



Types of Religious-Based Approaches Applied in the Treatment of Individuals with Substance Use Disorders in Rehabilitation Centers in Kajiado North Sub-County, Kajiado County, Kenya

By

Jamila Mwanje Mwinamu¹, Dr Chege Anthony (Ph.D.)² and Dr. Elijah Macharia (Ph.D.)³

Corresponding author email address: 862jamila@gmail.com

¹ Master of Counselling Psychology, Catholic University of Eastern Africa

² Lecturer, Department of Counselling Psychology, Catholic University of Eastern Africa

³ Lecturer, Department of Counselling Psychology, Catholic University of Eastern Africa

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ABSTRACT

This study explored the types of religious-based approaches applied in the treatment of individuals with substance use disorders in rehabilitation centers in Kajiado North Sub-County, Kajiado County, Kenya. The objective guiding this study was to examine the types of religious-based approaches used to treat individuals with SUDs. The study was anchored on the Religiosity and Spirituality Theories. The research was conducted in Kajiado North Sub-County, Kenya. Using a descriptive survey design, data were collected via structured questionnaires from 208 participants across nine rehabilitation centers. The target population for this study comprised nine NACADA-accredited rehabilitation centers in Kajiado North, with a population of approximately 208 individuals. Using the census method, the study included the entire population (208) due to its manageable size. The study collected quantitative data using questionnaires. The questionnaires were validated through content, face, and construct validity. Content validity ensured alignment with research objectives, literature, and expert input. Face validity was confirmed via pilot testing on a small group outside the target population. Reliability was assessed using internal consistency (Cronbach's $\alpha \geq 0.7$) and test-retest reliability. Quantitative data were analyzed using SPSS, generating descriptive statistics such as frequencies and percentages to summarize the study variables. Results revealed that the most used religious-based strategies included moral teachings (74%), religious activities (72%), spiritual counseling (71%), prayer sessions (66%) and support groups (64%). The study recommends the integration of religious-based and professional medical interventions for a holistic approach to recovery.

Keywords: Religious-based treatment, Substance use disorders (SUDs), Recovery outcomes, Rehabilitation centers



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INTRODUCTION TO THE STUDY

Substance use disorders (SUDs) represent a significant global health challenge, affecting individuals, families, and communities across various socio-economic contexts. Religious-based treatment approaches have garnered attention for their potential in supporting recovery, particularly through spiritual and community support. Substance use disorders (SUDs) are serious social and health issues affecting millions worldwide. The integration of spirituality into healthcare, especially within addiction recovery, is truly gaining momentum as both researchers and practitioners recognize its unique benefits. Jamal (2023) emphasizes a holistic approach that goes beyond treating just the physical symptoms of addiction; instead, it addresses the mental, emotional, and spiritual dimensions that are so crucial for lasting recovery. This shift is particularly impactful for individuals who hold strong religious or spiritual beliefs, as it taps into values and practices that resonate deeply with them, potentially boosting their recovery outcomes (Moosavi et al., 2021).

Religious based treatment strategies according to Allen (2020) incorporates faith, spirituality and theology into counselling. The aim is to foster holistic healing and growth. In the United States, Sachs (2023) assessed the impact of religiosity and peer support on reducing substance abuse among college students. The study employed a quantitative research design, surveying college



students involved in religious-based peer support groups. Findings indicated that participants in these groups reported significantly lower levels of substance abuse compared to their counterparts not involved in such groups, highlighting the positive role of religiosity and peer support in substance abuse reduction. Sachs concluded that incorporating religiosity into peer support structures offers a viable strategy for mitigating substance abuse in college settings. However, the research has a gap in understanding the specific mechanisms through which religiosity and peer support interact to influence substance abuse behaviors, suggesting the need for further qualitative research to explore these dynamics in depth.

Galanter et al. (2023) conducted a study on role of spirituality in relation to substance use disorders in the United States of America. The aim of the study was to review literature related to psychological, biological and cultural dimensions of spirituality and its role in relation to substance use disorders. Data was reviewed from relevant peer-reviewed articles from major indexing services that included PubMed, PsychInfo, and Social Sciences Citation Index. The research established that there was a significant relationship between SUD recovery process and spiritual awakening. Spiritual awakening was associated with lower levels of craving and relapse. This study was important in showing the association between religiosity and spirituality in the recovery process of individuals with substance use disorder.

Travis et al. (2021) conducted a study on faith communities' improvements in readiness to engage in addictions resilience and recovery support programming in the United States. The study observed that spirituality and religion are documented as part of prevention, treatment and recovery of substance use disorders. The study was an exploratory study of faith communities involved in implementing recovery and resilience programming for substance use disorders. The

findings of the study indicated that there was an enhanced effectiveness of post-intervention through support group to help in the recovery process of individuals with substance use disorders. The reviewed study has provided insights into the potential effectiveness of faith-based interventions for substance use disorders. However, Travis et al. (2021) conducted their study within the context of faith communities in United States. The present study focuses specifically on Kajiado North Sub-County, Kenya, providing insights into the types of religious based treatment approached within a distinct geographical area. This helps in understanding how religious-based approaches helps in addiction treatment.

Dubbini et al. (2020) explored the therapeutic potential of spirituality and mystical experiences in the treatment of substance use disorders in Italy. Through the use of psychotropic plants and other complementary and alternative medicine (CAM) therapies, the therapeutic community Takiwasi is used to study the role of spirituality and faith in treating substance use disorders (SUDs). Synergy between Christian and Amazonian spirituality is demonstrated by the results, and CAM treatments with spiritual overtones have encouraging potential in the treatment of sexually transmitted diseases. Dubbini et al. (2020) investigated the role of spirituality and mystical experiences, particularly within the context of the Takiwasi therapeutic community, in treating substance use disorders. The present study examined the types of religious based treatment methods in Kajiado North Sub-County, Kenya.

Afolabi and Oyelade (2021) examined the specific religious strategies used by faith-based rehabilitation centers in addressing substance use disorders in Nigeria. The study employed mixed methods and case study descriptive survey and phenomenological design. The study targeted 95 staff and 120 patients from 5 faith-based centers. A sample of 40 participants (20 patients and 20

staff were sampled using purposive sampling. The findings of the study identified spiritual counselling, deliverance prayers, religious fasting and bible study as core interventions. The clients reported spiritual transformation as key to recovery. The study was relevant in identifying common faith-based strategies applicable to Kenyan context, particularly prayer and scripture-based counselling. However, the reviewed study focused on faith-based centers while the present study was conducted among both religious and non-religious rehabilitation centers. This is a gap that was addressed by the present study.

Mafikiri (2022) conducted a study on the impact of parental leadership styles and spiritual support on alcohol use and abuse prevention among young adults in urban and rural areas of Moshi, Tanzania. The findings indicated that authoritative parenting combined with strong spiritual support was effective in preventing alcohol use among young adults. The study concluded that parental leadership and spiritual guidance are critical factors in alcohol abuse prevention.

Kuyeya (2021) investigated the effectiveness of treatment and rehabilitation programs for drug and substance dependence in Mombasa County, Kenya. Utilizing a mixed-methods approach that combined surveys and interviews with participants of various rehabilitation programs, the study found that programs incorporating community and religious elements reported higher success rates in terms of participant recovery and lower relapse rates. Kuyeya concluded that the integration of cultural and religious aspects into rehabilitation programs significantly enhances their effectiveness.

Nyamongo (2014) explored the knowledge, attitudes, and practices of Christian Faith-Based Organizations (FBOs) on alcohol and drug abuse in Kenya. The study revealed a general awareness among FBOs of the issues related to substance abuse and a commitment to addressing these



challenges through education and support services. However, it also noted variability in the approaches and effectiveness of these interventions. The research concluded that while FBOs are important stakeholders in substance abuse prevention, there is a need for more standardized and evidence-based practices. A significant research gap identified is the comparative effectiveness of different faith-based approaches to substance abuse prevention, indicating a potential area for future research. While spiritual interventions have shown promise in improving recovery outcomes globally (Diego-Cordero, 2022), there is limited literature focusing specifically on their impact in Kajiado North Sub-County.

METHODOLOGY

The study was conducted in Kajiado North Sub-County, Kenya, using a descriptive survey design. Data were collected from all 208 individuals across nine NACADA-accredited rehabilitation centers through structured questionnaires, employing a census approach due to the manageable population size. The questionnaire was validated for content, face, and construct validity, with expert input and pilot testing conducted outside the target group. Reliability was confirmed using internal consistency (Cronbach's $\alpha \geq 0.7$) and test-retest reliability. Quantitative data were analyzed using SPSS, with descriptive statistics (frequencies and percentages) used to summarize key study variables.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

Types of Religious-Based Treatment Approaches Used in Rehabilitation Centers

The study shows that religious activities comprised of structured interventions like group prayer, clergy-led counseling, scripture study, and communal worship. The study reported a high acceptance of religious-based treatment approaches, where 64–84% of the respondents either

agreed or strongly agreed that religious activities, prayer, spiritual counseling, and moral values are core components of their treatment. Regarding the recovery efficacy, 64% of the respondents agreed and strongly agreed that religious-based approaches aided their recovery. While 64% affirmed the positive role of support groups, 21% either disagreed or strongly disagreed, which implies limited access or dissatisfaction.

Table 1: Types of Religious-Based Approaches in Treatment Programs

Statement	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
Religious activities are part of the program	23 (11%)	12 (6%)	22 (11%)	54 (26%)	94 (46%)
Prayer sessions are conducted regularly	27 (13%)	12 (6%)	31 (15%)	51 (25%)	84 (41%)
Spiritual counseling is available to patients	13 (6%)	19 (9%)	28 (14%)	66 (32%)	79 (39%)
Religious teachings support recovery	8 (4%)	10 (5%)	34 (17%)	56 (27%)	97 (47%)
Religious approach has helped in recovery	15 (7%)	14 (7%)	45 (22%)	38 (19%)	93 (45%)
Focus on moral/ethical values	19 (9%)	13 (6%)	29 (14%)	69 (34%)	75 (37%)
Religious-based support groups are available	24 (12%)	19 (9%)	30 (15%)	59 (29%)	72 (35%)

The study identified several religious-based practices embedded within the rehabilitation programs. As shown in Table 2, the approaches with the highest adoption rates were moral teachings (74%), religious activities (72%), spiritual counseling (71%), prayer sessions (66%), and support groups with religious themes (64%).

Table 2: Summary of the Main Types of Religious-Based Treatment Approaches

Type of Religious-Based Approach	Frequency (%)	Interpretation
Moral Teachings	74%	Emphasis on ethical behavior rooted in religious doctrines
Religious Activities (e.g., Worship)	72%	Scheduled worship sessions and religious observances
Spiritual Counseling	71%	Faith-based guidance from spiritual leaders or chaplains
Prayer Sessions	66%	Structured individual or group prayers within the treatment program
Support Groups with Religious Themes	64%	Peer-support systems centered on shared faith and recovery values

These structured interventions provide meaning, emotional support, and a framework for accountability during recovery. The study reported a high acceptance of religious-based treatment approaches. These approaches were consistent with common faith-based therapeutic models that emphasize spiritual connection and moral guidance. These activities help provide meaning, structure, and support to clients during recovery. They offer emotional healing and promote accountability through communal worship and personal reflection, aligning with findings by Koenig (2021) and Smith et al. (2023), who argued that religious interventions can strengthen personal agency and reduce relapse risk.

The strong agreement among respondents on the use of religious-based approaches aligns with Kenya's faith-centric culture, where spirituality is integral to community health practices (NACADA, 2022). There is also high endorsement of religious-based treatment on recovery outcomes which supports their role in fostering hope and accountability (Koenig, 2020).

Moral frameworks in terms of focusing on ethics had 71% agreement rates, which aligns with findings that moral realignment reduces recidivism in substance use (Adeboye et al., 2022). The strong agreement matches global evidence that spirituality enhances recovery self-efficacy and reduces relapse (Smith et al., 2021). Regular prayer sessions accounted for 66% of positive responses which correlate with reduced anxiety and improved coping in SUD recovery (Kelly et al., 2020). Kenya's 87% Christian population (Pew Research, 2020) explains high acceptance of religious interventions. Studies in similar settings (e.g., Uganda) show faith-based programs achieve 30% higher retention than secular ones (Mwangi et al., 2022).

The findings implied that religious-based approaches in Kajiado North Sub-County are highly used and culturally resonant, particularly for prayer, counseling, and moral guidance. However, inconsistent support group access and minor dissent (10–15%) suggest opportunities for program refinement. These results align with global literature advocating faith-integrated SUD care. It therefore recommends for a blend of spiritual practices with evidence-based therapies such as Cognitive Behavioral Therapy (CBT).

CONCLUSION

This study examined the types of religious-based treatment approaches used in rehabilitation centers in Kajiado North Sub-County, Kenya. The study concluded that the most commonly used

types of religious-based treatment approaches were moral teachings (74%), religious activities (72%), spiritual counseling (71%), prayer sessions (66%) and support groups (64%). Prayers, scripture reading, and faith-based mentorship played a significant role in substance use disorder recovery by providing emotional and moral support. The findings demonstrated that spiritual practices such as moral teachings, religious activities, spiritual counseling, prayer sessions, and faith-based support groups are widely used (69% prevalence).

The study recommended the integration of faith-based treatment approaches into the professional psychological and medical therapies in order to achieve a holistic approach to recovery. Rehabilitation centers should incorporate religious counsellors in their treatment approaches while faith-based rehabilitation centers should establish partnerships with licensed healthcare professionals to provide medical treatment, psychiatric care, and detoxification services alongside spiritual counseling. This hybrid model would ensure holistic healing and address persistent medical challenges. Similarly, there is need for capacity building for religious counselors. Training programs for spiritual counselors, clergy, and recovery staff should include basic mental health literacy, trauma-informed care, and addiction treatment principles to enhance intervention effectiveness.



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