

# Social Work/Maatskaplike Werk



A professional journal for the social worker  
*Iphephandaba lomsebenzi woonontlalontle*

Vol. 61, No. 4, 2025, DOI: <https://doi.org/10.15270/61-4-1423>

## The crucial role of motivation in the recovery process at inpatient and outpatient substance-related treatment centres

Noxolo Zwane

University of South Africa, Department of Social Work, Pretoria, South Africa

 <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-2029-5956>  [zwanenc@unisa.ac.za](mailto:zwanenc@unisa.ac.za)

Article received: 19/02/2024; Article accepted: 06/05/2025; Article published: 04/12/2025

### ABSTRACT

For individuals who use substances, compliance and treatment motivation are crucial to the effectiveness of substance-related treatment services. Thus, exploring motivation is imperative to the holistic treatment of individuals who use substances. The intricate interplay between motivation and the decision to seek substance-related treatment among individuals who use substances is conceptualised. Self-determination theory was the most relevant theoretical framework for the study, as it captures the complex, evolving nature of motivation in the treatment process. Document analysis was employed as the primary research methodology for this study, allowing for a systematic review and interpretation of relevant texts to extract meaningful information aligned with the research objectives. This confirms that extrinsic and intrinsic motivation significantly influence the decision to seek substance-related treatment. The researcher argues that the type of motivation a person exhibits prior to being admitted shapes the success of their substance-related treatment regimen. As a result, treatment plans for individuals who use substances need to be tailored accordingly by social workers in substance-related treatment centres. This article contributes to the academic discourse around substance-related treatment and holds practical implications and offers guidelines for treatment centres and healthcare professionals, such as social workers in treatment centres.

**Keywords:** dependency; extrinsic motivation; intrinsic motivation; self-determination theory; substance-related treatment centres; substance use; treatment

## INTRODUCTION

A local study conducted in South Africa in 2023 highlighted that substance use disorders (SUDs) significantly contribute to the burden of communicable diseases, such as HIV/AIDS, tuberculosis, and hepatitis, as well as non-communicable diseases in South Africa, such as diabetes, hypertension, cancer, and chronic respiratory illnesses, are becoming increasingly common. (Kader et al., 2023). Substance misuse presents a significant and escalating issue, with dependence spreading across all levels of society. What may begin as a personal battle with substance use often evolves into a widespread public health concern, disrupting the fabric of entire communities, as substance use is closely linked to behaviours that increase the risk of communicable diseases, such as HIV, hepatitis and tuberculosis through unsafe practices such as needle sharing and unprotected sex. As these health risks multiply, communities face rising infection rates, overburdened healthcare systems, and deepening social and economic challenges (Groenewald & Bhana, 2016; Schwetz et al., 2019). Jongejan (2017) concurs with the above researchers, adding that substance use can be characterised by persistent, recurrent behaviour of seeking and using substances despite negative repercussions, indicating a chronic condition affecting individuals, irrespective of gender, age, socioeconomic status or racial background. Furthermore, research conducted in Enschede in the Netherlands highlighted that dependency on substances is not a contemporary condition; it has been present for a very long time, even dating back to ancient times (Jongejan, 2017).

Individuals who are struggling with substance use/abuse (alcohol, illicit substances or pain medication) are normally diagnosed with an SUD when an individual meets at least two criteria described in the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual for Mental Disorders (DSM-V) (American Psychiatric Association, 2021). These include continued substance use despite causing dysfunctionality in work and social life, experiencing intense cravings, devoting considerable effort and time to obtaining substances, and developing tolerance related to use (Jongejan, 2017). For the purpose of this article, a substance is understood as medications or toxins that are ingested, inhaled, injected or otherwise introduced into the body and that have the capacity to produce a substance-related disorder (World Health Organisation [WHO], 2024). Substance dependence poses a significant public health challenge, contributing to rising crime rates, family breakdowns and community disintegration. Moreover, it also leads to incurring substantial costs for individuals who use substances, their families and society at large, as health complications for individuals who struggle with substance often result in repeated hospitalisations, prolonged treatment and reduced life expectancy, leading to higher healthcare costs and diminished quality of life. Their families also bear significant financial burdens, including treatment expenses, legal fees and lost income (Formánek et al., 2022). Furthermore, individuals struggling with substance dependence frequently demonstrate a significant degree of reluctance when it comes to participating in substance-related treatment and rehabilitation programmes, which can be attributed to a multitude of interrelated factors aligned with motivation, including fear of failure, denial, low self-efficacy and negative past treatment experiences. Additionally, psychological and social factors such as

stigma, interpersonal issues and environmental triggers further hinder their willingness to seek help and commit to recovery (Nyashanu & Visser, 2022).

As a result, understanding the intricate interplay between motivation and the decision to seek treatment is of the utmost importance, as motivation holds considerable significance in substance-related treatment, where societal, economic and cultural factors can impact on individuals' willingness to seek and sustain recovery (Ghouchani et al., 2016). Empowering individuals with a sense of autonomy and purpose and addressing underlying socioeconomic disparities can enhance their commitment to recovery efforts. Motivation plays a pivotal role in the treatment of individuals who use substances, significantly influencing treatment engagement, adherence and overall recovery outcomes (Chan et al., 2019).

A comprehensive understanding of the underlying factors that influence an individual's motivation and the development of strategies to enhance this motivation are fundamental components of successful therapeutic interventions that are facilitated by social workers at substance-related treatment centres. Motivation is a crucial factor in determining the level of engagement and adherence to treatment protocols, which directly influences the effectiveness of therapeutic interventions, mostly led by social workers. However, there is a significant gap in understanding the role of motivation in treatment for individuals who use substances (Chan et al., 2019).

The effectiveness of substance-related treatment services is significantly influenced by the adherence and motivation of individuals seeking help for substance-related challenges. There is limited understanding of the complex relationship between various types of motivation, both intrinsic and extrinsic, and the decision-making process for seeking treatment. This article argues that motivation affects treatment-seeking behaviour among individuals who use substances and this needs to be explored more for an understanding the intricate interplay between motivation and the decision to seek treatment for individuals who are dependent on substances.

This article offers a comprehensive overview of substance-related treatment, including inpatient and outpatient services. It then examines the role of motivation in the recovery process for individuals seeking treatment, addressing both intrinsic and extrinsic factors. It discusses the application of self-determination theory (SDT) as the article's theoretical framework and examines the SDT as the framework.

## **AN OVERVIEW OF SUBSTANCE-RELATED TREATMENT**

The Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA) (2019) states that there are several types of substance-related treatment programmes available.

**Inpatient treatment services:** Inpatient treatment programmes typically span at least 21 to 28 days. Individuals seeking substance-related treatment willingly admit themselves to a secure environment where comprehensive drug and alcohol rehabilitation initiatives form the core of their daily routine. Recognising the severity of substance abuse and substance-related treatment centres, some treatment centres have decided to extend their programme to 42 days, as it has been observed

that individuals in recovery often encounter psychological challenges during the third week of treatment (SAMHSA, 2019). These challenges, which include withdrawal symptoms, emotional instability and a heightened sense of vulnerability, often impede continued engagement with the treatment process. This extended treatment period is crucial in enhancing the likelihood of successful long-term outcomes, making it an important area for further investigation and potential expansion in substance abuse rehabilitation strategies (SAMHSA, 2019).

**Outpatient services:** An outpatient substance-related treatment centre is a community-oriented establishment which individuals are expected to attend for a designated duration without residing onsite during therapy. Such a centre must provide a specialised treatment programme administered by skilled professionals, such as a multidisciplinary team, which includes a general practitioner, professional nurse, social worker and psychologist to address substance-related concerns effectively (SAMHSA, 2019).

**Long-term residential services:** Long-term residential treatment offers round-the-clock care, predominantly in hospitals. This model typically spans from 6 to 12 months, featuring a highly structured treatment approach that may involve confrontational elements aimed at assisting individuals in scrutinising detrimental beliefs, self-perceptions and maladaptive behaviours (SAMHSA, 2019). The National Institute on Drug Abuse (2020) concurs with the above information, noting that those long-term residential services are structured inpatient programmes that provide extended care ranging from several months to a year for individuals struggling with substances. These programmes offer comprehensive treatment, including detoxification, therapy, life skills training and mental health support, aiming to address the underlying psychosocial factors driving substance use and promote sustained recovery and reintegration into society. This article focuses on both inpatient and outpatient treatment services.

The South African Community Epidemiology Network on Drug Use (SACENDU) reported an increase in the number of individuals admitted for treatment, rising from 9,394 in 2020 to 10,938 in 2021 across 94 treatment centres. This upward trend highlights the growing demand for inpatient and outpatient treatment services (SACENDU, 2022). This research indicates that individuals seeking help for SUDs select treatment options based on a range of personal and contextual factors. These include their unique life circumstances, such as the severity of their addiction, co-occurring mental or physical health conditions, availability of social support and level of daily functioning. Personal preferences influence decision-making, such as feeling more comfortable with group therapy versus individual therapy, and the desire for inpatient care versus outpatient care. Additionally, financial capacity plays a significant role, as the affordability and accessibility of services often determine the type and duration of treatment pursued. These decisions are further shaped by the variety of treatment modalities available, including short- and long-term residential programmes, outpatient services, medically assisted detoxification and community-based support (Schwetz et al., 2019).

Self-efficacy plays a pivotal role in fostering the motivation to initiate substance-related treatment and in strengthening an individual's belief in their capacity to complete it successfully. It significantly influences key aspects of the recovery process, including treatment engagement, sustained participation and the prevention of relapse (Gorgulu, 2019). Therefore, bolstering an individual's self-efficacy is crucial for fostering motivation to engage in and adhere to treatment protocols (Gorgulu, 2019). Social workers play a critical role in this process, as they are often among the first professionals to identify and respond to substance use challenges. According to SAMHSA (2019), it is essential for primary care clinicians, including social workers, to be well-informed about available treatment resources and their responsibilities in supporting individuals with SUDs. Social workers are uniquely positioned to influence clients' motivation and treatment decisions through early intervention, psychoeducation and establishing a trusting therapeutic relationship. By helping clients recognise their strengths and developing realistic goals, social workers can directly enhance self-efficacy (Unegbu, 2020). Furthermore, research indicates that the relationship between a therapist and a patient appears to be a consistent indicator of engagement, retention and affirmative outcomes in substance-related treatment and, therefore, should be viewed as an essential ingredient of a successful intervention. Social workers and psychologists serve as the primary point of contact in substance-related treatment services, as their interventions are informed by various approaches that integrate techniques and principles formulated from relevant research and literature (Schultz & Shirindi, 2019).

Although many substance users express a desire to quit, the process of making and executing this decision typically requires time and a conducive environment in which such decisions can be made. Individuals with stronger coping skills demonstrate increased treatment compliance and motivation, positively impacting on their engagement and persistence in treatment (Nyashanu & Visser, 2022). Specifically, psychosocial programmes designed to enhance coping skills in treatment contribute to improving the patient's internal motivation (Gorgulu, 2019). Evidence-based research highlights the importance of structured and empirically supported treatment approaches in achieving measurable clinical outcomes for individuals struggling with dependency. Such interventions are associated with improved functioning, reduced symptoms and sustained recovery while contributing to public health through lower relapse rates, decreased healthcare costs, and long-term behavioural change (Allen & Olson, 2015). Once individuals have committed to accessing treatment, various factors contribute to sustained motivation during substance-related treatment.

## **THE SIGNIFICANCE OF MOTIVATION IN THE RECOVERY PROCESS**

SAMHSA published a Treatment Improvement Protocol in 2019, emphasising that motivation for change is a dynamic process, not a static trait. The protocol underscores the importance of understanding and enhancing motivation to improve treatment engagement and outcomes (SAMHSA, 2019). Motivation refers to individuals' willingness to modify their behaviour. When individuals who use substances lack motivation, the result can be discontinuation of therapy or difficulty completing the treatment regimen, which may lead to relapse or various challenges

arising during therapy. Therefore, a person's motivation level directly correlates with the effectiveness of treatment and rehabilitation programmes (Gorgulu, 2019). Research has established that motivation to change can be defined as an internal psychological condition characterised by acceptance of and preparedness for change. It can be influenced by various internal and external factors. In the context of SUD, these factors encompass internal and external pressures, such as the individual's readiness to engage in treatment, perceptions of the treatment programme's approach (whether lenient or stringent), available support networks and therapeutic methods being utilised. Motivation acts as the catalyst for both initiating and maintaining change processes. The article highlights the critical role of decision-making and motivation in seeking substance-related treatment. Consequently, the three stages of change are particularly relevant, focusing on the processes influencing an individual's decision to seek treatment. Understanding how motivation evolves through these stages allows for the tailoring of therapy to support individuals at each stage, ultimately facilitating successful recovery outcomes (Opsal et al., 2019).

**Precontemplation:** At this stage, the individual is typically unaware of or in denial about the existence of a substance use problem. They may not perceive their behaviour as harmful or problematic and, as a result, are not considering or intending to make any changes in their substance use. This lack of recognition often stems from limited insight, minimisation of the consequences, or a belief that their use is under control or not significantly impacting on their lives. (DiClemente, 2018). At this stage, the individual does not see their substance use as a problem and may view it as more beneficial than harmful, often showing denial, blaming others or having limited self-awareness (Opsal et al., 2019).

**Contemplation:** This stage highlights a phase where the individual with a dependency assesses their current behaviour patterns and the potential for change through a risk-reward evaluation. Contemplation involves pondering the idea of change, actively seeking and appraising information, yet not being entirely ready to commit to change (Opsal et al., 2019).

**Action:** At this stage, the individual is fully committed to making a change and is actively involved in implementing specific actions to alter their behaviour. This may include attending therapy or support groups, reducing or completely stopping substance use, seeking medical or psychological help, and making lifestyle adjustments that support their recovery. Their efforts are purposeful and goal-oriented, reflecting a clear decision to break away from harmful patterns and work towards healthier alternatives (DiClemente, 2018). There are two other stages in the change process: maintenance and termination. However, this article focuses only on the first three stages.

Motivation is a cornerstone in the journey of change within treatment, acting as the driving force behind individuals' willingness to confront their unhealthy behaviour and embark on recovery. Motivation drives individuals who use substances through the stages of change, from recognising the need for transformation to taking actionable steps toward recovery. In the **precontemplation** and **contemplation** stages, motivation helps individuals confront the negative consequences of substance use and overcome ambivalence. As they transition into the **preparation** and **action**

stages, motivation encourages concrete steps like seeking treatment and adopting healthier behaviours. Without sufficient motivation, individuals who use substances may remain stuck in contemplation, unaware or unwilling to acknowledge the detrimental effects of their dependency (Pasareanu, 2015).

### **Intrinsic motivation**

To fully understand motivation, it is imperative to understand intrinsic motivation. Intrinsic motivation is defined by autonomy and encompasses a feeling of willingness and self-determination. It entails reconciling the inherent conflict between one's innate desires and personal goals by incorporating externally motivated rules such as rewards and consequences, aiming for enhanced competence and autonomy (Ryan & Deci, 2017). As a result, individuals who use substances find themselves more capable of improving the recovery process when they are intrinsically motivated (Barbieri et al., 2016). To provide more context, Cleverly et al. (2018) state that a person may feel motivated to stop using substances because they want to improve their physical fitness, enjoy activities such as hiking or playing sports again, or have a healthier lifestyle; as a result, this intrinsic motivation can lead to a commitment to healthier habits, such as exercising regularly, eating nutritious foods and engaging in activities that promote physical wellbeing.

### **Extrinsic motivation**

On the other hand, extrinsic motivation arises from external influences designed to enforce regulation and reinforce desired conduct. These external factors may involve rewards from outside sources, societal validation, apprehension of punishment or the attainment of a specific outcome (Ryan & Deci, 2017). Harerimana et al. (2020) identify extrinsic motivation as a significant factor influencing substance use recovery, noting that individuals frequently respond to external pressures from family, friends, or social support networks to modify their behaviour. To better understand extrinsic motivation, an individual might stop using substances to strengthen their relationship with their partner or to reconnect with their children, realising that substance use is damaging their family ties. This can provide accountability and encouragement, helping individuals remain committed to their recovery journey (Cleverly et al., 2018).

A qualitative study (Khan et al., 2022) explored intrinsic and extrinsic motivational factors influencing drug abuse and rehabilitation among young males. The results from this article indicated that personal motivations, such as self-improvement and health concerns, are intrinsic factors. At the same time, external influences such as peer pressure and societal expectations were recognised as extrinsic motivators. Understanding these factors is essential for developing effective treatment strategies, as research-driven insights can inform targeted interventions. As part of the multidisciplinary team, social workers can leverage this knowledge to design and implement tailored interventions that address the specific needs of individuals in treatment.

Research has shown that both intrinsic and extrinsic motivation play complementary roles in the context of substance-related treatment. Intrinsic motivation instils in individuals a profound sense

of purpose and dedication to their recovery journey, fostering enduring engagement and resilience when faced with obstacles. On the other hand, extrinsic motivation, if appropriately harnessed, can act as a catalyst for change by providing initial encouragement and reinforcement for positive behaviours (Cleverly et al., 2018). Nevertheless, for sustainable transformation, treatment approaches should prioritise cultivating and nurturing intrinsic motivation, enabling individuals to discover meaning, fulfilment and purpose in their treatment process (Ryan & Deci, 2017). When social workers who are working in substance-related treatment centres address both intrinsic and extrinsic motivational aspects during the intervention duration, treatment programmes can strengthen the prospects of successful outcomes and assist individuals in attaining long-term abstinence and wellbeing (Gorgulu, 2019). Some challenges in accessing effective treatment services and inadequate aftercare services are related to poor treatment outcomes, which contribute to persons with a dependency struggling with demotivation. This includes high rates of relapse, a revolving-door phenomenon (which is a cycle in which individuals struggling with dependency repeatedly enter and exit treatment facilities) and challenges in reintegrating people who are working with a dependency into their respective communities. Should the role of motivation be explored more, these could be understood in more depth (Khan et al., 2022).

This article aimed to address the following research question: What is the interplay between motivation and the decision to seek treatment among individuals who use substances at substance-related treatment centres?

The article explores the types of motivation (i.e. intrinsic and extrinsic) that influence individuals' decisions to seek and remain in substance-related use treatment to tailor better social work interventions offered at substance-related treatment centres.

The article also provides a concise overview of the article's theoretical framework, followed by a detailed account of the research methods employed. It discusses the research findings and concludes by presenting the implications of the results, along with specific recommendations for practice and further research.

## **THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK**

Self-determination theory (SDT), grounded in organismic theory, posits that human beings act as active organisms. It suggests that the effectiveness of every action of a person centre on internal regulation and external environmental factors to fulfil needs (Ryan & Deci, 2017). Humans possess curiosity, a drive for physical activity and a social nature. SDT assumes that human beings have an inborn tendency to pursue growth, wellbeing and health. To encourage a person to pursue a particular goal, there are two kinds of motivation: intrinsic and extrinsic motivation (Chan et al., 2019). This approach allowed the researcher to gain a deeper understanding of the relation between motivation and change, resulting in more thorough findings and recommendations.

In their development of the SDT, Ryan and Deci (2017) suggest that various elements and origins of motivation play a role in shaping the quality and dynamics of behaviour. Motivation

encompasses overtly acknowledged as well as subconscious desires, spanning the range from those readily perceived to those existing beneath the surface of awareness (Baumeister & Nadal, 2017). People are motivated by various factors, ranging from reluctance or simply going along with things to actively committing and persisting, having positive self-perceptions. This spectrum of motivation related to substance-using behaviours spans from being fully self-driven (autonomous motivation) to being externally influenced (controlled motivation), with different degrees of autonomy along the way (Ryan & Deci, 2017). This factor holds considerable importance in the admission process, as it acknowledges that individuals lacking autonomous motivation may face challenges in adhering to and flourishing within the treatment process.

The SDT emphasises the importance of intrinsic motivation, autonomy and relatedness in promoting behaviour change and psychological wellbeing. Intrinsic motivation describes an individual's engagement in a specific behaviour driven by internal satisfaction and personal fulfilment. When a person is intrinsically motivated, their participation in an activity stems from the inherent enjoyment and sense of gratification they experience from it rather than any external incentives or pressures (Ryan & Deci, 2017), which aligns with the SDT's emphasis on the importance of fulfilling basic psychological needs of autonomy, competence and relatedness as key drivers of motivation. This motivation arises from within, as the behaviour is perceived as rewarding and pleasurable, and individuals act not for the pursuit of tangible rewards, such as money or recognition. Still, because the activity is enjoyable, it aligns with their values or contributes to a sense of achievement and personal growth (Chan et al., 2019).

In substance-related treatment, social workers can effectively apply the principles of the SDT to foster a greater sense of autonomy and competence among their clients. Doing so can create an environment that empowers individuals to take ownership of their recovery journey. This approach emphasises the importance of intrinsic motivation and acknowledges the role of extrinsic motivation (Chan et al., 2019). By understanding how intrinsic and extrinsic motivations influence behaviour, practitioners can tailor their interventions to enhance clients' engagement in substance-related treatment. Additionally, by fostering a supportive and encouraging atmosphere that allows clients to make choices regarding their treatment, practitioners can significantly enhance clients' motivation. This dual focus on autonomy and competence not only increases the likelihood of successful outcomes in treatment, but also promotes lasting behavioural changes that can improve the overall quality of life for individuals facing substance dependence. (Ryan & Deci, 2017).

## **METHODOLOGY**

A qualitative deductive document analysis approach was employed to achieve the aim of this article. Document analysis is a methodological approach used in research to systematically examine a range of documents to extract meaningful insights and information (Sankofa, 2022). It encompasses a systematic and meticulous approach to reviewing various documents, spanning printed materials and online electronic resources. This method covers both personal and non-personal documents, including studies and journals, which are accessed electronically (Kayesa &

Shung-King, 2021). Deductive content analysis is applied when the analytical framework is established based on prior knowledge, and the article aims to test a specific theory, as the researcher initiated the process by reviewing broad documents sourced from various databases, ensuring that the conclusions drawn are logically consistent and firmly grounded in established knowledge (Sandström et al., 2015).

Document analysis (Kayesa & Shung-King, 2021) is advantageous for researchers who lack the resources or time required for field research, as document analysis can mitigate the impact of these factors. According to Sankofa (2022), document analysis helps discover and describe underlying patterns and meanings in a phenomenon by providing context, generating research questions, tracking changes in a living document, and using documents as secondary data for triangulation (which uses multiple methods to validate findings, enhancing their credibility and reducing bias), which inform the construction of interview questions and analysis of institutional records.

To this effect, the objective of this article was identified to enrich the article:

- To explore the types of motivation (i.e. intrinsic and extrinsic) that influence individuals' decision to seek and remain in substance-related use treatment to tailor better social work interventions offered at substance-related treatment centres.

The document analysis consisted of the four steps from the READ approach adopted by Dalglish et al. (2020):

- (1) prepare your materials;
- (2) extract data;
- (3) analyse data;
- (4) evaluate the findings.

Firstly, the materials were selected from academic databases. The title of this article guided this process, and search terms such as dependency, self-determination theory, extrinsic motivation, intrinsic motivation, treatment and substance-related treatment centres were used. These materials were extensively read and re-read by the researcher. The researcher searched for peer-reviewed studies, books and online government documents, and the reviewed studies and books which formed the sample. The documents were retrieved from 13 databases, namely PsychINFO, SocINDEX, ProQuest Central, EBSCOhost, Google Scholar, Elsevier, SAGE Journals, ResearchGate, Academic Search Premier, Academic OneFile, Science Direct, PubMed, and Taylor and Francis Online Scopus, to conduct this review; journals were the most easily accessible for the article.

Adding to the above, the researcher searched for documents by reviewing bibliographies of key papers, resulting in 100 relevant studies. The search was limited by article design, language and publication year, focusing on English-language papers published from 2014 to 2024. In this regard,

only articles that met the inclusion criteria of the mentioned themes were read in full and critically evaluated. Local and international sources were incorporated to provide a more comprehensive and well-rounded perspective in the article (Dalglish et al., 2020).

The second step of the research process concentrated on data extraction, which was accomplished through using programmes, such as Microsoft Excel and Word, which were used to efficiently extract, organise and analyse data from textual sources. The relevant documents were imported into Word for review, with key data points such as themes, concepts or quotes manually extracted and summarised. This information was then copied into Excel, where it was organised and quantified using tools such as PivotTables and charts for further analysis (Dalglish et al., 2020). This ensured that the data extraction process was comprehensive and aligned with the overall goals of the article.

The third step involved extensive data analysis, deriving meaning and categorising information based on the central research question. This was done through skimming, reading and making sense of the materials the researcher was exposed to. During this step, thematic analysis was undertaken, the method used to identify, analyse and interpret patterns or themes within textual data, where the information was organised into categories related to the central questions of the research (Kayesa & Shung-King, 2021). The literature search included books, journals and abstracts using keywords related to substance use. However, journals were mostly utilised for this article.

The following themes emerged from the literature reviewed by the researcher: motivation; intrinsic and extrinsic motivation; change; substance-related treatment; and the significance of motivation in the recovery process.

The fourth step (evaluating the findings) involved identifying patterns and recurring concepts within the collected data. As themes began to emerge, they were used to form the categories for analysis. This required careful and repeated reading of the documents to ensure a thorough understanding and accurate interpretation of the material. As previously outlined, documents were explicitly reviewed to extract data aligned with the research question. To strengthen the trustworthiness of the article, the researcher employed several strategies to uphold validity, reliability, and reproducibility (*Reliability* pertains to the consistency and stability of the findings over time and across researchers, while *reproducibility* emphasises the ability of other researchers to replicate the article using the same methods and arrive at similar results. *Validity* refers to the extent to which the findings accurately represent the phenomena being studied and are relevant to the research question.) These included engaging in regular consultation with a research mentor, conducting a structured screening process of quotation for inclusion, and verifying data abstraction to reduce the risk of subjective bias (McMahon et al., 2020).

From an initial pool of 100 documents, 70 were identified as relevant. Among these, 39 were included in the final sample, as they highlighted future research directions, and outlined strengths and limitations, and several pointed to key gaps in the evidence. The researcher carried out the

analysis process independently and later this was cross-examined with the mentor to enhance objectivity and credibility. Rigour was maintained throughout the preparation, organisation and reporting phases of the research process (Kayesa & Shung-King, 2021). As specified above, these documents were read to extract specific data on the reliability, validity and reproducibility of the research findings.

## DISCUSSION

Firstly, international and local research that was included has shown that extrinsic motivation plays a huge role in recovery. Extrinsic factors such as social support networks, including family, friends or support groups, play a crucial role in motivating individuals who use substances to acknowledge their struggles and seek professional assistance (Alia et al., 2017). Additionally, research by Gorgulu (2019) suggests that having a dependant heightened people's sense of responsibility, prompting them to evaluate their substance use and consider making long-term changes. While internal motivation is essential for breaking substance use/abuse habits, external factors such as family and friends can also influence substance-related treatment adherence and motivation, further reinforcing the individual's commitment. Therefore, it is noted that extrinsic motivation plays a huge role in the admission process and should be considered in the treatment programmes provided by substance-related treatment centres to support individuals who use substances to adhere to and comply with them during the treatment process (Pasareanu, 2015). Emerging research indicates that individuals who use substances and are in treatment demonstrate a strong commitment to their employment; they uphold high professional and ethical standards are likely to recognise the importance of seeking support when faced with occupational challenges, which is aligned with extrinsic motivation (Ashford et al., 2019). Another significant factor affecting treatment motivation is whether the individual has encountered familial difficulties because of substance use and whether the individual has dependants (Gorgulu, 2019). It is generally accepted that external pressure has an influence on the decision to seek and remain in treatment. A high proportion of individuals who use substances may not have received treatment without pressure from friends, family or the courts, which could be considered as coercion (Pasareanu, 2015).

Secondly, intrinsic motivation refers to internal and personal motivation, whereas extrinsic motivation refers to external motivation or motivation dependent on the environment. The internal desire for a better quality of life, fuelled by the hope of recovery and reclaiming one's autonomy, is a powerful motivator (Gorgulu, 2019). This article has demonstrated that stronger coping skills increase a person's treatment compliance and motivation, leading to a positive effect on participation and continuation of treatment (Gorgulu, 2019). A similar article concurred with the above researcher, citing that the role of motivation for treatment in patients with dependency has yielded beneficial results. It was found that internal sources of motivation, such as a feeling of achievement, were found to be related to long-term change. In contrast, external sources of motivation seemed to result in short-term abstinence (Bilici et al., 2014). It was noted that the healthcare professionals, such as social workers at the treatment centre, can harness the power of intrinsic motivation and other factors such as self-efficacy, building autonomy, and setting

meaningful goals to promote compliance and support individuals who use substances to achieve lasting abstinence in their journey towards recovery. Additionally, intrinsic motivation emerges when an individual dependent on substances participates in an activity for its inherent pleasure. This form of motivation frequently motivates individuals who use substances to actively engage in treatment, adhere to therapeutic measures and enact significant changes in their behaviour (Ryan & Deci, 2013).

Thirdly, through the document analysis it was evident that motivation plays a critical role in the decision-making process when considering starting their substance-related treatment at the treatment centre, as it often begins with the recognition that there is a problem, which is challenging to get to should the person struggling with the dependency not be motivated to change their circumstances (Gorgulu, 2019; Ryan & Deci, 2017). This self-awareness, in turn, is essential for individuals to acknowledge the need for help and consider seeking admission to a treatment centre. Individuals must be committed to the recovery process, as motivation drives this commitment; therefore, individuals must be willing to invest time, effort and resources into their recovery journey (Opsal et al., 2019). Once the individual who is dependent on substances has been admitted and assessed, the role of the healthcare providers at the treatment centre is seen as crucial, specifically the relationship between the therapist and the individual struggling with dependency. Gorgulu (2019) states that to enhance substance-related treatment motivation among individuals struggling with dependency and to strengthen adherence to therapy, it is advisable to supplement the motivational interviewing techniques employed by healthcare providers at substance-related treatment centres with cognitive and behavioural interventions aimed at enhancing coping strategies and skills (Chan et al., 2019). These interventions are designed to strengthen the effectiveness of treatment services offered at substance-related treatment centres and to enhance individuals' motivation to engage with and adhere to these interventions. Furthermore, healthcare professionals working in the field of substance use have consistently emphasised the critical role of patient motivation in influencing treatment outcomes for individuals who use substances (Chan et al., 2019). Many patients entering substance-related treatment may not be prepared to make the necessary changes for recovery and are frequently unready to modify their behaviour, or occasionally even resistant to do so (Opsal et al., 2019). The strength of the relationship between an individual dependent on substances and social workers at a treatment centre can create an emotional bond that conveys the therapist's optimism and motivation for solving problems and can help the individual dependent on substances to feel confident in engaging in tasks that are needed for the treatment process.

The document analysis revealed a scarcity of literature that thoroughly explores the role of motivation in individuals with SUDS seeking admission to treatment centres, as few research articles address this research question directly.

Fourthly, social workers are central facilitators of meaningful and lasting change within therapeutic and recovery-oriented contexts. Through the implementation of targeted, client-centred interventions, they work to enhance individuals' motivation to engage in treatment processes and

to support sustained recovery over time. These interventions are not limited to addressing immediate behavioural concerns, but are grounded in a holistic understanding of the client's lived experiences. Social workers routinely engage with and address a range of complex psychosocial factors – including but not limited to trauma histories, societal stigma, ongoing family conflict and persistent socioeconomic hardships – that frequently undermine client motivation and hinder active engagement in treatment.

Social workers occupy a central role as facilitators of meaningful and lasting change within therapeutic and recovery-oriented contexts. Through the implementation of targeted, client-centred interventions, they work to enhance individuals' motivation to engage in treatment processes and to support sustained recovery over time. The document analysis revealed that social workers foster therapeutic alliances characterised by empathy, trust, and mutual respect, creating a safe space for clients to explore ambivalence and move towards a commitment to change. By actively promoting the development of self-efficacy, social workers empower clients to take ownership of their journey to recovery, and to transition from a state of uncertainty to one of intentional action in seeking treatment (Schultz & Shirindi, 2019).

Lastly, the SDT highlights that intrinsic motivation is the internal drive to engage in a behaviour because it is inherently rewarding or meaningful. In recovery, this type of motivation stems from personal values, a sense of purpose, and the belief in one's ability to overcome addiction. Intrinsic motivation is essential for long-term recovery, because it fosters sustained commitment and resilience. Individuals motivated intrinsically to recover are more likely to take ownership of their journey, internalise recovery goals and develop healthier coping strategies. Treatment centres, nurturing intrinsic motivation, involve helping clients to identify their personal goals and strengths while also addressing factors such as self-worth and autonomy (Opsal et al., 2019).

In contrast, extrinsic motivation is driven by external rewards or pressures. In treatment settings, this can include incentives such as avoiding legal consequences, meeting family or community expectations, or gaining external approval. While extrinsic motivation can initially spur change, SDT suggests that reliance on external rewards may lead to temporary compliance rather than lasting change. However, when extrinsic motivations align with internal values, they can contribute positively to the recovery process (Ryan & Deci, 2017).

For individuals who use substances and who struggle to successfully navigate recovery, substance-related treatment programmes need to strike a balance between extrinsic factors and the cultivation of intrinsic motivation. This integrated approach, rooted in SDT, helps individuals achieve long-term recovery by encouraging them to move beyond external pressures and embrace internal transformation. Supporting competence through skill-building, therapy and personal achievements boosts self-confidence and intrinsic motivation (Chan et al., 2019).

Based on the reviewed studies that met the criteria and aligned with the article's focus, the findings indicate that a range of factors must be taken into account when individuals initiate the recovery process and aim to maintain compliance, particularly among those with substance dependence. It

is essential for social workers and key stakeholders in the substance use field to develop a comprehensive understanding of the motivational drivers that encourage individuals to seek treatment, as this insight is critical for designing effective and person-centred intervention strategies.

### **LIMITATIONS OF THE ARTICLE**

While this document analysis highlighted the crucial role of motivation in the recovery process at treatment centres, it is important to acknowledge some inherent limitations in the article:

- The reliance on secondary data sources, such as academic literature, may restrict the depth and breadth of insights gained regarding individual motivation experiences;
- The absence of direct qualitative methods, such as interviews, focus groups, or surveys, limited the ability to capture the nuanced and diverse perspectives of individuals undergoing treatment;
- Document analysis is useful for mapping literature and identifying research gaps, but it is subject to limitations such as publication bias, which can skew findings. To mitigate this, the authors included a diverse range of studies to ensure balanced representation.

The findings may not fully represent the complex interplay of personal, cultural and contextual factors influencing motivation in the recovery journey. Future research incorporating first-hand accounts could provide a more comprehensive understanding of motivational dynamics within the treatment landscape.

### **CONCLUSION**

This article consisted of a document analysis of publications that report substance-related treatment in the field, with international research that was relevant as a guide for the article, the role of intrinsic and extrinsic motivation in substance-related treatment. While research has highlighted the complex interplay of internal and external factors influencing motivation, there remains a significant gap in the literature comprehensively addressing this critical aspect of substance-related treatment. This is an indication that more research needs to be conducted that is target-driven for treatment centres, which means that the research needs to be driven by achieving specific goals that have been discussed in this article. Nonetheless, understanding and addressing these motivational factors are imperative for substance-related treatment centres to tailor interventions that resonate with the diverse needs of those seeking help. By fostering a supportive environment that enhances intrinsic motivation and acknowledges the influence of external factors (extrinsic motivation, such as social support), substance-related treatment centres can empower individuals to embark on the journey towards recovery with confidence. Best practice guidelines can be created by healthcare practitioners, such as social workers, which can provide actionable and clear guidelines on how to help individuals who use substances who seek treatment, whether they are driven by intrinsic or extrinsic motivation in ensuring that the practices that are implemented are effective. This can make a substantial contribution to the field of social work,

policy and practice. Additionally, once admitted to the treatment centre, the role that specialists at treatment centres play was noted as imperative in maintaining the motivation of individuals during their stay at various substance-related treatment centres. Additional training through workshops, professional development or conferences is essential for enhancing the ability of practitioners (such as social workers) to support motivation in individuals who use substances. Such training will deepen understanding of evidence-based approaches like motivational interviewing and strengths-based practices that foster intrinsic motivation for change. Ongoing learning also ensures that interventions remain current and impactful, strengthening their potential to drive sustainable, client-centred behavioural change. As we continue to delve deeper into the complexities of motivation in the context of treatment admission, it is evident that a comprehensive understanding of these dynamics holds the key to fostering long-term recovery and wellbeing among individuals struggling with SUDs. It is, therefore, imperative for the field of substance abuse to invest in conducting more research, which will assist in interventions that incorporate more motivational techniques, with the hope of increasing compliance, long-term abstinence and reducing the revolving-door phenomenon discussed earlier. This will create an additional body of work for future researchers who are interested in improving the treatment services that are available for individuals who misuse substances.

## REFERENCES

- Alia, B., Green, K., Daughters, S. & Lejuez, C. (2017). Distress tolerance interacts with circumstances, motivation, and readiness to predict substance abuse treatment retention. *Addictive Behaviors*, 73, 99-100. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1016/j.addbeh.2017.04.016>
- Allen, R. S., & Olson, B. D. (2015). The what and why of effective substance abuse treatment. *International Journal of Mental Health and Addiction*, 14(5), 715-727. [http://refhub.elsevier.com/S0306-4603\(17\)30163-6/rf0025](http://refhub.elsevier.com/S0306-4603(17)30163-6/rf0025)
- American Psychiatric Association. (2021). *Diagnostic and statistical manual of mental disorders*. (5<sup>th</sup> ed.). Arlington, VA: American Psychiatric Association.
- Ashford, R. D., Brown, A. M., & Curtis, B. (2019). Recovery capital: A systematic review of the literature. *Addictive Behaviors*, 88, 11-27. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.addbeh.2018.08.010>
- Barbieri, B., Dal Corso, L., Sipio, D., Maria, A., De Carlo, A., & Benevene, P. (2016). Small opportunities are often the beginning of great enterprises: The role of work engagement in support of people through the recovery process and in preventing relapse in drug and alcohol abuse. *Work: A Journal of Prevention, Assessment & Rehabilitation*, 55(2), 373-383. <https://doi.org/10.3233/wor-162411>
- Baumeister, R. F., & Nadal, A. C. (2017). Addiction: Motivation, action control, and habits of pleasure. *Motivation Science*, 3(3), 179-195. <https://10.1037/mot0000069>

- Bilici, M., Yazici, A., Tufan, A., Mutlu, C., Izci, F., & Ugurlu, H. (2014). Motivation in recovery: Role of psychological and social factors. *Psychiatry and Clinical Neurosciences*, 68(3), 203-208. <https://doi.org/10.1111/pcn.12125>
- Cleverly, K., Grenville, M., & Henderson, J. (2018). Youths perceived parental influence on substance use changes and motivation to seek treatment. *Journal of Behavioral Health Services & Research*, 45, 640-650. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11414-018-9590-2>
- Chan, G. H. Y., Lo, T. W., Tam, C. H. L., & Lee, G. K. W. (2019). Intrinsic motivation and psychological connectedness to drug abuse and rehabilitation: The perspective of self-determination. *International Journal of Environmental Research and Public Health*, 16(11), 1934. <https://doi.org/10.3390/ijerph16111934>
- DalGLISH, S., Khalid, H., & McMahon, S. (2020). Document analysis in health policy research: The READ approach. *Health Policy and Planning*, 35, 1-10. <https://doi.org/10.1093/heapol/czaa064>
- DiClemente, C. C. (2018). *Addiction and change: How addictions develop and addicted people recover*. (2<sup>nd</sup> ed.). Guilford Press.
- Formánek, T., Krupchanka, D., Mladá, K., Winkler, P., & Jones, P. B. (2022). Mortality and life-years lost following subsequent physical comorbidity in people with pre-existing substance use disorders: A national registry-based retrospective cohort article of hospitalised individuals in Czechia. *The Lancet Psychiatry*, 9(1), 35-45. [https://doi.org/10.1016/S2215-0366\(22\)00335-2](https://doi.org/10.1016/S2215-0366(22)00335-2)
- Ghouchani, H. M., Niknami, S., Aminshokravi, S., & Hojjat, S. K. (2016). Factors related to addiction treatment motivations, validity and reliability of an instrument. *Journal of Research in Health Sciences*, 16(3), 147-152.
- Gorgulu, T. (2019). The effect of self-efficacy and coping strategies on treatment motivation of individuals in the substance addiction group work process. *Dusunen Adam The Journal of Psychiatry and Neurological Sciences*, 32, 33-42. <https://doi.org/10.14744/DAJPNS.2019.00005>
- Groenewald, C., & Bhana, A. (2016). Substance abuse and the family: An examination of the South African policy context. *Drugs: Education, Prevention and Policy*, 25(2), 148-155. <https://doi.org/10.1080/09687637.2016.1236072>
- Harerimana, B., Csiernik, R., Kerr, M., & Forchuk, C. (2020). Extrinsic factors influencing a person's motivation for engagement and retention in the addiction recovery process: A systematic literature review. *Rwanda Journal of Medicine and Health Sciences*, 3(1), 93-108. <https://doi.org/10.4314/rjmhs.v3i1.11>

- Jongejan, I. K. (2017). *Focusing on the whole person in continued care for SUD patients. The acceptability and possible influence on the well-being of an ACT-based after-care intervention in people previously treated for substance use disorder.* (Master's thesis). Twente University, Netherlands.
- Kader, R., Govender, R., Cornelius, W., Abrahams, L., Ashburner, F., Tisaker, N., Miovský, M., & Harker, N. (2023). Needs assessment and preparatory work for addiction science programs at universities: experiences of universities in South Africa. *Journal of Substance Use*, 28(5), 505-512. <https://doi.org/10.1080/14659891.2023.2250866>
- Kayesa, N. K., & Shung-King, M. (2021). The role of document analysis in health policy analysis studies in low and middle-income countries: Lessons for HPA researchers from a qualitative systematic review. *Health Policy Open*, 2, 1-13. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.hpopen.2020.100024>
- Khan, S., Khan, A., & Aurooj, A. (2022). Intrinsic and extrinsic motivational factors in drug use and drug rehabilitation in young males in Pakistan. *South Asian Journal of Public Health*, 1(1), 1-8.
- McMahon, S. A., Winch, P. J., & Caruso, B. A. (2020). Document analysis in health policy research: The READ approach. *Health Policy and Planning*, 35(10), 1424-1431.
- National Institute on Drug Abuse (NIDA). (2020). *Principles of drug addiction treatment: A research-based guide.* (3<sup>rd</sup> ed). <https://nida.nih.gov/sites/default/files/podat-3rdEd-508.pdf>
- Nyashanu, T., & Visser, M. (2022). Treatment barriers among young adults living with a substance use disorder in Tshwane, South Africa. *Substance Abuse Treatment, Prevention, and Policy*, 17(1), 75. <https://doi.org/10.1186/s13011-022-00501-2>
- Opsal, A., Kristensen, O., & Clausen, T. (2019). Readiness to change among involuntarily and voluntarily admitted patients with substance use disorders. *Substance Abuse Treatment, Prevention, and Policy*, 14, 47. <https://doi.org/10.1186/s13011-019-0237-y>
- Pasareanu, A. (2015). Motivation in recovery: A conceptual framework. *Journal of Substance Abuse Treatment*, 56, 1-9. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jsat.2015.02.003>
- Ryan, R. M., & Deci, E. L. (2013). Toward a social psychology of assimilation: Self-determination theory in cognitive development and education. In B.W., Sokol, F. M. E. Grouzet, & U. Muller (Eds.), *Self-regulation and autonomy: Social and developmental dimensions of human conduct* (pp. 191-207). Cambridge University Press.
- Ryan, R. M., & Deci, E. L. (2017). *Self-determination theory: Basic psychological needs in motivation, development, and wellness.* Guilford Press.
- Sandström, B., Willman, A., Svensson, B., & Borglin, G. (2015). Perceptions of national guidelines and their (non) implementation in mental healthcare: A deductive and inductive
- Social Work/Maatskaplike Werk*, 2025: 61(4)

- content analysis. *Implementation Science*, 10, 1-13. <https://doi.org/10.1186/s13012-015-0234-0>
- Sankofa, N. (2022). Critical method of document analysis. *International Journal of Social Research Methodology*, 26(6), 745-757. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13645579.2022.2113664>
- Schultz, P., & Shirindi, L. (2019). Reflections on the experiences and needs of grandparents caring for their grandchildren with a substance use disorder. *Social Work/Maatskaplike Werk*, 55(4), 359-373. <http://dx.doi.org/10.15270/52-2-757>
- Schwetz, T. A., Calder, T., Rosenthal, E., Kattakuzhy, S., & Fauci, A. S. (2019). Opioids and infectious diseases: A converging public health crisis. *The Journal of Infectious Diseases*, 220(3), 346-349. <https://doi.org/10.1093/infdis/jiz133>
- South African Community Epidemiology Network on Drug Use (SACENDU). (2022). *Research update: Monitoring alcohol, tobacco and other drug use trends (South Africa). January – June 2021*. [https://www.westerncape.gov.za/sites/www.westerncape.gov.za/files/sacendu\\_research\\_update\\_phase\\_50.pdf](https://www.westerncape.gov.za/sites/www.westerncape.gov.za/files/sacendu_research_update_phase_50.pdf)
- Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration. (2019). *National survey on drug use and health: Summary of national findings*. Accessed from <https://www.samhsa.gov/data/sites/default/files/Revised2k11NSDUHSummNatFindings/Revised2k11NSDUHSummNatFindings/NSDUHresults2011.htm>
- Unegbu, R. O. (2020). *Exploring the role of social workers in substance abuse treatment* (Doctoral dissertation). Walden University, United States.
- World Health Organization. (2024). *Drugs (psychoactive)*. <https://www.who.int/health-topics/drugs-psychoactive>

## AUTHOR BIOGRAPHY

**Noxolo Zwane** is currently a lecturer in the Department of Social Work at the University of South Africa, and she is pursuing a Doctor of Philosophy at the University of Pretoria. Her research interests include substance abuse, employee assistance programs (EAP), mental health, and challenges related to substance use. This article is based on various documents studied to explore the role that motivation plays in the decision-making process for individuals seeking treatment for substance dependence.