

The challenges of recovery resilience in drug addicted clients: An addiction counselor's perspective

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Abstract

Drug addiction is a problem for addicted clients who need help recovering from addiction counselors. However, the challenges of resilience to recovery in the outpatient rehabilitation process are caused by social stress and the lack of meaning in life. Therefore, the research objective was to explore the challenges of resilience in recovery from drug addiction from the perspective of addiction counselors. A descriptive phenomenological design was used, supported by in-depth interviews with two professional addiction counselors. Interviews were conducted in three comprehensive data collection sessions, which were then analyzed using qualitative descriptive techniques for data reduction, presentation, and conclusion. The research findings indicate that outpatient rehabilitation plays a crucial role in shaping the resilience of addicted clients, along with the role of addiction counselors. The growth of resilience is not only seen in the cessation of drug-use behavior but also in emotional, cognitive, spiritual, and social changes. There are seven ways to foster resilience in addicted clients, including more stable emotional management, religious coping, relapse prevention, future orientation, adaptive coping strategies, positive social relationships, and a positive self-concept. Family support, spirituality, the rehabilitation environment, and addiction counseling are important factors in strengthening resilience and sustaining recovery. The novelty of this research lies in the discovery of seven strategies for fostering resilience in drug-addicted clients: emotional management, relapse prevention, future orientation, adaptive coping strategies, positive social relationships, positive self-concept, and healthy lifestyle changes. These findings underscore the importance of integrating a spirituality-based counseling approach in drug addiction rehabilitation.

Introduction

In the world of addiction, there are various addictions ranging from smartphones, social media, sex, pornographic films, drugs, food, work, shopping, games, sports, and various others due to repetitive human behavior or what is called a "vicious cycle" (Salicetia, 2015; Supriyanto, 2021). Of all addictions, drug addiction is a chronic disease that relapses due to the ongoing effects of drugs on the brain and therefore requires recovery (Cheron & Kerchove d'Exaerde, 2021). The need for recovery from drug addiction is a complex process

and requires multiple interventions appropriate to each specific stage of recovery, including addiction counseling interventions with the involvement of addicted clients, families, and communities as a therapeutic alliance supporting successful recovery (Rotărescu & Sleath, 2016).

However, the recovery process faces challenges in the form of stigma arising from the community and family (Gutierrez et al., 2020; Motyka et al., 2022), so the role of addiction counselors in the rehabilitation process is to change this stigma (Ricciutti, 2023). A major challenge in the addiction counseling process for drug-addicted clients is growing self-readiness and resilience to face life after rehabilitation and preventing relapse (Yuan et al., 2024). However, the biggest challenge for drug-addicted clients is relapse even after undergoing a therapy program in drug rehabilitation (Mohd Nawawi et al., 2026). Relapse conditions arise because they are not resilient to the effects of social stress, one of which is the family that can foster resilience in addicted clients to maintain recovery from addiction (Calpe-López et al., 2022; Kusumawaty, 2021). Therefore, addiction counselors play a crucial role in fostering relapse prevention for addicted clients, as the key indicator of success in counseling for addicted clients is a return to normal life (Sinambela, 2023). The profession of addiction counselor is crucial for client recovery through their competence in counseling services. Therefore, the role of addiction counselors as professionals is not only to foster psychological well-being for drug-addicted clients but also to prepare a social environment ready to accept addicted clients, namely the family (Supriyanto et al., 2021). This fosters clients' confidence in recovery, although some addicted clients still have low self-confidence in recovering from drug addiction (Supriyanto & Hendiani, 2018).

However, preliminary studies have shown that addicted clients who are unable to resist the urge or desire to reuse drugs during outpatient rehabilitation are often unable to control the urge (craving) to reuse drugs, which can lead to stress, frustration, and even relapse. Furthermore, addicted clients with low self-resilience have not yet found meaning in their lives due to various obstacles. This condition is also influenced by negative childhood experiences (He et al., 2022). Therefore, addicted clients who possess the seven aspects of resilience: emotional regulation, impulse control, optimism, problem analysis, empathy, self-confidence, and achievement after undergoing rehabilitation (Reivich & Shatte, 2003), will at least be able to find meaning in their lives. Because, essentially, life's obstacles are only temporary and must be overcome, not insurmountable conditions (Hoskeri, 2024). However, addiction clients do not necessarily show the same resilience in undergoing the recovery adaptation process (Neenan & Dryden, 2021).

An empirical gap also emerged, revealing that not all drug addicts receive in-depth support that explores subjective experiences, particularly regarding the meaning of suffering, recovery struggles, and life goals. However, there is still limited evidence that addicted clients find meaning in the recovery process and build meaningfulness in their lives during outpatient rehabilitation. The ability to build resilience depends on the ability of addicted clients to face future life challenges (Rantelaen & Huwae, 2022). Addiction clients also build relationships with their families, focus on the future, and manage their emotions (Syaputri, 2021).

These factual and empirical gaps require analysis to help addicted clients develop resilience to prevent relapse. Therefore, the purpose of this study is to explore the resilience challenges faced by addicted clients in addiction recovery from the perspective of addiction counselors. A perspective from the addiction counselor's perspective will reveal the resilience process that develops during counseling in an outpatient rehabilitation program as something new compared to only examining the client's perspective. This qualitative research aims to explore the resilience challenges from the perspective of addiction counselors, particularly in outpatient rehabilitation settings, as research on addiction recovery remains limited despite the growing presence of addiction recovery research.

Therefore, a major role of the addiction counselor profession is to assess and analyze client conditions that impact counseling success (Cavaiola et al., 2021; Supriyanto, 2017; Supriyanto et al., 2021). The results of this resilience assessment can provide new findings and recommendations for appropriate counseling service models or counseling services to foster resilience in addiction recovery.

Methods

Design

This study uses a qualitative approach with a descriptive phenomenological design to explore the lived experiences of addiction clients and the challenges of recovery resilience from the perspective of addiction counselors. Phenomenological research is used to explore more deeply the subjective meanings and interpretations constructed by addiction counselors in the context of addiction recovery from the results of assessments and counseling in terms of developing client resilience. This phenomenological study applies the principle of limitation (epoché), which focuses only on resilience challenges in the recovery process, thus focusing on lived experiences.

Participants

The research subjects were addiction counselors at the National Narcotics Agency of Yogyakarta Special Region Province who had obtained an addiction counselor competency certificate from the Indonesian National Narcotics Agency. The counselors' places of work are at the Yogyakarta Special Region Province, Sleman Regency, and Bantul Regency levels. The research subjects consisted of five addiction counselors who had experience treating drug addiction clients through outpatient drug rehabilitation and had more than 10 years of work experience. The use of sampling is purposive sampling by considering the inclusion criteria and consent as research subjects. The inclusion criteria used are work experience, professional experience, and involvement in the counseling process (assessment, intervention, and evaluation).

Instruments

The primary instrument of this research was an in-depth interview using an interview guide. The interview guide was developed based on the core constructs of resilience, including emotional regulation, impulse control, optimism, problem analysis, empathy, self-confidence, and achievement after undergoing rehabilitation (Reivich & Shatte, 2003). The in-depth interview questions were designed to obtain comprehensive and reflective information about clients' experiences of resilience in recovering from addiction and to interpret the meaning of the resilience process in recovery.

Procedure

Data collection was conducted through in-depth, face-to-face interviews at the National Narcotics Agency Office of the Special Region of Yogyakarta Province. Each subject (addiction counselor) was interviewed three times, ensuring comprehensive information. The entire process received approval from the addiction counselor.

Data Analysis

Data were analyzed using qualitative descriptive methods (Miles & Huberman, 1994). The analysis process, starting with the data reduction stage, focused on information about the resilience challenges faced by addicted clients in their recovery from addiction during outpatient rehabilitation. The next stage was data presentation, which involved in-depth identification to identify indicators of success and barriers to resilience development in

recovery from addiction. Finally, data conclusions were drawn, revealing new findings that could inform further recommendations.

Results

The first process of analysis, based on the results of interviews with five addiction counselors, paints a picture of the resilience of drug-addicted clients in the outpatient rehabilitation process and its development. Addiction counselors explained that there were changes that appeared in addicted clients that were not only seen from the cessation of drug addiction behavior but also the emergence of emotional, cognitive, spiritual, and social aspects. The results of the interviews found the fact that each addicted client had a different recovery dynamic, but all of them had a growth in the ability to deal with life's pressures, control the urge to relapse, and build a more adaptive lifestyle. Then there were seven summaries of interview findings from the client's emotional regulation ability, impulse control, optimism, problem analysis, empathy, self-confidence, and life achievements.

In terms of emotional regulation, changes in emotional management have emerged, but a religious dimension has also emerged. The following are the results of interviews with addiction counselors.

"Addicted clients experience changes in their ability to manage their emotions. Before undergoing outpatient rehabilitation, addicted clients tend to be easily angered, impulsive, and sensitive and have difficulty controlling their emotions when facing problems. After undergoing rehabilitation, clients become calmer, more stable, and able to respond to situations more rationally." (K1, K3)

"Improved emotional regulation is influenced by religious activities and positive activities implemented during rehabilitation. Addicted clients begin to practice prayer, dhikr (remembrance of God), ask for forgiveness (istighfar), recite the Quran, and occupy themselves with productive activities. Furthermore, some addicted clients choose to go for walks, spend time alone, or calm themselves before making decisions when facing emotional stress." (K2, K4, K5)

Furthermore, regarding impulse control, drug addiction can be reduced, and people can divert their attention to positive activities, as shown in the following interview.

"The ability of addicted clients to control their urges to use drugs has improved significantly. They stated that they no longer have a strong desire to use drugs because they are aware of the negative impacts on their physical, mental, and social health." (K2, K3)

"Addicted clients' strategies for preventing relapse include removing themselves from old risky environments, avoiding friends who are addicted to drugs, and replacing urges to use drugs with positive activities. Some addicted clients also choose to immediately leave situations that trigger cravings, occupy themselves with work or religious activities, and strengthen their life principles as a form of self-control." (K1, K4, K5)

Then, a state of optimism for change emerges, leading to optimism through motivation and hope in life, as seen in the following interview.

"Addicted clients have more positive hopes and outlooks on life after undergoing outpatient rehabilitation. They then begin to think about the future more realistically and constructively, such as the desire to work, start a family, help their parents, and live a healthier and more meaningful life." (K1, K5)

"The optimism of addicted clients is also evident in their belief that they can change into better individuals than before. Family support, the rehabilitation environment, and social acceptance are important factors that strengthen the client's hope and motivation to maintain the recovery process." (K2, K3)

Then, addicted clients develop the ability to analyze problems, leading to the emergence of coping strategies and growth in their thought patterns, as in the following interview.

"The ability of addicted clients to address problems so that they resolve them not by escaping through drugs but by starting to use more adaptive coping strategies. Some addicted clients exhibit introspective behavior, choosing to remain silent when emotions are heightened, calming themselves before acting, and trying to think more rationally when facing conflict. Changes in religious mindsets also emerge, indicating an increase in problem-analyzing abilities and more mature decision-making compared to before rehabilitation. (K2, K3, K4, K5)

Furthermore, empathy for addicted clients also emerged during the rehabilitation process within their family and peer groups, as seen in the following interviews.

"There is an increase in social awareness and empathy among addicted clients. They are beginning to understand the plight of others, respect others, and demonstrate greater concern for their families and their surroundings." (K1, K2)

"Changes in empathy are evident in the behavior of addicted clients, who are beginning to listen to friends' concerns, provide advice to fellow survivors, help friends experiencing difficulties, and strive to maintain better relationships with their families. The emergence of empathy is an important indicator of successful rehabilitation in fostering healthier social behavior." (K3, K4, K5)

Furthermore, the following interview data demonstrates that self-confidence has an impact on personality and physical well-being.

"Addicted clients experience increased self-confidence after undergoing rehabilitation. They begin to feel more confident in their abilities, assume greater responsibilities, and are more confident in social interactions." (K1, K5)

"Improved physical condition, emotional stability, and family acceptance contribute to strengthening the self-confidence of addicted clients. Some addicted clients also begin to feel capable of living independently and are optimistic about facing a future free from drug dependence." (K2, K3, K4)

Finally, self-actualization emerges from positive changes in habits.

"Rehabilitation produces various positive changes in the lives of addicted clients. They begin to develop more organized, disciplined, and religious habits. These changes are evident in increased consistency in worship, maintaining physical health, participating in positive activities, and building better social relationships." (K2, K4)

"Furthermore, some addicted clients feel more appreciated and accepted by their families and their communities. Consistent positive behavioral changes are an important milestone in the drug addiction recovery process." (K1, K3, K5)

Overall, interviews with five addiction counselors demonstrated that outpatient rehabilitation plays a crucial role in fostering resilience in drug addiction. Positive changes were seen in the clients' emotional regulation, impulse control, optimism, problem-solving,

empathy, self-confidence, and life achievement. Although resilience varies among clients, all clients demonstrated more adaptive psychological development and improved ability to maintain sustainable recovery. A summary of the data reduction results is presented in Table 1.

Table 1. Mapping of Interview Results with Addiction Counselors on Resilience Growth in Drug Addiction Clients

Resilience Aspects	Interview Result Mapping	Coding	Category
Emotional Regulation	The client becomes calmer and less prone to anger after rehabilitation	More stable emotions	Emotional Management
Emotional Regulation	The client controls emotions through prayer, dhikr, and worship	Religious coping	Emotional Management Strategies
Emotional Regulation	The client chooses to go for walks or be alone when emotions escalate	Emotional diversion	Adaptive Strategies
Impulse Control	The client does not want to return to drug use	Relapse denial	Self-Control
Impulse Control	The client distances himself from his former drug-using environment	Avoidance of risky environments	Relapse Prevention
Impulse Control	The client keeps himself busy with positive activities	Craving replacement activities	Coping Strategies
Optimism	The client hopes to work and live a better life	Future hope	Future Orientation
Optimism	The client wants to make his family happy	Family motivation	Social Support
Optimism	The client believes he can change for the better	Self-change beliefs	Internal Motivation
Problem Analysis	The client is more rational in facing problems	Rational thinking	Problem Solving
Problem Analysis	The client chooses to remain silent and calm before acting	Response control	Adaptive Coping Strategies
Problem Analysis	The client engages in self-introspection	Self-reflection	Self-Awareness
Empathy	The client listens to the stories of fellow survivors	Social concern	Interpersonal Relationships
Empathy	The client helps and advises fellow rehabilitation participants	Peer support	Social Support
Empathy	The client values family and others more	Social esteem	Positive Social Relationships
Self-Confidence	The client feels more confident with improved physical condition	Increased self-confidence	Positive Self-Concept
Self-Confidence	The client feels more responsible	Self-responsibility	Independence
Achievement	The client believes he can live a drug-free life	Recovery beliefs	Self-Efficacy
Achievement	The client becomes more diligent in worship and disciplined	Positive behavioral changes	New Habits

Resilience Aspects	Interview Result Mapping	Coding	Category
Achievement	The client has a healthier physical and mental condition	Improved health	Self-Recovery
Resilience Aspects	The client is re-accepted by his family and community	Social acceptance	Social Reintegration

The rehabilitation process, with the assistance of addiction counselors, has fostered resilience in addicted clients. Resilience grows through strengthening emotional regulation, self-control, social support, spirituality, and positive behavioral changes. These data are summarized in Table 2.

Table 2. Growth of Resilience in Drug Addiction Clients

Category	Growth of Resilience in Drug Addiction Clients
Emotional Management	Emotional stability, religious coping, and emotional diversion
Relapse Prevention	Relapse denial, avoidance of risky environments, and activities that replace cravings
Future Orientation	Future hope, family motivation, and self-change beliefs
Adaptive Coping Strategies	Rational thinking, response control, and self-reflection
Positive Relationships	Social Social awareness, peer support, and social esteem
Positive Self-Concept	Increased self-confidence, self-responsibility, and recovery beliefs
Positive Life Change	Positive behavioral changes, improved health, and social acceptance

Discussion

The findings of this study are based on addicted clients undergoing outpatient rehabilitation and assistance from addiction counselors. Outpatient drug rehabilitation helps individuals physically combat drug addiction, impacting their physical health, psychological well-being, social support, environmental conditions, goal achievement, and tangible change (Ivana et al., 2024; Marzuki et al., 2026). Overall resilience growth is supported by external factors such as spiritual guidance and the use of information technology as a distraction, while internal factors include the development of life skills and coping strategies (Dewi et al., 2020; Manomenidis et al., 2019). Resilience growth in addicted clients requires therapeutic counseling to foster control over behavioral habits based on the mind (Ersche et al., 2020). Resilience is basically an innate ability to recover naturally in the face of life's conditions or challenges and prevent relapse (Yamashita et al., 2021) with cognitive, emotional, and interpersonal aspects (Safni & Misrah, 2024).

Findings also indicate that in the outpatient rehabilitation process, resilience develops through the development of emotional management skills, including more stable emotions, religious coping, and emotional diversion. Stable emotional regulation, coupled with the emergence of spiritual well-being, impacts the growth of addiction clients' resilience and prevents relapse (Aghdam & Golujeh, 2023). Resilient addiction clients are those who are able to manage their emotions during stressful situations or life challenges (Dezhkam et al., 2023; Rezaei et al., 2021). Mindfulness skills can at least reduce anxiety and depression and increase resilience. However, social support is also needed to impact recovery (Gu et al., 2023; Zhuo et al., 2021). In addition to social support, religious coping skills can reduce addictive behaviors, also known as spiritual coping (Iqbal & Sa'ad, 2025; Setiawan et al., 2024).

Coping strategies for fostering resilience stem from rational thinking. However, when thinking rationally, addicted clients can express emotions and self-reflect (Caparrós &

Masferrer, 2021). In counseling, counselors can use a cognitive-behavioral approach, which can also be integrated with spirituality (Ahmadifaraz et al., 2021; Tavakoli Tameh et al., 2024). A religious approach in counseling is a strategy for addicted clients because it can transform aggressive behavior into polite and gentle behavior with controlled emotional control (Syavika & Muktaruddin, 2023). The development of a peaceful mindset through peace counseling is a strategy to prevent relapse and foster resilience (Saputra et al., 2019; Supriyanto et al., 2019), but there are also peaceful mindsets integrated with religion and reflection of spiritual values (Supriyanto et al., 2024; Supriyanto et al., 2024). Because peace counseling has been based on the paradigms of cognitive behavioral, existential humanistic, multicultural, and spiritual philosophy (Hendiani et al., 2025) which can help the growth of resilience in addicted clients.

From the overall rehabilitation process, this study's findings relate to the resilience that is formed, which will prevent relapse through the ability to refuse relapse, avoid risky environments, and substitute activities for cravings. Relapse is likely to occur during the recovery process (Devi & Singh, 2023), but preventing relapse from external factors is through the emergence of family, friend, and community support (Jia et al., 2024; Supriyanto et al., 2021; Zaidi, 2020; Zeng et al., 2021). The emergence of social support from family, community, and peers will foster social relationships. The significant impact is the emergence of meaningful life changes in health, behavior, and social life.

Because the recovery journey from drug addiction is so challenging, denial in the face of adverse conditions, such as a return to addiction, must be prevented from both thoughts and behavior (Yamashita et al., 2021). The environment plays a crucial role in aiding recovery from addiction (Razali et al., 2023). This temporary process, which occurs when relapse occurs, gives clients time to evaluate themselves and resist relapse through a spiritual approach (Younas et al., 2025). If the urge to use drugs again or relapse occurs, the client requires therapy through a counselor for cognitive, emotional, and behavioral recovery (Vafaie & Kober, 2022).

Resilience is then formed from future hopes, one of which is a career. The client's career is at least a consideration, so addiction counselors can help clients plan their careers through career counseling (Sutoyo et al., 2022). Because addiction recovery is fundamentally centered on the addicted client's strengths and will foster motivation for a meaningful future aligned with personal aspirations (Ogilvie & Carson, 2025). Therefore, counselors must consider growth, connectedness, hope, identity, meaning in life, and empowerment as individual strengths in the counseling process (Kaczmarek, 2006; Ogilvie & Carson, 2022; Rashid, 2015). Counselors also pay attention to the client's belief in recovery because belief is a primary resource for relapse prevention (Supriyanto & Hendiani, 2018). From all of this, self-concept emerges with the emergence of recovery beliefs, self-confidence, and self-responsibility.

Overall, these findings have explored the resilience challenges of drug-addicted clients in outpatient rehabilitation, although still limited to the perspective of addiction counselors. Therefore, the research subject can be expanded to include policymakers and addicted clients. This counselor's perspective provides an important overview and evaluation. Similar to self-reflection in the counseling process, counselors conduct self-reflection regarding the challenges of resilience development in addicted clients (Arsad et al., 2018). The existence of seven resilience indicators—emotional regulation, impulse control, optimism, problem-analyzing skills, empathy, self-confidence, and self-achievement (Reivich & Shatte, 2003)—gives rise to seven ways to foster resilience in addicted clients: emotional management, relapse prevention, fostering future orientation, coping strategies, social relationships, self-concept, and positive and healthy life changes. The novelty of these seven methods emerged from the exploration of addiction counselors. The findings from this novelty serve as recommendations for further research or topics for addiction counselors in helping addicted

clients through addiction counseling that can be integrated with a spiritual paradigm. Addiction counselors can utilize both modern and postmodern counseling approaches in the spiritual counseling process for addicted clients (Kurniawan et al., 2026).

Academic and Practical Implications for Addiction Counselors

Strategies and methods for fostering resilience are essential for clients with addiction in rehabilitation programs. These seven resilience-building strategies can be taught to clients with addiction during rehabilitation, including emotional management, relapse prevention, future-oriented development, problem-solving strategies, social relationships, self-concept, and positive and healthy lifestyle changes. Counselors can utilize guidance and counseling practices to foster peaceful and spiritual thought patterns. Academically, these seven strategies can be developed into a module for fostering resilience in clients with addiction or a spiritual counseling model to prepare them for life after rehabilitation. Policymakers also implement strategies to ensure that clients with addiction not only recover but are prepared and resilient to the challenges of life after rehabilitation.

Limitations and Future Directions

This research is still limited to the perspective of addiction counselors, so it can be expanded from the client's perspective, both qualitatively and quantitatively. The counselor's perspective on the resilience of drug-addicted clients to their lives can be expanded throughout Indonesia and internationally. The research subjects can be expanded to include policymakers and addicted clients. This counselor's perspective provides an important overview and evaluation for the implementation of addiction counseling services by addiction counselors. These seven strategies can be compiled as an evaluation tool in a module so that addiction counselors and addicted clients can jointly evaluate the development of resilience skills in preventing recovery.

Conclusion

The outpatient rehabilitation process plays a crucial role in developing and fostering resilience in drug-addicted clients, with the role of addiction counselors. Resilience growth is not only marked by the cessation of drug use but also by emotional, cognitive, social, and spiritual changes, as well as more adaptive lifestyles. Addicted clients have developed the ability to cope with life's stresses, control the urge to relapse, and build healthier and more meaningful lifestyles as a means of recovery and resilience. Seven resilience indicators develop during the rehabilitation process: emotional regulation, impulse control, optimism, problem analysis, empathy, self-confidence, and self-achievement. These seven indicators demonstrate how individuals can become resilient through more stable emotional management, religious coping strategies, relapse prevention, positive future orientation, rational thinking skills, healthier social relationships, and the development of a more positive self-concept. Family support, the rehabilitation environment, spirituality, and addiction counseling are important factors in strengthening the resilience growth process of addicted clients. The novelty of this research lies in the discovery of seven ways to foster resilience in drug-addicted clients: emotional management, relapse prevention, future orientation, adaptive coping strategies, positive social relationships, positive self-concept, and healthy lifestyle changes. These findings reinforce the importance of integrated addiction counseling services with a spiritual approach in assisting the recovery process of drug-addicted clients. Therefore, addiction counselors can implement modern and postmodern spirituality-based counseling approaches to strengthen resilience and maintain the sustainability of drug-addicted clients' recovery.

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Author Contribution Statement

AS contributed to the research concept, instrument design, data collection, data analysis, and drafting of the research article. NH contributed to data collection and interview summary. NJL contributed to instrument design, data collection, data summary, and data analysis. TH contributed to the drafting of the report and research article. All authors have agreed to the preparation of this article for publication.

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