reliability statistics (e.g., Cohen's kappa) were therefore not calculated, as such measures assume a coding-reliability paradigm that is conceptually inconsistent with reflexive TA's constructionist epistemology. Rigor was instead pursued through the researcher's sustained reflexive engagement and the iterative, documented movement between transcripts, codes, and themes described above.

Results and Discussions

The thematic analysis suggests that optimism on the way to recovery from addiction is a rather complex concept that results from a blend of personal meaning, emotional experiences, social relations, spiritual activities, and the characteristics of the rehab facility as its context. Optimism is shown not to be just one kind of attitude or mental state, rather as constantly changing process that connects how one makes sense of life, how she/he reinvents her/himself, and how one stays committed to recovery even in the long run. Data results have been grouped into 3 major themes corresponding to the 3 main research aims: the nature of optimistic beliefs, their value, and how to create more optimism. This concept has been represented in the diagram below: The themes below are presented first as coded empirical patterns drawn directly from participants' accounts, with theoretical interpretation of these patterns reserved for the Discussion section.

Together, the results show that optimism during substance use recovery is a multifaceted quality, which gets shaped and reshaped as a consequence of an interaction between meaning made in life, personal emotional experiences, religious rituals, interpersonal relationships, and rehabilitation settings. Optimism is fundamental and it can be viewed from three different angles: one deals with the understanding of what optimism is about, the second one is about the value or worth we give our optimism, and the last one is on a practical approach or ways of cultivating optimism. The concept of optimism itself is seen as the deep inner trust in oneself, which stems from a spiritual context and is backed up by one's contemplation and prayer, the belief that Divine support is with us, and the bringing of religion into daily life is one of the main factors behind that self-trust. In other words, the meaning is grounded in, and sustained by, moral and emotional motives like guilt, love for the family, a longing to make up for past mistakes, and hope that a new life will bring with it a meaningful existence and the rebuilding of one's identity.

What's interesting is that these research findings reveal an important link between a person's level of optimism and their ability to recover as the positive mental attitude not only builds up personal confidence but also deepens spiritual connection and creates supportive therapeutic communities. Owing to these effects of an optimistic outlook, it naturally leads to one's greater ability to take on life challenges through their inner strength and a sense of small triumphs that result in self-efficacy. This internal motivation that stems from an optimistic attitude and shared experiences. All these factors together lead from an addicted identity to becoming a recovery identity and a new positive future orientation is created that is healthy, meaningful and sustainable at the same time.

also cultivated in the presence of a safe, highly regimented environment, spiritual practice that is maintained constantly, being under the guidance of the professionals, and living in a community that creates mutual bonding

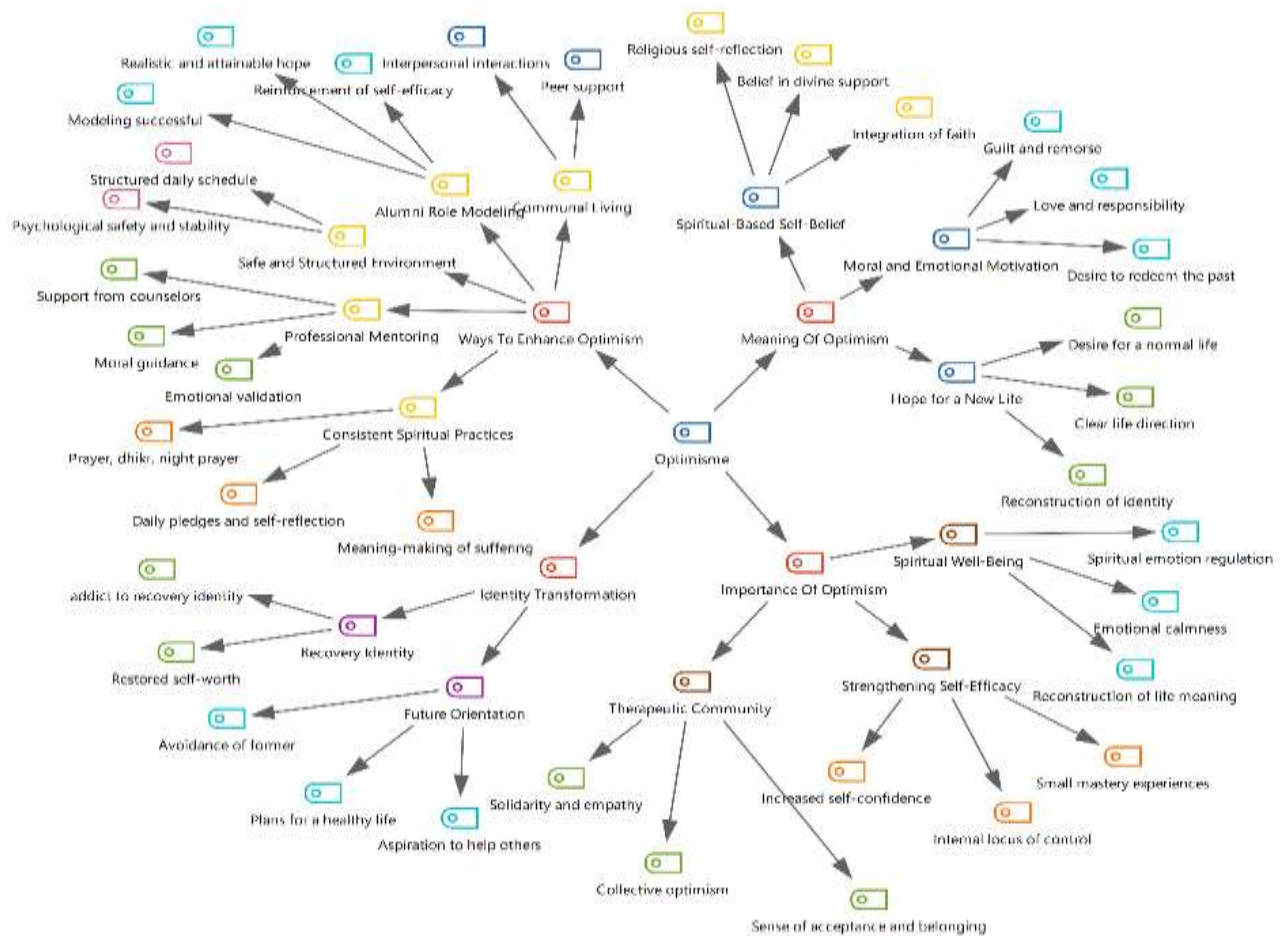


Figure 1 <Results of Data Processing Using MAXQDA>

This is not very important, but still to take look at the partial result, let us have a look at the results:

Meaning of Optimism

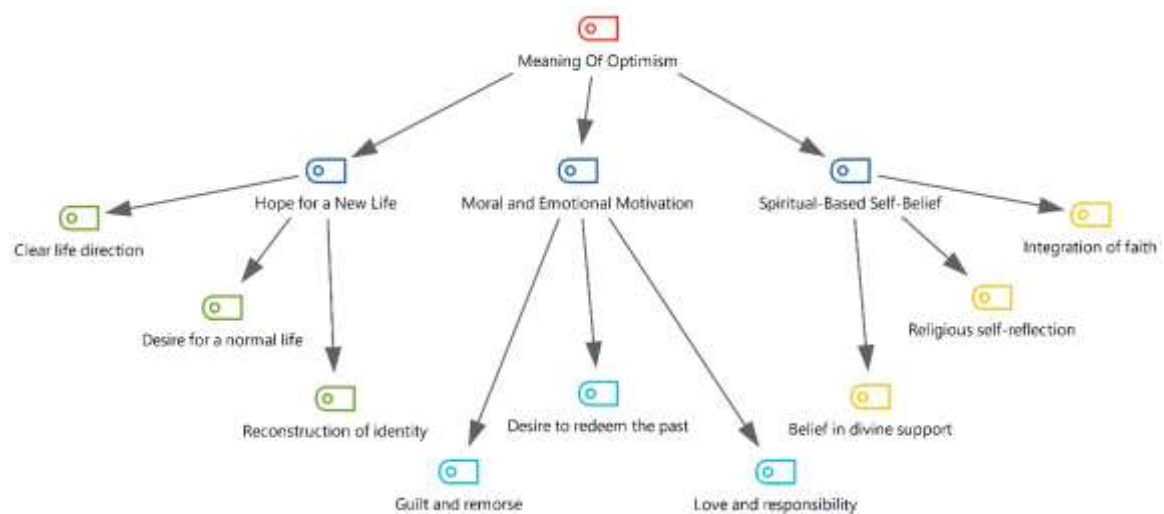


Figure 2 <Meaning of Optimism>

The second dimension shows us that optimism, on behalf of ourselves or of other human beings, is also fostered through highly human moral and emotional reasons. Feeling guilty or regretting about past actions,

loving the family, taking charge of family, and wanting to do good again can be psychological energy sources for change. These moral emotions don't lead one to be less optimistic, but actually, on the contrary, they lead people to deeper levels of optimism by providing a moral compass and giving a meaning of recovery. At the same time, the third dimension highlights that people generally see optimism as the belief in a new, even more, normal, meaningful life of purpose. The longing that reflects the idea of being healthy, having a clear direction and rebuilding a self-identity without the past label of addiction will be the basis of the hope. In a way, optimism works as a story of the future joining together the past suffering and the possibility to change oneself while making it a base for forming a recovery identity, which is dignified, empowered.

Optimism as a recovery from addiction, according to the results of the thematic analysis and illustrated in the conceptual map, is viewed as an interpretation which is based mostly on these three factors: self-confidence grounded in spirituality, moral and emotional motivation, and expectation of a new life. Optimism within the spiritual dimension originates from the harmonizing of faith with daily lives, being demonstrated by religious meditation and trust in God's support. The perception that God creates situations which offer change leads to self-esteem that is supported by more than just individual capabilities but also by a deep-level connection that offers stability, hope, and psychological power. Therefore, optimism doesn't refer merely to a happy-go-lucky kind of thought, but rather to life-views that are based on believing that the only way to achieve a life-change is through working together, that effort is never in vain and that such a life-change is something that is totally desirable for a person.

The Importance of Optimism in Recovery

Research clearly indicates that optimism is central to the maintenance of recovery from addiction. Through it, optimism helps increase the belief in one's ability to do the recovery, as reflected in greater confidence in oneself, developing an internal locus of control, and enhancing the capacity through small mastery experiences of the recovery challenging situations. The accomplishments of day-to-day routines, rules compliance through the program, and suppression of cravings all together bring about a clear and tangible realization to the participants that indeed change is possible. Such a process builds-up confidence and encourages perseverance despite encountering obstacles, therefore opening the path for Optimism to become the engine that drives the behavior enabling recovery to continue. In addition, it is found that optimism not only boosts one's efficacy but also significantly contributes toward the promotion of spiritual and social well-being. Spiritual health is characterized in terms of emotional tranquility, emotion regulation based on spiritual aspects, and the reinterpretation of life's meaning as a result of spiritual rebuilding. Participants are then able to make sense of suffering within the framework of development and learning. Regarding social well-being, optimism acts as a form of collective power within the therapeutic community that is aimed at fostering belonging, mutual aid, and empathy, while also sharing one's hopes. A sense of belonging to the community increases the social network of recovery which is a crucial element both for reducing isolation, lowering relapse risks and supporting sustainable longterm recovery.

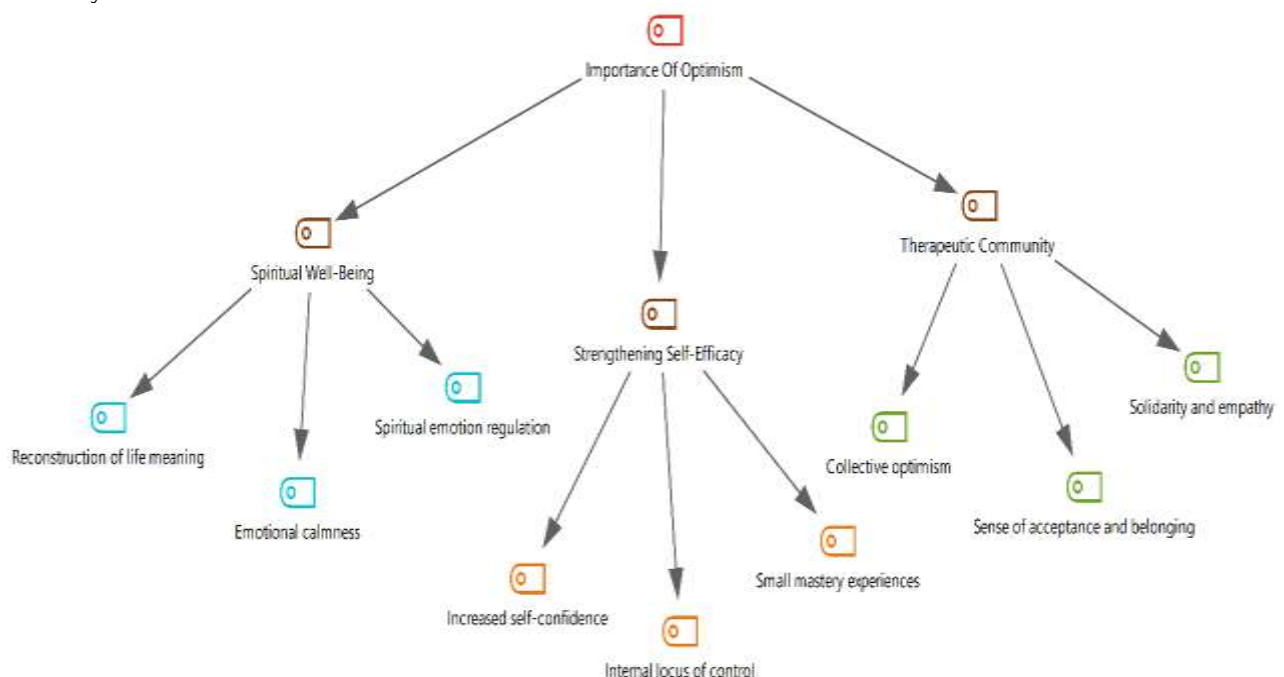


Figure 3 <Importance of Optimism>

Increasing Optimism in Recovery

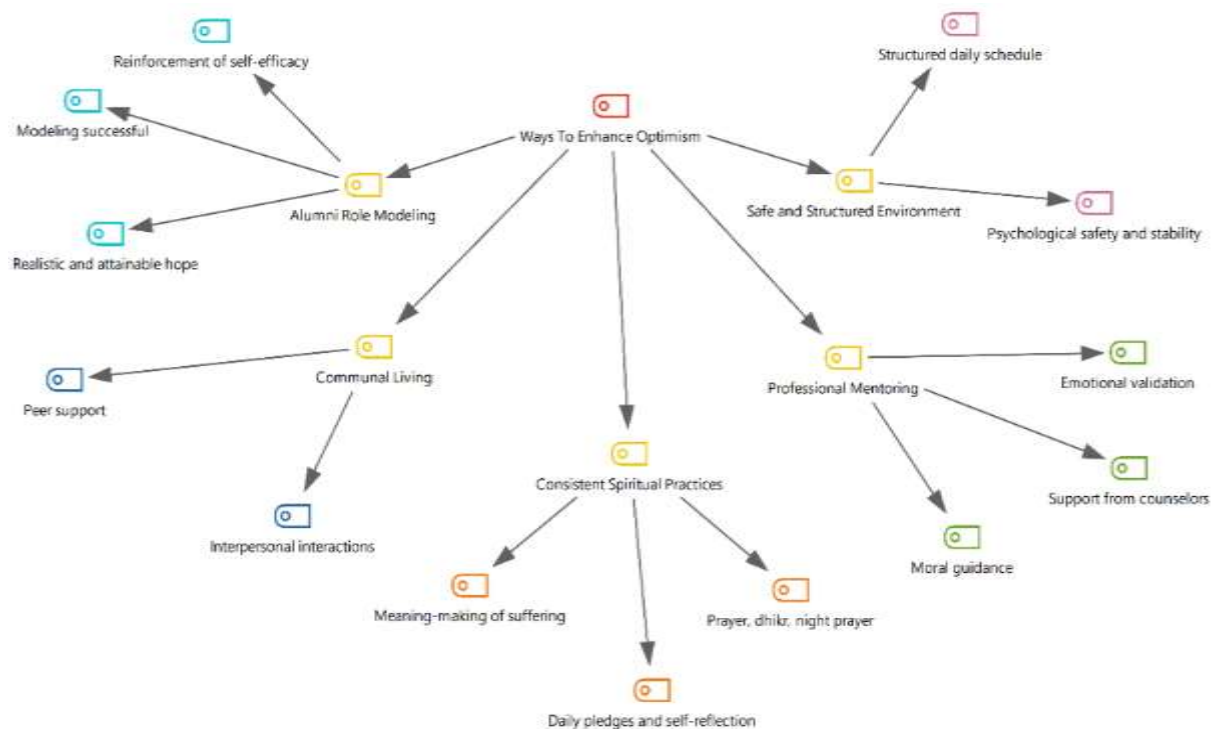


Figure 4 <The Ways to Enhance Optimism>

Research results suggest that optimism regarding sobriety or substance use disorder recovery is created through a process of several intertwined, psychological, social and spiritual mechanisms rather than just showing up out of nowhere. A safe and secure environment is a psychological foundation that leads to a sense of safety, security, and one's control. An unchanged daily timetable, a predictable activity structure, and limitations on addictive behavior triggers make people feel less nervous about the world and give them the feeling of having a grip through discipline and competence. Such a setting where people experience, in a way, a consistent routine through the different activities, provides a sort of success that they can refer to when talking to themselves about their recovery and thus it is the main support of the idea that the change is not only possible but something you get through if you take it seriously. This is how optimism becomes a real and grounded belief and not just wishful thinking.

The structural support is the first part that comes to mind. Along with this, however, the consistent spiritual practices and social relations that are really meaningful also play a large role in the encouragement of optimism. Spiritual practices like prayer in the night, daily reflection, the practice of vows, meditation, etc. are major instruments in the reinterpretation of suffering and the regulation of emotions. This allows the participants to keep a calmer and more sustained sense of hope. Pastoral counseling and modeling in behavior by recovering addicts serve as other ways to help individuals feel optimistic. Emotional validation, moral guidance, and modeling by showing people that it is possible to get well through recovery are the ways in which mentors are able to help a person feel optimistic again. Finding a recovery home within a small community allows the sharing of optimism between each other. The feeling of belonging is strengthened through solidarity, empathy, and mutual support at the same time. Positive interactions and a shared future encourage one to see recovery as a possibility and a direction to take in life. This will not only help one to build a new social identity of being in recovery, but also lead to long-term optimism as a result.

Identity Transformation and Future Orientation

Studies generally show that optimism is one of the main elements that drive identity changes during the addiction recovery process. The shift happens from the old, stigmatized identity of an addict to a more valued, empowered, and socially accepted recovery identity. This identity change is visible through the rebuilding of self-worth, the creation of a positive, healthy future orientation, the development of meaningful life plans, and the desire to help others as a new purpose in life. In that way, optimism becomes an emotion that links the memories of hardship and sufferings to the current state of recovery and the vision of a desirable life, which in turn allows the participants to weave their narratives of the past, present, and future into coherent, meaningful, and sustainable life stories.

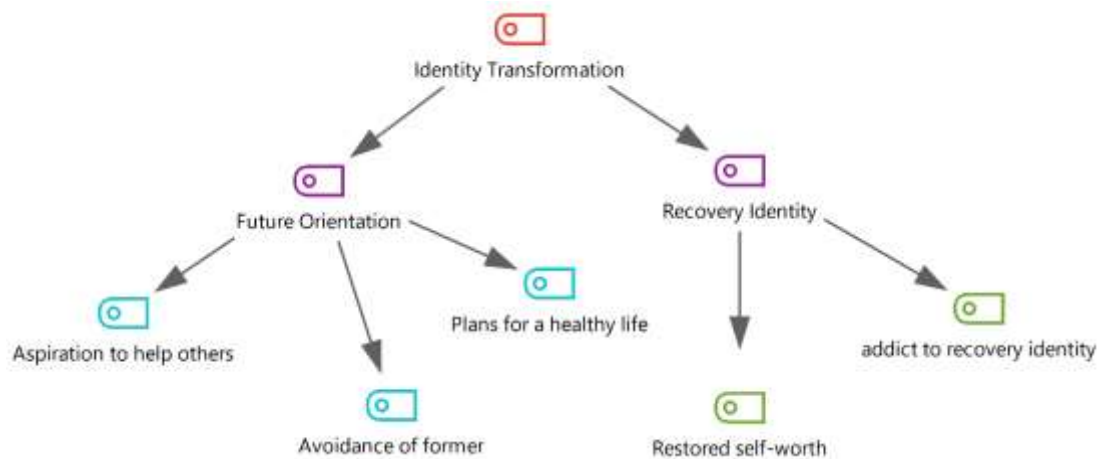


Figure 5 <Identity Transformation and Future Orientation>

Discussion

The results of our research support the view that optimism during addiction recovery does not refer only to a fixed psychological state or a certain kind of personality. Rather, it is an evolving and constructive aspect of psychosocial and spiritual life. Over time, individuals acquire optimism through the constant interplay among personal meanings, feelings, spiritual activities, relationships, and a healing supportive environment (Best & Laudet, 2021; Venuleo et al., 2020). This research enriches the positive psychology area, as the latter mostly perceives optimism as an individual trait which remains almost unchanged over time even if the social environment is different (Carver & Scheier, 2014; Scheier et al., 2021). Pertaining specifically to the realm of recovering from addictions, optimism is seen here as a psychological asset which is integrated to its social context where it is also affected by physical and social variables, interpersonal experiences and the meaning systems that gradually are being built up during the course of recovery (Conversano et al., 2020; Moos, 2021).

On another hand, the findings of this study demonstrate that optimism grows side by side with changes in identity and social relations, in contrast to being only an inherent individual feature. Optimism serves as a psychological technique by means of which people can re-define what happened in the past, control moral feelings and work on their future in such a way, that can be considered to adapt more successfully (Wong, 2019; Tangney et al., 2020). This viewpoint is consistent with the latest progress in recovery science and identity-based recovery, which show that long-term recovery is heavily dependent on identity reconstruction, social recognition, and engaging in the life of the community in a meaningful way (Best et al., 2016; McIntosh & McKeganey, 2020; Best & Laudet, 2021). In this sense, besides being a positive attitude towards the future, optimism, as well, is a kind of transformative energy of the process of identity change, social relations, and daily life practices throughout addiction recovery (Venuleo et al., 2020; Wong, 2019).

Studies find that hope is a kind of inner voice rooted in spiritual beliefs that one can achieve one's goals (a kind of self belief through the power of the divine). Hope and expectation for life improvement were associated with spiritual connection and deep faith contemplation. For example, an interviewee shared, " God keeps on giving me chances through the years... without Him, I would have been finished long ago." This finding reveals that hope or positive mindset doesn't mainly come from just weighing up a person's abilities and thinking logically, but from religious/sacred self-confidence that brings about a feeling of existential security. This finding confirms the spiritual coping theory in which a person's spirituality is seen as the key way of understanding suffering and managing emotional distress, during periods of extended crises (Pargament, 2021). In overcoming addiction, suffering involves aspects like the body and mind only; it also refers to spiritual suffering in which an addicted person feels like he or she has failed, that life has lost its meaning, and that there is the social stigma associated with the past. A spiritually based meaning of life is such a framework to interpret this suffering as not punishment, nor death, but as a part of a process of getting to know oneself and growing (Park, 2016; Wong, 2019). In a recent review of substance use disorders, it is reported that when one's faith helps form the meaning of one's life, that is, spiritually rooted meaning, emotional stability will be well maintained and distress will be greatly minimized (Brown et al., 2021; Kelly et al., 2020).

Moreover, considering recovery from addictions, which is associated with relapses, guilt, and previous failures, is where spirituality functions as a kind of buffer of hopes that helps people sustain hopefulness without becoming despairing (Pargament, 2021). Spirituality as a spiritual practice when regularly followed helps emotional stability, promotes one's acceptance of who they are, and a reconnected sense of one's value and one's place in life which is all important components for lasting optimism (Moos, & Moos, 2021). The most recent

investigations further indicate that the state of spirituality can act as a safeguard in that it diminishes the chances of relapse and helps one maintain recovery over the course of one's life by increasing the perception of life meaning and moral obligation to change (Best & Laudet, 2021). As a result, spirituality is not solely being employed as a passive coping mechanism but actually functioning as a very vital psycho-social resource that facilitates people to recover while holding onto their hope, resilience, and sustaining recovery in their lives.

Besides their spiritual component, optimism in life can also be rooted in very human moral and emotional motivations like shame, sorrow, affection for close relations, the wish to make the past right. The participants talked about their urge to change by saying, "I've been terrible with my family... now I just want to make them forgive me." These moral sentiments act like a spiritual power that propels optimism towards meaningful and value-oriented objectives. This research result matches the recent papers that indicate moral emotions such as shame and a sense of duty may serve as behavioral change initiators stronger than the mere external motivation (Tangney et al., 2020; Leamy et al., 2022). Consequently, optimism within this context is not merely a hope for recovery, but a hope for a person who wants to be on a morally higher level.

In addition, being optimistic means hoping that life can once again be normal, meaningful, and purposeful. This hope consists of wanting not only to be physically healthy but also to work, get along with family and friends, and to define oneself without the stigma and identity of being an "addict". A participant said, "I would like my life to be normal, like other people's, a life that is purposeful and guided." The research results are consonant with that proposed by Snyder's hope theory which basically describes a hope as a vision for the future, determination and courage to move toward realizing these goals as well as having some sort of plan or means to getting there (Snyder et al., 2020). Optimism, in this situation, serves as a way of looking forward that links the past, where the person had to suffer, with the possible future self-transformation of the individual.

The discussion below illustrates that a good attitude is a strategy to help maintain recovery. A good attitude is one factor which leads to self-efficacy, which is in evidence because of increased self-confidence, a belief that one can control their destiny (internal locus of control), and capability to face hardship (resilient). Examples of people saying something about their achievements include statements like "I used to have no confidence, but now I can stick to my schedule and persevere." It appears to us that the data support Bandura's theory of self-efficacy, in which he claims experiences of overcoming obstacles one by one are the main sources of one's self-confidence (Bandura, 1997), as well as recent research which shows that self-efficacy is the main factor predicting whether a recovering person can stay sober and if a drinker will relapse (Witkiewitz et al., 2021).

In addition to psychological aspects, optimism positively affects people's spiritual and emotional health. Spiritual activities give participants a way to calm their inner selves, cope with anxiety, and see their pain as being connected to their journey of maturation rather than an unnecessary suffering. When participants said, for example, "If my heart is restless, I pray... when I let go, I feel strong again," it showed that optimism could be built upon spiritual emotional regulation. These results align with the Scopus Q1 study that showed spiritual well-being is a safeguard against psychological problems in addiction recovery and is, at the same time, a way to enhance the quality of life (Kelly et al., 2020; Brown et al., 2021).

Socially, hope takes shape as a shared energy in the therapeutic milieu. Positive social interactions, a feeling of being in it together, and getting a supportive attitude from one's peers lead to a collective atmosphere of hope that, in turn, boosts everyone's individual hope. One person said, "If I see somebody else going tough times and doing okay, then I realize I am not the only one doing that." This result supports the Therapeutic Community model that looks to relationships, solidarity and group cohesion primarily as agents of recovery change (De Leon, 2020). As far as recovery capital model is concerned, this mutual hope represents social capital that brings isolation to an end, deepens involvement and enhances the longevity of the recovery process (Best & Laudet, 2021).

Optimism is further supported by professional counselors, mentoring programs, and positive examples of former graduates. Professional counselors, on one hand, give support and encouragement, and, on the other hand, give advice on the right way. Former students, however, prove to participants that recovery exists and is a possible way out in the form of real cases. A statement like, "He was like me... Now he's successful," taken verbatim, shows how the observational learning method strengthens belief in achievable dreams. Apart from matching up nicely with the main ideas of social learning theory (Bandura, 1997), these results are corroborated by latest studies that highlight the role of the therapeutic alliance in the outcome of drug treatment programs (Venuleo et al., 2020). In general, the optimism factor in this research turned out to be the main mechanism of the identity change. It gave power to the respondents who started reshaping their identities, feeling good about themselves, and planning for the future (Best et al., 2016; McIntosh & McKeganey, 2020; Wong, 2019). They stopped seeing themselves as hopeless and instead embraced themselves as sober individuals with purpose, goals, and values. Besides identifying a positive aspect to recovery optimism our study supports what identity-focused

recovery literature suggests (McIntosh & McKeganey 2020) by showing that the latter is an important part of the whole process of identity formation.

This study, in conclusion, makes a crucial theoretical contribution by presenting optimism as an integrated and transformational process that connects spirituality, moral emotions, social relationships, and environmental aspects within the context of addiction recovery. Optimism is, to be sure, more than a positive state; it can also be seen as a psychosocial-spiritual force that allows people to keep going, to change, and to create new and more meaningful lives that are sustainable.

Limitations

Several limitations should be acknowledged. First, because participants were drawn exclusively from individuals who remained engaged with spiritually-based therapeutic community programs, the sample carries an inherent selection bias toward those for whom optimism and recovery efforts were already sustained; individuals who disengaged or relapsed are not represented, which limits transferability to the broader population of people in recovery. Second, no standardized quantitative optimism instrument (e.g., LOT-R, ASQ) was administered, consistent with this study's interpretive qualitative design; the findings therefore describe optimism as it is subjectively narrated by participants rather than as a psychometrically validated construct, and should be read alongside, not as a replacement for, trait-based measurement approaches (cf. Carver & Scheier, 2014). Third, the study was conducted within a single cultural and programmatic setting, so the specific spiritual and communal expressions of optimism reported here may not generalize to other recovery models, secular programs, or cultural contexts. Future research combining this interpretive approach with longitudinal or mixed-methods designs, larger and more heterogeneous samples, and comparison across recovery models would help clarify the boundary conditions of these findings.

Conclusions

This study reveals how optimism helps individuals overcome addiction. It is not just a feeling that randomly pops out in them nor is it only a psychological state of the mind of an individual, but rather a transformative process that is the result of various changes at the level of spirituality, moral feelings, human relationships, and the rehab environment which supports the persons undergoing these changes. It means to the researchers here that optimism is spiritually founded self-confidence, an expectation of a better, more fulfilling sort of life, and a moral determination to restructure life as a healthier and more honorable one. In overcoming addiction it is through optimism that self-efficacy is built, emotional control is achieved, spiritual wellness improves, and through the backing provided by a therapeutic community that is emotionally responsive and based on solidarity, optimism at a personal level is converted into a shared sense of positivity. Moreover, this study demonstrates that optimism can also be a powerful factor in changing one's identity when addiction recovery is at stake by helping addicts shift from being persons who only care for the satisfaction of their own desires and who have no concern for the consequences of that satisfaction (as is normally the case in addicts), to becoming people with an active concern for others and a strong commitment towards making the world a better place for everyone. This is the recovery identity that is not based on what one has done but rather on the potential one sees in the future and the steps one is making in that direction. This extends existing identity-based accounts of recovery, such as the Social Identity Model of Recovery (Best et al., 2016) and the recovery capital framework (Best & Laudet, 2021), by foregrounding optimism itself, rather than group belonging or accumulated resources alone, as the psychosocial-spiritual mechanism that binds spiritual practice, moral emotion, and social relationship into a coherent forward-looking identity. As a result, this work brings new ideas about the concept of recovery and explains that optimism is something that develops and changes together with the changes in the spiritual, psycho-social and relational life of the person on the recovering road. For practical purposes, however, the researchers stress the necessity of rehab programs that address the addicts not only by getting rid of their addiction but by helping them gain life meaning through the reinforcement of spiritual and psychological aspects that support their ongoing development. This will help them not only get over their addiction but also lead meaningful and happy life in the future.

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