



# Transformation in the Psyche in the Congress 60: A Qualitative Study of Changes in Treatment Outcomes in Substance Use Disorders

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## Abstract

**Background:** Congress 60, as an NGO, provides services to people with substance use disorders (SUDs). Despite offering services and evaluating their effectiveness in several studies, the underlying theory of interventions and the impact process of these interventions have not been investigated within this organization. The purpose of this study is to obtain the underlying theory of changes in treatment outcomes in this organization.

**Methods:** To achieve this theory, the grounded theory methodology was used. The data for this study consisted of the results of in-depth individual interviews with 26 individuals treated at Congress 60 branches, as well as documents. The analysis of these data was conducted using continuous comparison analysis to extract concepts, involving open, axial, and selective coding. Trustworthiness was evaluated according to the grounded theory principles.

**Findings:** The core concept derived from this study was the “Theory of Transformations in the Psyche” as presented in Congress 60. Subcategories of the core concept included the psyche, the addictive psyche, and the healthy psyche.

**Conclusion:** In Congress 60, psyche is defined as the expression that a person shows, which is the interaction of physical structures and worldview. A person with SUD has an addictive psyche that is demonstrated in daily behavior and, therefore, experiences adverse outcomes. The person treated at Congress 60 achieves a healthy psyche, as shown in daily behavior, and thus experiences positive outcomes. The theory obtained in this study can explain the process of change in the outcomes in Congress 60.

**Keywords:** Substance use disorder, Congress 60, Outcomes, Qualitative research

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## Introduction

Substance use disorders (SUDs) are defined as compulsive seeking and use of drugs despite their terrible effects and loss of control over drug use, and they show a set of cognitive, behavioral, and physiological symptoms.<sup>1</sup> These disorders affect the individual, family, and society; for this reason, several theories have been presented for the treatment of drug use disorders.<sup>2-4</sup> Despite many theories, which are the basis of many interventions in different organizations, SUD is still one of the problems of human society. Therefore, effective comprehensive theories are needed in this regard.<sup>5,6</sup>

In Iran, one of the organizations that considers

physiological, medicinal, psychological, behavioral, and environmental aspects together as a whole and provides related services is Congress 60.<sup>7,8</sup> Congress 60 is a non-governmental and public organization active in the field of treatment and recovery from addiction,<sup>7,8</sup> and was founded in 1998 by Dezhakam based on his former addiction experience.<sup>7,8</sup> This organization focuses on facilitating ex-addicts' support for addicts. This organization has 120 agencies in the country for the treatment of men, nine agencies for the treatment of women, 75 sports agencies, 311 collaborating clinics, and 1223 addiction treatment guides.<sup>7,8</sup> Currently, 158 986 people in Congress 60, including people with SUD and their families,



hold membership cards.<sup>7,8</sup> In Congress 60, over 50 000 individuals with SUDs have received treatment, and currently, 15 083 are undergoing treatment.<sup>7,8</sup>

The physical structures and psychological dimensions of substance abusers are changed by using the interventions in Congress 60.<sup>7-9</sup> The treatment drug in Congress 60 is opium tincture.<sup>7-9</sup> In this method, the substances used by the person, whether stimulants or opioids, are equated with opium tincture.<sup>7-9</sup> This equation is based on the measurement triangle that includes saturation, adaptation, and nutrition.<sup>7-9</sup> The drug gradually reaches zero in 21-day increments over 11 months, with a coefficient of 0.8.<sup>7-9</sup>

In Congress 60, to change the psychological state of people suffering from SUDs, “Worldview Theory in Congress 60” was proposed.<sup>7,8,10</sup> This theory introduces elements such as sight and sound, self, structures, reason, heart, sense, and action, and explains the relationships between these elements. Healthy behaviors are shaped, and addictive behaviors are altered based on these elements.<sup>7,8,10</sup>

Several studies have been conducted about Congress 60 to examine its effectiveness. Tehrani et al. conducted a study that demonstrated the efficacy of Congress 60 in helping individuals achieve control over their temptations, reduce psychological disorders, improve their quality of life, and ultimately prevent relapse.<sup>11</sup> Another study by Zahedi Asl and Pilevari revealed that individuals treated at Congress 60 experienced a shift from unhealthy and destructive beliefs to healthy and constructive beliefs.<sup>12</sup> Additionally, Tavakli et al found that the treatment method employed by Congress 60 was cost-effective and led to an improved quality of life.<sup>13,14</sup> In the study conducted by Pilevari and Zahedi Asl, Congress 60 had a positive impact on families, leading to improved relationships, ultimately facilitating the treatment of substance abusers.<sup>15</sup> Similarly, Dezhakam et al demonstrated that the treatment method employed by Congress 60 enhanced executive functions and regulated the expression of BDNF and 5-HTTLR genes after a six-month treatment period.<sup>16</sup>

Additionally, Zahedi et al discovered that individuals who underwent rehabilitation at Congress 60 had an improved quality of life compared to those who received treatment in addiction treatment clinics.<sup>17</sup> Dezhakam et al followed up 21 034 individuals who received treatment to determine the relapse rate and investigated 2090 individuals to assess cognitive changes over two years at Congress 60. Their findings demonstrated a low relapse rate and improvements in memory and decision-making performance.<sup>18</sup> Furthermore, the authors investigated the effectiveness of Congress 60 in 3,972 amphetamine users over a two-year period, revealing a recovery rate of 89 percent.<sup>19</sup>

These studies and field evidence from this organization present a new perspective on addiction rehabilitation.

However, the underlying process related to changes in outcomes within this organization has not yet been thoroughly and comprehensively studied. Therefore, considering the exploratory research question (how will the outcomes of treatment in people with SUD change in Congress 60?), a theory is needed. Therefore, considering reality-based data regarding treated individuals, as well as the documents in Congress 60, the grounded theory methodology was used to transform this real data into a theory.<sup>20,21</sup>

## Methods

### *Study design*

The grounded theory approach developed by Corbin and Strauss in 2014 was employed in this study.<sup>20</sup> Grounded theory is a collection of techniques that are utilized to integrate information and draw conclusions about causal mechanisms and conditions.<sup>22,23</sup> As one of the most prominent research methodologies, grounded theory involves moving from empirical information to theoretical abstraction.<sup>22</sup> Grounded theory, developed by Glaser and Strauss, is an exploratory approach that allows researchers to work without pre-existing theoretical knowledge and gather comparable information about general phenomena.<sup>24</sup> The ground theory includes four steps.<sup>20</sup> In the first step (collecting data), data is collected from different methods. In the second step (open coding), the data is broken into manageable pieces so that each piece is compared for similarities and differences. In the third step (axial coding), similar data are collected under a conceptual title. Then, with further analysis, the concepts are compiled and form various categories. In the fourth step (selecting coding), different categories are integrated into a core category.<sup>20</sup> The distinctive features of the grounded theory include the simultaneous collection and analysis of data, theoretical sampling, constant comparison at each stage of analysis, memo writing for comparative analysis, and reflexivity, which guides the analytical processes of theory building.<sup>20</sup>

### *Implementation process*

The research was based on the existing ethical guidelines in qualitative research.<sup>20,21</sup> The researcher (A.R.) introduced himself, explained the purpose and method of the study, and obtained informed consent forms from all participants who could read and understand. Participants could withdraw at any time. Moreover, the researcher was reminded not to use any personal identifiers in reports or publications.

### *Data collection*

Purposive sampling was used for the initial sampling, followed by theoretical sampling. At first, data was collected through semi-structured interviews from April 2022 to March 2024. This period was selected to

facilitate the simultaneous collection of data, analysis, and reporting of the findings obtained during the study. The interviews lasted between 20 and 60 minutes. Participants for the interview were selected based on the following criteria: (a) individuals who underwent treatment using the Congress 60 method and successfully rehabilitated without experiencing any relapses, (b) individuals who were willing to participate and complete the consent form for the study, (c) individuals who could communicate verbally, and (d) individuals with a history of drug use. The interviews were conducted at either the Congress 60 branches or the main building of Congress 60.

The initial framework for the semi-structured interview began with an open-ended question. The opening question in the first interview, after demographic questions, was designed to get to know clients and facilitate the interview process. The subsequent question was "Please explain your treatment process in this organization".

After answering the initial question, the interviewer proceeded to ask follow-up questions based on those responses. These questions for subsequent interviews were developed in consultation with the research team and included the following:

1. "What led you to become a drug user?"
2. "How did you learn about Congress 60, and what attracted you to it?"
3. "Can you share your experiences during this trip?"
4. "Could you describe your experiences in the legion of newcomers? (A newcomer to Congress 60 is guided by a mentor for three sessions. In Congress 60, these meetings are referred to as the legion of newcomers.)"
5. "What were your experiences like in public meetings?"
6. "Can you tell me about your experiences in the Legion?"
7. "How has your worldview impacted your treatment process?"
8. "In what ways did the guide (a person who has been treated at Congress 60, passed the guide test, and is responsible for leading the legion) help you in your recovery?"
9. "How did your medication influence your treatment process?"
10. "What changes did you experience after your release?"
11. "Is there anything interesting that I didn't ask?"
12. "Is there anything you found annoying that I didn't ask?"

After obtaining consent for recording the interview from the participant, the content was recorded. During the interview, the participants were encouraged to provide their explanations freely without prompting, direction, or influence on their responses, and the researcher listened carefully to the interview. The book "*Crossing the Zone 60 Degrees Below Zero*," which shares the experiences of Dezhakam, the founder of Congress

60, which details his treatment journey, was used as a source of information. Additionally, the CD titled "*What is the Psyche*," also by Dezhakam, provided invaluable information for Congress 60.

### Data analysis

First, the recorded voices were transcribed, the participants' information was deleted, and the names of the participants were replaced with the interview numbers. The study data were analyzed based on the methods proposed in the grounded theory methodology of Strauss and Corbin 2014.<sup>20,21</sup> In this study, the analysis process was carried out simultaneously with data collection through MAXQDA 2020 software in three open, axial, and selective coding stages to extract concepts, process, structure, and context. Data analysis was conducted focusing on the content that showed the changes in the treated people.

In the initial stage of coding, which included open coding, conceptual codes were assigned line by line to the raw data (twenty-third participant: "*It means that doing my chores has become more beautiful. It has become more organized. At that time, if they tell me to sweep this kitchen. I would not do it to the end. But now I do it to the end*"; open coding: "*doing things*"). As the study progressed, microanalysis turned into macroanalysis. In axial coding, connections and logical order between the codes obtained from open coding were examined, which led to identifying and revealing the connections between concepts and categories. The concepts that were obtained in this stage of coding had not reached the saturation stage. Therefore, theoretical sampling was used and related text (the book "*Crossing the 60 Degrees Below Zero*") and existing CDs about psyche (entitled "*What is a Psyche?*") were used to enrich the obtained concepts. In selective coding, which was the final stage of coding, the codes were re-analyzed and revised to create a picture of all concepts and categories. At this stage, the core category (transformation in the psyche in Congress 60), which encompasses other categories, was selected.

### Trustworthiness

Trustworthiness was assessed based on the grounded theory principles established by Corbin and Strauss in 2014.<sup>20</sup> Trustworthiness was enhanced through field note recording, memo writing, long-term engagement, ongoing field observations, member checks, method and data source triangulation, peer review, and reflective self-awareness. Long-term engagement facilitated communication with participants. Additionally, prolonged observations allowed for a deeper comprehension of the underlying principles that shape the organization's processes and contexts. To ensure accuracy, a member check was conducted by presenting the emerging categories to the Congress 60 members, who provided feedback on the interpretations derived from

the data and suggested necessary amendments. Multiple data collection methods and sources were employed to triangulate the data. Furthermore, experts were consulted throughout the research, and a visual analysis of the documents was conducted.

### **Ethical considerations**

The University of Social Welfare and Rehabilitation Sciences approved the research with the code IR.USWR.REC.1400.237. The study was conducted in accordance with the current guidelines for qualitative research. The researcher introduced herself, explained the study objectives and methodology, and obtained informed consent from participants who could comprehend the study's details. Participants were allowed to withdraw from the study at any time. The researcher was instructed not to use any personal identifiers in reports or publications.

### **Results**

After analyzing the 26 initial interviews (see Table 1), we identified several concepts. The primary texts from Congress 60, including the book *"Crossing the Zone 60 Degrees Below Zero"* and the introductory CD for newcomers titled "What is the Psyche," were recognized as essential components. Additionally, the concept of "Transformation in the Psyche" presented in Congress 60 was highlighted as a key theme. The subcategories of the core concept included "the psyche," "the addictive psyche," and "the healthy psyche." The concepts are tabulated in Table 2.

#### **The psyche**

In Congress 60, "psyche" is defined as the expression that a person displays, encompassing various moods as different manifestations of the psyche in individuals. One interviewee stated, *"I used to be a nervous and aggressive person, clinging to everything"* (8th interview). Another shared, *"I was in an argument and messed up"* (9th interview). A third interviewee remarked, *"I was very mean, very nervous, and very spiteful. I was also very vengeful"* (10th interview). Additionally, someone noted, *"Being psychic means you can become depressed or even bipolar"* (12th interview).

The foundation of the psyche in Congress 60 consists of the body and worldview. In other words, the psyche is shaped by the interaction between the body and worldview. As Dezhakam states in "What is Psyche CD": "Mood is created and influenced by two factors: one is the body and physiology, and the other is the worldview." Additionally, he explains, *"When both the body and worldview are fixed, the psyche also becomes fixed"* (Sixth interview). It is essential to have a coherent worldview, a healthy body, and good morals to ensure a positive psyche (Tenth interview).

The body consists of structures related to addiction that,

whether healthy or problematic, influence the psyche of a person with a substance use disorder. One source states, *"Does this person's brain structure function properly? We explored higher up in the body and discovered that neurotransmitters play a role in affecting mood"* (What is Psyche CD, by Hossein Dezhakam). Another interview notes, *"Congress states that the body is our car, and this car is under their control"* (22nd interview). A participant in the first interview mentioned, *"We were using opium tincture medicine. It was effective; it prevented my mood from deteriorating physically and kept my mind clear of drugs."*

A worldview refers to an individual's perception, feelings, and responses to both their inner thoughts and the external world, all of which influence their psyche. According to the first participant, the concept of worldview in Congress 60 is a crucial element in addiction treatment. It teaches individuals how to navigate life in society and enhances their communication with friends and family. *"... it is the missing link in treating addiction. It teaches a practical worldview, including how to interact within society. A worldview is not just about drugs; it encompasses all social behaviors. It guides how to relate to friends and family, as well as how to engage with the broader community. All of these aspects are part of one's worldview"* (first interview).

#### **Addictive psyche**

Due to the repeated use of drugs, the frequency of use often increases: *"As usual, it starts with once a month, then becomes twice a month, and eventually leads to once a week"* (18th interview). People who use drugs experience significant damage to their bodies, particularly in areas related to addiction; one person stated, *"I destroyed this system (my body) by importing drugs from outside"* (14th interview). Another participant noted, *"Because your body does not function normally, you lose weight and start feeling unwell"* (4th interview). Additionally, a common sentiment was expressed: *"Our bodies are out of balance"* (5th interview).

Participants also identified an addictive mindset, with one individual noting, *"The first time I used drugs was rooted in negative thoughts"* (5th interview). Others shared their initial motivations, such as, *"I wanted to feel energized and enjoyed spending time with my friends"* (21st interview). One person reflected on their perspective, saying, *"I realized that we had no real understanding of how to live life properly"* (7th interview).

Due to the interplay of these two factors, the psyche lacks balance and manifests in various moods such as timidity, anger, aggressiveness, resentment, stress, irritability, anxiety, depression, and annoyance. As one interviewee stated, *"I was a very angry person"* (25th interview). Another mentioned, *"I was experiencing a state of depression and extreme despair inside"* (23rd



**Table 1.** The demographics of the participants

Participant	Gender	Age	Marital status	Education	Substance	Drug use years	Treatment duration	Drug-free period	Location
1	Male	50	M	Diploma	Opium	15	10 months and 18 days	50 days	Lorestan
2	Male	41	M	Bachelor's degree	Opium juice	8	13 months	93 days	Lorestan
3	Male	39	M	Bachelor's degree	Heroin and amphetamine	18	10 months and 27 days	21 months and 2 days	Tehran
4	Male	35	M	Bachelor's degree	Heroin, generic drugs, methadone, and cannabis	17	10 months	18 months and 24 days	Tehran
5	Male	31	S	Diploma	Opium, marijuana, opium juice	7	13 months and 3 days	43 months	Tehran
6	Male	37	M	Bachelor's degree	Opium juice and methadone	5.9	11 months	69 months	Tehran
7	Male	44	M	Diploma	Amphetamine and methadone	14	12 months and 12 days	1 day	Tehran
8	Male	39	M	Diploma	Opium juice and methadone	17	10 months	1 day	Khuzestan
9	Male	43	M	Diploma	Opium, amphetamine, heroin, and hashish	18	11 months and 10 days	91 months and 6 days	Tehran
10	Male	39	S	Diploma	Opium juice, opium, and pills	6	13 months	72 months	Tehran
11	Male	51	M	Diploma	Opium juice	10	10 months and 4 days	120 months	Isfahan
12	Male	36	S	Diploma	Pills and opium	8	11 months	84 months	Tehran
13	Male	41	S	Associate degree	Opium juice, amphetamine, hashish, alcohol	17	10 months and 10 days	58 months	Tehran
14	Male	36	M	Diploma	Heroin and amphetamine	20	11 months	52 months	Gilan
15	Male	44	S	Master's degree	Cocaine, opium, amphetamine, juice of opium, and alcohol	17	10 months and 28 days	2 days	Tehran
16	Male	48	M	Bachelor's degree	Edible and smoked opium, opium juice, and hashish	20	12 months and 28 Days	3 months and 6 days	Tehran
17	Male	43	M	Associate degree	Alcohol and hashish	35	12 months and 2 days	10 months	Tehran
18	Male	50	M	Associate degree	Opium and opium juice	17	10 months and 3 days	18 months	Tehran
19	Male	45	M	Bachelor's degree	Heroin	28	10 month and 3 days	16 months	Tehran
20	Male	51	M	Elementary School certificate	Opium and opium juice	30	10 months and 15 days	6 months	Isfahan
21	Male	43	M	Diploma	Opium and opium juice	15	10 months and 4 days	3 months	Mashhad
22	Male	46	M	Bachelor's degree	Opium and opium juice	10	10 months and 4 days	4 year	Mashhad
23	Male	24	S	Diploma	Cannabis, hashish, and opium juice	7	14 months and 13 days	3 months and 7 days	Tehran
24	Male	58	M	Elementary	Heroin	25	12 months and 29 days	2 hours	Isfahan
25	Male	32	M	Elementary school certificate	Opium and opium juice	7	11 months	2 years and 2 months	Qazvin
26	Male	40	S	Diploma	Amphetamine	20	14 months	4 month and 15 days	Tehran

**Table 2.** Classification of the concepts

Core concept	Categories	Subcategories	Examples of open codes with quotes
Transformation in the psyche in the Congress 60	Psyche (individual expression with SUD)	Body	Balance in the body <i>"The body should reach a balanced state and a stabilization"</i> (5th interview, Pos. 29) Reconstruction of the body <i>"Reconstruction of the body and nervous and biochemical brain system"</i> . (Tenth interview, Pos. 43)
		Worldview	Happy with the change in worldview, <i>"They enter the Congress because of changing their worldview and maintaining their happy mood, they start serving in the Congress"</i> . (14th interview, Pos. 23) Changing perspective with worldview <i>"Worldview means that we change our view of the world"</i> (17th interview, Pos. 37)
	Addictive psyche	Addictive behaviors	Lack of recreational activities <i>"I did not spend one Friday (day off for recreational activities) with them (family members) at that time (drug use) for many years, I always left home for reasons."</i> (16th interview, Pos. 11). Not regulating sleep. <i>"Physically, one issue is sleep. I had a terrible sleep"</i> (4th interview, Pos. 7)
		Addiction consequences	No hope for life, <i>"I practically did not see any hope of life for myself."</i> (14th interview, Pos. 63). Loss of life <i>"I had lost my whole life. I was separated. I had reached zero financially."</i> (14th interview, Pos. 17).
	Healthy psyche	Healthy behaviors	Better social communication <i>"I saw that social relations are getting better with society."</i> (22nd interview, Pos. 27). Sleep regulation <i>"It happened that my sleep was adjusted."</i> (22nd interview, Pos. 19)
		Treatment-related outcomes in the Congress 60	Feel better <i>"In fact, I saw that I was getting better"</i> (Interview 18, Pos. 25). The feeling of freedom and liberation <i>"Well, this makes you feel free and feel better, and I feel free."</i> (16th interview, Pos. 37).

interview). A third participant reflected, *"For me, stress was my biggest problem"* (4th interview).

The following moods manifest as negative speech and behaviors in daily life. Participants expressed feelings such as, *"I couldn't do my daily activities"* (5th interview). Regarding education, one said, *"I lost the time to engage with various subjects, so we didn't think things through properly"* (6th interview). In terms of work, another participant shared, *"I work in a government agency, and I faced more problems at the office"* (7th interview). When discussing sleep, a participant noted, *"My sleep was disturbed"* (25th interview). In relation to recreation, one said, *"When we wanted to go somewhere, I had to be driven so I could go and take my medication"* (1st interview). For social participation, a participant stated, *"Everything had to go my way at home"* (21st interview). Regarding health management, one participant mentioned, *"I didn't have a good day mentally and emotionally"* (10th interview), and with respect to daily activities, another expressed, *"You couldn't do your work"* (1st interview).

Engaging in daily activities while exhibiting behaviors and attitudes rooted in an addictive mindset often leads to a lack of competence in fulfilling one's responsibilities. For instance, in one interview, it was stated, *"You couldn't do your work."* In another, a participant mentioned, *"Over time, things happen that make it hard to manage your behaviors."*

The impact on one's quality of life, health, well-being, and comfort is significant. One interviewee remarked, *"The consequences of your unwise behavior will bring you down."* Another shared, *"My drug use would multiply, or I would turn to another substance to find peace."* A participant expressed the loss of both their life and job, saying, *"I lost both my life and my job."*

One interviewee offered a stark comparison, stating, *"Consider a simple, ordinary person who wakes up in the morning, goes to work, engages in business, and enjoys leisure time in the evening. For a drug user, this cycle is disrupted and reversed."*

The first participant highlighted the addictive mindset, explaining how it prevents them from engaging in recreational activities with their family, feeling motivated, and facing societal stigma.

*"I was exhausted and lacked the necessary balance. I couldn't go out with my children. During Sizdahbedar (a festival in Iran) or whenever we wanted to go out, they had to put me in the car so that I could use drugs. This was just one example. There were also other societal issues I faced; as someone who experienced addiction, I found it difficult to carry out my daily activities."* (first interview)

The addictive psyche state in Congress 60 has been likened to a car driving through a region of 60 degrees below zero (Figure 1). In this allegory, the car is an allegory of the body, the driver is an allegory of worldview, driving is an allegory of the psyche of addiction, and the frozen state is an allegory of the difficult conditions of addiction.

### Healthy psyche

Individuals who received treatment at Congress 60 reported that achieving a healthy body initiates a series of reconstructions within themselves. One participant noted, *"My body is healthy now"* (5th interview), while another shared, *"Very beautiful things have happened to my body"* (23rd interview). Additionally, one participant mentioned, *"Opium tincture syrup helped to heal my body"* (22nd interview).

In terms of worldview, participants expressed

transformative experiences: “Congress taught me the art of living” (22nd interview), and “There, we learned what worldview is, what information is, and what knowledge is. They explained to us that our minds calmed down” (21st interview). A participant emphasized the importance of worldview in the Congress, stating, “One of our priorities and important indicators at Congress is learning about worldview” (17th interview). Another shared, “When my worldview changed, I realized I came to this world for a purpose: to have a positive impact on my society” (14th interview).

Regarding psychological well-being, participants noted that achieving balance in both body and mind is crucial. One stated, “My psyche reached balance” (5th interview), while another insisted, “You have to heal the body, psyche, and worldview together” (6th interview). Additionally, it was noted, “When the body reaches balance, the psyche also reaches balance” (5th interview), indicating a holistic approach to health and well-being.

People who have received treatment share that achieving a relative balance in all aspects of life is “very useful for our daily life” (21st interview). For example, they mention improvements in their relationships with others: “I gradually became stronger in my relationship with my family” (16th interview). In terms of work, one individual states, “Today, I am a successful person in my work” (9th interview). Regarding sleep, another participant notes, “My sleep has changed, and my sleep has improved” (17th interview). When discussing daily activities, one person expresses, “I feel that my strength has increased. It means that doing my tasks has become more beautiful and regular” (23rd interview). They also emphasize self-care: “I continue to be disciplined” (22nd interview).

As a result of achieving this balance, individuals feel more competent in fulfilling their roles. One participant reports, “In the workplace, they ask where I am going because I have changed so much” (22nd interview). Participants also engage in healthy activities, with one

stating, “Congress taught me the abilities I had and even the abilities I didn’t know I had” (15th interview) and another sharing, “I can do things I couldn’t do before” (11th interview).

This pursuit of balance leads to improvements in quality of life, health, well-being, and comfort. One individual reflects, “I got what I wanted, and I’m getting more. I feel better, and now I have balance” (first interview). Another expresses, “I am extremely satisfied with my life” (third interview) and adds, “I am living my life at ease... my life is being lived in the best way” (5th interview). Moreover, many have experienced liberation from addiction, with one stating, “You will reach that liberation and a true belief from absolute disbelief” (9th interview) and another sharing, “Until I was released from addiction after 11-12 months” (10th interview). A participant vividly describes the experience of freedom: “You feel like you have stood at the top of the peak on the day of liberation” (16th interview). They add, “I have been free for 10 months” (11th interview) and, “It has been 10 months since I was let go” (17th interview).

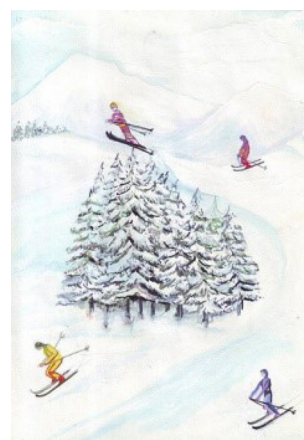
Participant 1 described their mental well-being as stemming from strong relationships with family, active participation in ceremonies, engagement in healthy activities, and achieving a sense of balance in life. They shared:

“Now, I feel very connected to my family, and I enjoy spending time with the children. I visit my family and extended relatives regularly, and I participate in all our ceremonies, speaking up whenever needed. I no longer engage in negative behaviors. I follow a clear path, and I feel true to myself. This sense of being true to myself is very important, and I have maintained balance in my life. In the past, I didn’t have that balance...” (first interview).

A healthy psyche state in Congress 60 has been likened to skiers playing in the ice (Figure 2). This image shows the conditions of the glacier, which is an allegory of the



**Figure 1.** Allegory of a person’s psyche to drive in icy conditions. (Image from the book “Crossing the Zone 60 Degrees Below Zero” by Hossein Dezhakam, with permission from the author to publish)



**Figure 2.** Allegory of the treated person to the skier (Image from the book “Crossing the Zone 60 Degrees Below Zero” by Hossein Dezhakam, with permission from the author to publish)

difficult situation during the addiction period, and the skier is an allegory of the cured person, who can easily live again in the same difficult conditions by regaining his abilities.

### *The theory of transformations in the psyche in the Congress 60*

A person with a SUD enters Congress 60 with an addictive mentality shaped by the destruction of physical structures and a skewed worldview. This mental state affects their daily behavior, including work and recreation, leading to an imbalance in their actions, inappropriate conduct, a lack of competence in fulfilling roles, and overall poor health and well-being. Consequently, they struggle to engage in healthy behaviors, enjoy a satisfactory quality of life, and find comfort in their daily existence.

Through participation in Congress 60, the individual's psyche undergoes healing, resulting in the development of a healthy worldview and the restoration of physical structures impacted by addiction. This transformation manifests in improved daily behaviors—such as work and recreation—and fosters behavioral balance, appropriate conduct, and competence in fulfilling roles. As a result, the individual experiences enhanced health and well-being, engages in healthy activities, achieves a better quality of life, and gains a sense of comfort and stability. Ultimately, they are discharged from addiction. A diagram illustrating the transformation process in the psyche is presented in Figure 3.

### Discussion

Congress 60 is a non-governmental organization that provides services to individuals struggling with substance abuse.<sup>7,8</sup> Despite the provision of services by

this organization, the underlying theory has not been comprehensively studied. For this reason, this study was conducted to gain a deeper understanding of how outcomes changed in individuals treated at Congress 60. To achieve this, grounded theory methodology was used. This study included individuals treated at Congress 60 and texts and CDs related to the research question. The findings of this study revealed the theory of transformations in the psyche at Congress 60. The subcategories of this concept include the psyche, the addictive psyche, and the healthy psyche.

The theory of transformations in the psyche, as described in Congress 60, explains how changes in treatment outcomes occur. In this theory, the psyche is defined as the expression that a person shows and is formed from the two foundations of body and worldview. The psyche manifests in various moods (such as timid, brave, hopeful, spiteful, jealous, capricious, hopeless, and depressed) and behaviors (such as work, recreation, sleep, social participation, and health management) through individual speeches and actions.

A person's psyche is ultimately presented by various consequences, including competence or lack thereof in performing roles, balance or imbalance in behavioral patterns, appropriate or inappropriate behavior, and having or not having a suitable quality of life, as well as experiencing or not experiencing well-being and comfort.

One of the subcategories of transformations in the psyche in Congress 60 is the addictive psyche category. The addicted psyche is formed from addictive body structures and addictive worldviews. An addictive psyche manifests itself in the form of different moods in all daily behaviors, such as work, recreation, education, social interactions, sleep, and health management. Due to the addictive psyche of a drug abuser, consequences such as

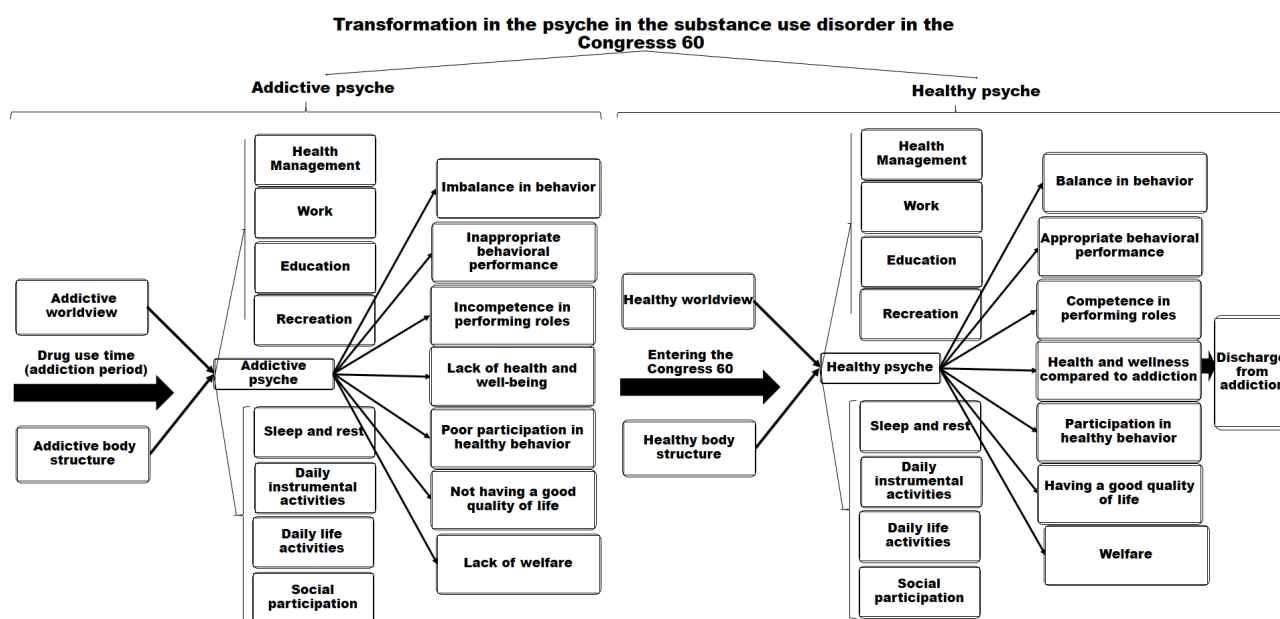


Figure 3. Diagram of concepts related to transformations in the psyche



lack of balance in performing activities, inappropriate behavior performance, lack of competence in performing roles, lack of proper quality of life, lack of adequate comfort and well-being emerge.

In the literature, the basic feature of drug use disorder is a set of cognitive, behavioral, and physiological symptoms that show that a person continues to use drugs despite significant related problems.<sup>1,4,25</sup> SUD is known based on the pathological patterns of behavior related to substance use, such as control disorder, social harm, high-risk use, and pharmacological criteria, which affect the individual, family, and society. This is consistent with the results obtained from this study.<sup>1,4,25</sup>

Another category of transformations in the psyche, as observed in Congress 60, is the healthy psyche after treatment, which manifests in various moods and daily behaviors, such as work, recreation, social participation, and sleep. This healthy psyche leads to outcomes including balance in behaviors, proper behavioral performance, competence in performing roles, improved health and well-being regarding addiction, increased participation in healthy behaviors, a good quality of life, and overall well-being and comfort. Ultimately, these changes help individuals break free from addiction. The results of several studies conducted in Congress 60 have demonstrated that the interventions of Congress 60 lead to a better quality of life,<sup>14</sup> reduced relapse,<sup>11</sup> formation of healthy beliefs,<sup>12</sup> peace in the family,<sup>15</sup> persistence in not using drugs,<sup>11,18,19</sup> changes in gene expression,<sup>16</sup> and cognitive changes.<sup>16,18</sup> The results of these studies are consistent with the healthy psyche categories obtained in this study.

### Limitations of the study

The main limitation of this study was the lack of access to women treated in Congress 60. For this reason, it is suggested that future studies investigate the population of women treated at Congress 60.

### Conclusion

SUD is currently a significant issue in society, causing extensive harm to individuals, families, and communities. Therefore, new theories are needed to reduce the destructive burden of this phenomenon. One organization that appears to have proposed a new theory in the treatment of SUDs, based on the number of individuals treated and their ongoing commitment to overcoming addiction, is Congress 60. However, the underlying mechanisms of changes in treatment outcomes were not investigated in Congress 60. Therefore, in this study, the underlying theory of changes in treatment outcomes in Congress 60 was analyzed using grounded theory methodology. In this study, the theory of transformations in the psyche in Congress 60 was investigated, which explains the changes in the treatment outcomes in

Congress 60. Considering that this theory shows concepts related to changes in treatment outcomes, it can be investigated in future studies using quantitative studies. It is suggested to conduct quantitative studies regarding the positive changes made in the psyche of the treated people to examine the effectiveness of these changes. This study and future studies can facilitate implementing interventions presented in Congress 60 to be used as a model in the provision of services and rehabilitation of substance abusers in the future.

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### Competing Interests

The authors declare that they have no conflicts of interest.

### Ethical Approval

Ethical approval for the research was obtained from the University of Social Welfare and Rehabilitation Sciences, with the code IR.USWR.REC.1400.237.

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