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ABSTRACT

Background: Spirituality is a construct encompassing a diversity of strongly held beliefs and pursuits related to life's meaning and purpose. Empirical studies in key domains of spirituality related to substance use disorder (SUD) can be valuable in guiding research, and potentially clinical care.

Objectives: To conduct a scoping review of research on the psychological, biological, and cultural dimensions of spirituality and their role in relation to SUD. To identify limitations in empirical findings within these domains and identify promising areas for related research.

Data Sources: Study Appraisal, and Synthesis Methods: Illustrative studies available in the empirical literature are reviewed in order to characterize these three key domains.

Results: Certain areas of importance stand out: On Psychology, attribution of SUD to a spiritual outlook; spiritual awakening; the relation of spirituality to drug craving; and spirituality in the context of psychedelic-assisted psychotherapy. On Biology, heritability of traits related to shared spiritual experience; neurophysiologic correlates of spiritually related experiences; and correlates in brain imaging; On Culture, spiritual aspects of SUD in different cultural settings; distinctions between spiritual and religious phenomena; roles that international organizations play; and context of acquiring recovery capital. The need for further research in each area is defined.

Conclusions: There is utility in examining the diversity of findings in the roles of psychology, biology, and culture in the SUD field. Further research, particularly applying randomization and clinical controls, would be useful in improving the effective application of the construct of spirituality in clinical care.