



Motivations for abstinence reported by women: a phenomenological analysis based on Edith Stein


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Objective: to understand how women with a history of substance abuse elaborate their motivations for abstinence, through dialogue with Edith Stein's Phenomenology.

Methodology: qualitative study with three female drug users. The participants, who were chosen through deliberate sampling, took part in individual and semi-structured interviews that were audio-recorded and completely transcribed. Based on the phenomenological method, the interviews were analyzed. **Results:** distinct experiences (sensory, empathetic, and volitional) appear as mobilizing in the elaboration of each participant about their abstinence process. In dialogue with Stein, the process of acceptance of these mobilizing experiences was recognized, as well as the recognition of human finitude and the activation of the will aimed at changing the state of things. **Conclusion:** it is concluded that it is possible to identify shared elements, just as it is important to emphasize the specificity of each story and recognize the uniqueness of each woman who experiences or has experienced substance abuse.

Descriptors: Motivation; Alcohol Abstinence; Women; Mental Health Services.

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Motivações para a abstinência relatadas por mulheres: uma análise fenomenológica a partir de Edith Stein

Objetivo: compreender como mulheres com histórico de uso abusivo de substâncias elaboram suas motivações para a abstinência, por meio do diálogo com a Fenomenologia de Edith Stein. **Metodologia:** estudo qualitativo realizado com três mulheres usuárias de drogas. As participantes, selecionadas por amostragem intencional, participaram de entrevistas individuais e semiestruturadas, que foram gravadas em registro sonoro e transcritas integralmente. A análise das entrevistas foi pautada no método fenomenológico. **Resultados:** vivências distintas (sensoriais, empáticas e volitivas) apareceram como mobilizadoras na elaboração de cada participante sobre seu processo de abstinência. Em diálogo com Stein, reconheceu-se como compartilhado o processo de aceitação dessas vivências mobilizadoras, o reconhecimento da finitude humana e a ativação do querer voltado para a mudança do estado das coisas. **Conclusão:** conclui-se que é possível identificar elementos compartilhados, assim como é importante ressaltar a especificidade de cada história e reconhecer a singularidade de cada mulher que vivencia ou já vivenciou o abuso de substâncias.

Descritores: Motivação; Abstinência Alcoólica; Mulheres; Serviços de Saúde Mental.

Motivaciones para la abstinencia relatadas por mujeres: un análisis fenomenológico a partir de Edith Stein

Objetivo: comprender el modo como mujeres con antecedentes de abuso de sustancias elaboran sus motivaciones para la abstinencia, a través del diálogo con la Fenomenología de Edith Stein. **Metodología:** estudio cualitativo realizado con mujeres usuarias de drogas. Las participantes, que fueron elegidas por muestreo deliberado, participaron en entrevistas individuales y semiestructuradas que fueron grabadas en audio y transcritas en su totalidad. Las entrevistas se analizaron con base en el método fenomenológico. **Resultados:** distintas experiencias (sensoriales, empáticas y volitivas) aparecen como movilizadoras en la elaboración de cada participante sobre su proceso de abstinencia. En diálogo con Stein, se reconoció el proceso de aceptación de estas experiencias movilizadoras, el reconocimiento de la finitud humana y la activación de la voluntad encaminada a cambiar el estado de las cosas. **Conclusión:** se concluye que es posible identificar elementos compartidos, así como es importante enfatizar la especificidad de cada historia y reconocer la singularidad de cada mujer que vive o ha vivido el abuso de sustancias.

Descriptorios: Motivación; Abstinencia Alcohólica; Mujeres; Servicios de Salud Mental.

Introduction

The indiscriminate use of alcohol and other drugs is a multifactorial problem that transcends geographical barriers and has mobilized discussions, studies and different intervention proposals all over the world⁽¹⁾.

In Brazil, as an achievement of the psychiatric reform movement, Law 10.216 of April 6th, 2001 extended the rights of mental health service users - including those suffering from alcohol and other drug use disorders - and redirected the care model in force until then⁽²⁾. At the end of the same year, the III National Health Conference, among other consolidations, discussed the inclusion of abusive users of psychoactive substances and drug addicts in the harm reduction policy, as well as recognizing the indispensability of individualizing care for these people⁽³⁾. In this restructuring, the Psychosocial Care Centres (*Centros de Atenção Psicossocial*, CAPS) appear as an important strategy of the Psychosocial Care Network (PSCN), and those specialized in receiving and treating this population are called Alcohol and Drug CAPS (CAPS AD).

In 2003, the Ministry of Health's Policy for Comprehensive Care for Users of Alcohol and Other Drugs was instituted⁽⁴⁾. The document provides a wide interpretation of the scenario and proposes possibilities for dealing with the abusive use of psychoactive substances, and among the guidelines, comprehensive care for the user and the implementation of a care network gain focus in which CAPS appears as the protagonist of a specialized and continuous service.

In the years that followed, there were both advances and setbacks in terms of public policies for the comprehensive health of drug addicts and people with mental disorders. After decades of promoting and consolidating a movement committed to the autonomy and freedom of the individual, a process has begun that seems to be moving in the opposite direction. Transformations brought about by the psychiatric reform have been questioned since 2016, when the "New National Mental Health Policy" once again brought controversial issues to the fore, such as encouraging psychiatric hospitalization and punitive approaches to drug addicts. It is important that these setbacks are confronted, so that advances in psychosocial care continue to be part of the Brazilian political agenda⁽⁵⁾. In this sense, a better understanding of the reality of users can be a way of formulating actions that meet new social demands, among which the increase in the consumption of substances by women stands out.

The habit of using psychoactive substances is commonly read as a male behavior. Although this scenario is changing, as the dysfunctional use of these substances by women is increasingly present in day-to-day care, studies aimed at this sector have yet to

keep pace with these transformations: it is common for differences between men and women to be ignored, and research aimed at gender specificities is still scarce⁽⁶⁾.

Not recognizing the heterogeneity of drug users excludes and makes invisible differences that may be crucial to understanding the issue, which highlights how substance abuse breaks with the socially prescribed characteristics of being a woman, such as selfless dedication to reproductive and care functions. This rupture refers to gender stereotypes and moral judgments that fall more heavily on female behavior than on male behavior. Even before the use of any substance becomes excessive or pathological, there is great social disapproval of this behavior in women. As a recent systematic review of the world's production on the subject points out, the qualitative literature clearly demonstrates that women drug users experience higher levels of stigma compared to men⁽⁷⁾.

The fact that they are the target of stigmas, and judgments and are exposed to stricter standards of behavior makes it difficult for women to seek treatment. As a way of protecting themselves from social pressure and avoiding feelings of shame, they tend to hide their addiction, contributing to its maintenance⁽⁸⁾. When they exist, the search for treatment tends to be late, compared to men, and at a more serious stage⁽⁹⁾. Hence the importance of knowing and analyzing female use, listening to women about their experiences, recognizing their heterogeneities, in order to subsidize care practices and policies for users that are attentive to their various modalities of use, social circumstances and life cycle⁽¹⁰⁾.

This movement is urgent, given that the treatment available is still primarily structured to meet male demand and is not prepared to address the specificities of women's health, or the intersection between substance abuse and experiences of violence, which is recurrent in the trajectory of female users. These structural barriers contribute to women being a minority in care, inhibiting the formation of bonds and a sense of belonging to existing services⁽¹¹⁾. The questions raised corroborate the underestimation of the female gender in the drug abuse treatment scenario, which may be associated with the higher number of suicide attempts and mortality among female users⁽¹²⁾. For all these reasons, conducting studies dedicated to understanding the experience of women who abuse substances is important for broadening our understanding of this change in scenario and helping to address this social demand, guiding new understandings that can be translated into equitable public policies^(10,13).

This challenge initiated this research project by listening to women who attend a CAPS AD about their experiences. In dealing with them, specific gender issues were not the focus of their accounts, while the

motivations for abstinence emerged as central to their elaborations. For this reason, this became the aim of the research: to understand how women with a history of substance abuse elaborate their motivations for abstinence. Talking about abstinence and drug addiction treatment is complex, because in addition to the social and cultural diversity of users, it is important not to lose sight of the uniqueness of each story. Faced with generalist theories that end up incurring in mechanisms and reductionisms, authors have highlighted the need to avoid stigmas, overcome prejudices and carry out analyses that focus on the person behind the addiction⁽¹⁴⁾. Hence the choice to take this journey in the company of a philosopher whose life and work has been dedicated to understanding the complexity of the human person.

The phenomenology option

In the classic phenomenology of Edmund Husserl (1859-1938) and Edith Stein (1891-1942), a theoretical and methodological reference helps us to suspend preconceived ideas to get closer to the subjects and their lived experiences⁽¹⁵⁻²¹⁾. Phenomenology emphasizes attention to lived experiences in their singular and shared aspects⁽¹⁹⁾.

In this approach, the search for common structures in different phenomenal manifestations is always accompanied by the recognition that each person possesses an inexhaustible dimension of mystery. This recognition points to the limitations of attempts to enter the human terrain in a totalizing and mechanistic way⁽²²⁾, but it also promotes the rigor of the researcher in the act of bearing witness to the lived experiences that are communicated to us⁽²³⁾.

In order to analyze the motivations for abstinence with the precision outlined by phenomenology, it is necessary to briefly clarify how human beings are constituted and the meaning of the term "motivation".

Investigating the possibility of knowing things in themselves and intentional consciousness, Husserl analyzed specific characteristics of lived experiences, which reveal the structure of the human being as a unity made up of three dimensions: corporeal, psychological, and spiritual⁽¹⁵⁾. Stein, a disciple of Husserl, sought to deepen her investigations into the structure of the human person⁽¹⁷⁻¹⁹⁾.

According to Stein, it is possible to delineate the realm of human corporeality in terms of the material body (*Körper*), which belongs to nature and is fully subject to its natural mechanical and causal laws⁽¹⁸⁾. However, there is a specific quality of a human body that differentiates it from a corpse or a machine, and that is the fact that it is alive or, in other words, it expresses life. Stein calls it a "living body" (*Leib*)⁽¹⁸⁾. And what does

life mean? It delimits the internal realm of the person that is expressed externally. First of all, the living body has sensations, it is capable of feeling. Sensations are lived experiences that belong to both the physical and psychological spheres of human beings. According to the philosopher, sensations are experiences that are immanent to consciousness, in other words, they have no intentionality⁽¹⁸⁾.

In addition to sensations, life is also expressed through movement. In this sense, another quality of the living body is the manifestation of its movements. This point is important, as it signals a different kind of legality to the mechanistic causality to which the living body is subjected. It also points to a new realm of human experiences, namely psychological and spiritual lived experiences. A lifeless material body, or any natural object, can only move if it receives a stimulus or force from surrounding natural objects. Living bodies, in turn, can move by internal impulses, that is, the "origin" of the movement itself is internal⁽¹⁹⁾.

Finally, it is important to clarify what is meant by "internal impulses". These constitute the very dynamics of the psyche, where lived experiences delimit the sphere of feelings and vital states; and also of the spirit, an aspect that circumscribes specifically human lived experiences, which reveal the presence of a "cogito", or a reflective and free "I" – or phenomenological self⁽¹⁹⁾.

The sphere of spirit delimits the realm of intentional acts of consciousness that are accompanied by the gaze of the "I"⁽¹⁶⁾. The intentional gaze makes the "I" turn towards objects that are outside the flow of consciousness, or that are transcendent to it; or, it transforms into objects the constitutive instances of consciousness itself, be it a sensation or an act itself, to the extent that it also places itself before them (reflecting on them, for example). Due to this particular nature of the spiritual sphere, the intentional lived experiences linked to it require the approach of a specific type of "causality", which supports the linking of the same acts to each other and their respective objects: motivation. In Stein's words⁽¹⁶⁾, "[Motivation] is a *proceeding* from one act to another, a realizing or being realized of one *in* virtue of another, *for the reason* of another. The structure of lived experiences, which are the only ones that can enter into the dynamics of motivation, is decisive for the essence of such dynamics (p. 36, emphasis by the author)".

Therefore, the differentiation between mechanical causality and motivation is of paramount importance in order to understand the person as an embodied subject in the world, without reducing their actions either to the conditioning of their context or to pure individual spontaneity that does not take into account the dynamics that constitute them.

Stein⁽¹⁶⁾ calls motivation a specific type of link of intentional acts with each other or between intentional acts and their respective objects. It's important to clarify that motivation, as the law on which spiritual life is based, is wider than the concept of motivation as a synonym for a voluntary act. In this sense, not every motivated act is necessarily the result of a free action by the "I".

Because it is an articulation between intentional lived experiences, motivation unites acts, which means that they are not just an aggregate of lived experiences. Recognizing that the objects of acts constitute motives implies recognizing that their correlated acts are also important in motivational dynamics. There is a connection of meaning between the motive and the motivated act, since each act can be understood according to the motive that instigated it.

Motivation as a properly free act underlies the human process of taking a stand in the face of what one experiences. Freedom doesn't mean affirming that the horizon of human action is unlimited, but rather that each person can position themselves in order to respond to the game of stimuli and responses in which they are immersed, whether or not they follow up on the invitations that challenge them⁽¹⁹⁾.

Therefore, researching motivations based on Stein's contributions implies recognizing the inalienable capacity of the human person to position themselves in the face of what they experience, based on the apprehension of meaning, even when their choice is to allow themselves to be led by psychological or even mechanical causality⁽¹⁶⁻¹⁹⁾. In this sense, as stated, this study aims to understand how women with a history of substance abuse elaborate their motivations for abstinence, through a dialog with Stein's Phenomenology.

Methodology

This is a qualitative phenomenological study carried out at the Alcohol and Drug Psychosocial Care Center (CAPS AD) in Diamantina, MG, Brazil. The CAPS AD is the only institution specialized in the care of people with drug addiction operating in the city, and is a reference in the reception of these patients from the entire Alto Vale do Jequitinhonha micro-region. The data in this study comes from a study on motivation to consume psychoactive substances, approved by the Research Ethics Committee of the Federal University of the Jequitinhonha and Mucuri Valleys (CAAE: 19682619.4.0000.5108). The participants' consent was secured by signing the Free and Informed Consent Form (FICF). To guarantee their anonymity, they were given fictitious names.

Data collection occurred during fieldwork at CAPS AD over 4 months in 2019. Several visits were made to the institution to provide a community experience that

would enable the potential participants to get closer and bond with the institution and a chance to be with them⁽²²⁾. Access to the participants was by convenience, and they were the people who were there on the days and at the times of the interviewer's visits. The inclusion criteria were being a woman, having a link with CAPS AD, being over 18, willing and interested in sharing their experiences. The interviews, carried out by the first author, took place with three middle-aged, low-income black women. The aim was to provide a focus on women's experiences, in order to contribute to a deeper understanding of the subject and go in the opposite direction to homogenization in terms of gender.

The interviews were conducted individually and semi-structured, with the trigger question being: "Could you tell me about your history of involvement with substances?". Only one of the institution's patients refused to take part in the interview, claiming she felt uncomfortable telling her story. The proposal was to delimit a subject, but to give the participants the freedom to elaborate their stories. Subsequent questions varied according to the participant's openness and the interviewer's intention. All the interviews took place in the CAPS AD environment, in a private room, occupied only by the interviewer and the participant to preserve the confidentiality of the information, and lasted for varying lengths of time.

The interviews were conducted only once with each participant, lasting a maximum of 40 minutes, recorded on sound recordings, and transcribed in full, with no notes taken during the interviews. After transcription, the reports were not sent to the participants for corrections or comments but were accessed, discussed, and analyzed only by the researchers who wrote this article, aiming to appropriate the collected material.

Based on van der Leeuw's guidelines, the analysis started with an initial ordering of the stories into thematic axes, along with a systematic integration into their own lives in order to elucidate the lived experiences and clarify the connections of meaning. The analysis of each interview merges diverse perspectives on the participants' stance, leading to a nuanced synthesis, reflective of their personal approach to elaborate their own experiences, in accordance to Stein's contributions. Subsequently, a proposal for a typical abstinence motivation experience is presented based on the elements that emerge as structuring factors in the three analyses. The research includes feedback for the participants and for CAPS AD as soon as all the analyses are completed.

Results and Discussion

The CAPS AD, where the interviews took place, currently operates in a rented house. The environment

is pleasant, with colorful posters on the walls and, although it isn't sizable, it is well-suited to care and offers users the chance to socialize in a large common space. The service offers meals and receives users from various municipalities in the Upper Jequitinhonha Valley, who face hours of travel to be accompanied by the team. The primary request for support predominantly comes from males, while females make up around 30% of those addressed.

During the initial on-site visit, designated for the collection of narratives, it was feasible to conclude two out of the three interviews under analysis. The first interview was with Elza, who, at the time, attended the CAPS AD daily. A slender woman with a darker complexion and an aged appearance, she shared her experiences with timidity and reserve. The chosen pseudonym pays homage to Elza Soares, a Brazilian singer whose history and music stimulate discussions on racial and gender issues. The protagonist of the second interview, Elis, was already at CAPS AD that day, accompanying her son, who was also undergoing treatment at the facility. She willingly agreed to participate in the research, asserting that she could assist others with her story of overcoming challenges. A woman of mixed heritage, in her middle years, and with great enthusiasm, her pseudonym was chosen in tribute to the Brazilian singer Elis Regina. The third interview was with Maria, conducted on a different date when she came from another city for her treatment. The pseudonym was chosen in tribute to the song "Maria, Maria" by Milton Nascimento and Fernando Brant, immortalized in the voice of Elis Regina, which portrays the strength demanded from women of Black heritage in lower socioeconomic classes.

Next, some of the key aspects present in the interviews will be presented, illustrating the intricate motivational dynamics that guided the positioning of the interviewed women.

Elza - Motivation within psychophysical connections

During the interview, Elza revealed that she started consuming alcohol in adolescence, accompanied by some friends, but denied any external influence for substance abuse. According to her account, involvement with alcoholic beverages arose from her own decision, based on the observation of intoxicated individuals: *I was like, "Yo, these folks acting wild, what's going on? Let me grab one too and find out." So, I'd be like, "What y'all sippin' on?" "Just beer." (...) Then one, then two, kept rollin'... and that's how I got in the game* (Elza).

Having consumed alcoholic beverages for years, one day she experienced a fall at home after consuming a substantial amount. Transported by the Mobile Emergency Care Service (SAMU), she spent two days in the Intensive Care Unit (ICU, CTI in Brazilian Portuguese). Following this incident, she asserted

cessation of alcohol consumption: *"I was like, 'never again'"* (Elza). In her narrative, the perplexity towards the event is evident, particularly concerning the lack of memory and the inability to articulate her sensations. *"I was like, 'Mom, how the heck did I fall? Mom, I can't even remember. Mom, how that went down?'"* (Elza). The severity of the fall, with her recovery described as a miraculous event without lingering consequences, contributed to the decision of abstinence. Since then, she attended CAPS AD, invited by her brother.

The two pivotal moments in Elza's experience have been outlined above: the onset of addiction and the decision for abstinence. In both circumstances, the intricacies of the motivational dynamics expressed in her descriptions can be inferred.

Primarily, Elza recounted her attention to the psychophysical dimension of others, describing the bodily expressions of intoxicated individuals as a stimulus for her interest in alcohol. It is through the external bodily expression that one can gain access to the inner life of others. Among various experiences, external perception and empathy played a role in Elza interpreting the bodily manifestation of others as pleasure, happiness, or, in any case, a pleasant subjective state (and, therefore, enticing and decisive in inviting her to desire the same). She portrayed it as the perception of a profound affectivity ("these folks acting wild"), which indeed characterizes the psychophysical unity of the human structure.

According to Stein, motivation occurs in the presence of a motive, which can be a value in the manifestation of volitional and free spiritual acts but can also be of any other nature and/or circumstance⁽¹⁶⁾. In this sense, even though the "I" is present in motivational dynamics, it is not necessarily free. In the case of Elza's lived experience, as per her own account, the motivating factor for the onset of addiction was the object of her perception (the affectivity of other individuals). Reflection on the consequences, the will, and the decision for abstinence emerged when a "lack" in her perceived experiences, which should have been part of the flow of intentional acts, was realized. It involved the awareness of her own forgetfulness, motivating her through the free decision to seek treatment for her condition.

In addition, when she decided to stop, she took steps not to go to places where alcohol was present, such as parties at her brother's house, and even the supermarket aisles where drinks are placed. *Today I can't stand the smell. I can't stand it. I can't even get close to someone who drinks* (Elza). Her elaboration indicates that, by opting for abstinence, she ceases all contact with alcoholic beverages and people, showing special care for the psychophysical dimension by avoiding the reasons that lead her to her old habits.

Thus, corporeality, positioned as the initial point of orientation in relation to the world⁽²⁴⁾, emerged as a determining factor in the experiences recounted by Elza. The onset of alcohol consumption and the decision for abstinence intersect with corporeality, forming a cycle that commences and concludes within the same dimension.

Elis – Motivation arising from lived experiences

Elis stated that she initiated cigarette smoking in childhood, as she was routinely asked to light it for her godmother, and continued the habit for over 30 years. Alcohol consumption began in adolescence and escalated later, especially after the loss of her partner: *"After I became a widow, that's when I... That's when I started drinking a lot, really a lot, you know?"* (Elis)

In addition to her early widowhood, she reported the loss of her mother due to harmful alcohol use in childhood, the loss of a brother also due to excessive alcohol consumption, and the stories of individuals who underwent amputation and acquired cancer due to cigarette smoking. All these events were reflected upon by her as motivators for contemplating the need to change her addictive behavior. She also highlighted a situation with her son, where he supposedly said, *"Mom, for smokers... quitting is just about having the guts, it's like a lack of shame."* Then I was like: *yeah. And I thought to myself: he's got a point* (Elis).

Finding herself urged to abandon her addiction, Elis said that her process of abstinence was anchored in her faith in Our Lady and in the mental work she did on herself. *I prayed, "Our Lady, I've been trying to quit smoking by myself until today, and it just didn't work out. But with Your help, starting today, I don't wanna do that no more"* (Elis).

Elis further disclosed that she has a son entangled in substance abuse, and following her triumph over addiction, she perceives *more sway to talk to him* (Elis).

Throughout Elis's journey, it is possible to perceive the significance that dynamics hold in her trajectory: she intensifies alcohol use following the premature loss of her partner and ceases consumption mobilized by events that highlight her connection with the Divine and people in her social circle.

Following other people's experiences caused them to manifest in Elis's own life⁽¹⁸⁾. She began to scrutinize her behaviors regarding addiction, using the experiences of other individuals to complement the perceptions she already held about herself and her addictions. Identifying similarities between the habits she maintained and those of her acquaintances, she realized that she could undergo the same outcomes as such individuals if she continued excessive substance consumption. Thus, she made the decision to embark on the process of abstinence.

This decision is based on a communal experience. Stein defines a communal experience as arising from the apprehension by two or more individuals of an object carrying the same meaning⁽¹⁶⁾. Communal experience can also refer to the experiences (*Erfahrung*) evoked by that apprehension. These experiences involve memories, expectations, suspicions, and conclusions, and the presupposition for their manifestation as supra-individual experiences is the individuals' openness to communal life, guided by an understanding of exchanges between people (*Welchselverständigung*) – in turn, supported by empathy or the apprehension of others' subjectivity. In this sense, the formation of individual experiences is also the result of a communal experience⁽¹⁶⁾.

Empathy, in its essence, is a purposeful and representative encounter rooted in various experiences, including external and internal perception, memory, and imagination. It serves to facilitate the comprehension of other people and fosters an intersubjective, shared understanding of the world. Ultimately, empathy enables the (re)cognition of individual human beings⁽¹⁸⁾.

The capacity to attentively process information acquired through empathy and to adopt a stance based on it is a recurrently observed process in Elis's narrative. The decision-making act (to abstain), as a voluntary action, presupposes a motive but also requires an impulse that is not inherently part of the motivational relationship⁽¹⁶⁾. This is where the concept of purpose (*Vorsatz*) comes into play, representing one of the facets of will. Purpose is oriented toward an achievable goal, guiding one's self-conduct, which, in turn, presupposes the realization of voluntary actions. The interplay of will, and ultimately action, is necessary to bring about a particular state of affairs (in this case, abstaining from addiction).

In summary, considering the three nuances of wanting, there is initially a desire to break the habit, propelling her towards the desired behavior, even if she doesn't immediately feel capable of it (first sense of wanting). Subsequently, there is her intention to abstain from addiction, seen as a feasible, attainable goal (second sense of wanting, characterized as an intention). Additionally, in Elis's specific case, there are motivational dynamics of a different kind tied to her religiosity. From a phenomenological standpoint, acknowledging the presence of the Divine is a multifaceted process involving all dimensions of human existence (corporeal, psychic, and spiritual)⁽²⁵⁾. In this context, relationships, be they human or spiritual, appear to be at the core of Elis's positions. Having attempted to overcome her addiction on previous occasions, motivated by recognizing a personal limitation, she reported achieving abstinence due to an encounter with the Divine.

And for abstinence to take place, voluntary acts must be present. It is possible that, initially, the voluntary

act that intends abstinence is not authentic or alive in her (her most authentic desire is to continue consuming alcoholic beverages). However, even if inauthentically at first, she has made herself available to achieve her goal, through an actualization of the will, turning her purpose towards it (third sense of wanting).

Maria - Motivation stemming from self-awakening

Maria recounts the onset of her alcohol addiction at the age of 27. Despite delineating a familial context with a prevalence of individuals grappling with alcoholism, she refrains from directly attributing her own addiction to this historical backdrop. The pivotal juncture she identifies is the period in which she rekindled a relationship with the father of her child, a person afflicted with alcoholism. *"I got back with my boy's dad, and (...) seeing him hit the bottle every single day, I ended up joining him."* (Maria).

Maria also recounts the prejudice she suffered for being an alcoholic: *"It's like everyone's giving you the side-eye, right? There's no trust. People lose trust. They give you the side-eye. We deal with a bunch of prejudice"* (Maria).

Although she states that there were no problems initially *since when she was drinking things were cool*, Maria reveals that over time she started to *get kinda shaken*. She reports auditory hallucinations with threatening content. *"The booze was already making me hear voices. I'd hear people saying things that ain't... there was no one around. I'd hear talking (...) saying there were folks trying to kill me"* (Maria).

During the interview, Maria points out that these episodes started happening quite often, *SAMU picking me up all the time*, until she experienced two consecutive episodes (two days apart), in which she became very ill and was taken to hospital with recurrent nosebleeds and auditory hallucinations. Maria reports she was hospitalized for a few days and ceased her involvement with alcohol. *"It was a horrible thing (...) from that day on I never drank again"* (Maria).

While recounting another episode following this decision, the issue of human finitude resurfaces. She reveals the fear her mother had of her death and attributes this concern to the loss of a cousin, also an alcoholic. *She was really scared I'd die. We lost a cousin of mine, just a year younger than me, because of drinking. She... passed away. Her liver was coming out of her mouth. I wasn't there; Mom told me over the phone. She saw that girl in the coffin (...) the girl looked a lot like me. Mom was totally freaking out.* (Maria).

In these stories, the horror of losing control over herself and the possibility of dying akin to her cousin emerge as driving forces for her decision to abstain. Maria underwent a series of situations in which she was on

the verge of losing control of herself until she ultimately opted for the cessation of alcohol consumption.

As mentioned previously in the case of Elis, the same movement of the act of volition can be observed from the description of Maria's experience, as well as the intricate motivational dynamics that permeate connections with other individuals. Among the various lived experiences recounted, we highlight the fear of death and the loss of self-control as reasons for abstinence. In Maria's case, fear can be described through the course of sensory and psychological experiences (reactions) laid out in the stream of consciousness, implying correlations with other lived experiences within the same flow. Initially, Maria described that she did not take a stance in the face of the initial occurrences, whether when feeling unwell or when realizing that people were losing trust in her. Her account indicates that, at first, she did not embrace the reverberations of these events for herself. In this sense, it is as if the spiritual aspect (deliberative and free) of Maria was numb. However, gradually, Maria becomes aware of the effects that these events have had on her. Becoming aware of something, therefore, relates to the awakening of the presence of the "I" accompanying sensory and psychological lived experiences⁽¹⁷⁾. Thus, there is the possibility of taking a position of will and the resulting action.

This level of lived experiences, which stems from an awakened "I", is thus subject to motivational dynamics. Here lies the beginning of the dominion of reason⁽¹⁶⁾. In the words of Stein, "the entire life of acts is subject to the laws of reason [as possibility] that lead the subject to self-discernment and thanks to which the latter can indeed measure the course of its motivations"⁽¹⁶⁾ (p. 38).

Interweaving trajectories: a typical experience of motivation for abstinence

In the case of the reported abstinence from substance abuse by the interviewees, the centrality of taking a position of will and the involvement of spiritual aspects were observed. Analyzing the three narratives collectively, the importance of sensory, empathetic, and volitional lived experiences as motivators for the abstinence process is evident. Each participant followed a unique path, and the analysis of their journeys allowed us to discover both specificities that reveal the uniqueness of each individual and common aspects, as described below.

Lived experience as an instigating event

All participants experienced events that stimulated their process of abstinence. They elaborated on the instigations of these events, indicating a specific path for them. Faced with these experiences, they report having grasped the events as links in the motivational flow that

directed them to cease alcohol consumption - or alcohol and cigarettes, when it comes to Elis.

A deterministic reading cannot be applied, as if these events were the cause of abstinence: the significance lies in the women's positioning, where they acknowledge the invitations and decide to move in a certain direction based on them.

Recognizing one's own or others' finitude as a catalyst for change.

In the face of the provocations of the lived experiences, the interviewees reflect on their own experience, accepting and embracing the indications that arise from it. A central indication concerns the recognition of human finitude, stemming from one's own or others' lived experiences.

Elza realized that she could have died and elaborates on how this event was crucial in ending the cycle of her addiction. A cycle that, according to her, began with the interest aroused by observing the effects of alcohol on other people's bodies. The process of accepting addiction as a behavior that brings people closer to finitude was experienced by Elis mainly through observing the outcomes of people with habits similar to hers. She makes the move to complement her perception of her own limits with these shared experiences. Maria went through various events that led her to feel a loss of self-government and the imminent possibility of death, which can be understood as signs of her own finitude. Perceiving herself as a "*disturbed*" person, not to be trusted by others and facing the potential fate of her cousin as a result of her addiction, her awareness of her own limits accumulates until the "*horrible*" episode that marks the beginning of her abstinence.

The paths varied, but they all went through post-event reflection. Stein says that experiences of great intensity often need a certain distance to be analyzed clearly⁽¹⁶⁾. Elis's lived experiences, despite not being of strong intensity in terms of the psychophysical dimension, had their intensity linked to the psychic dimension, given the profound sadness experienced in the face of her losses.

From purpose to action: the will turned towards changing the state of affairs

In the analysis of the interviews, it was possible to apprehend the following movement: each woman, embracing experiences as events, establishes a purpose that mobilizes action, choosing to cease the consumption of substances. It is noteworthy to emphasize the will in the trajectory of the three participants. The free acts, upon which their journey was based, depend on motivation but also on choices, which are made within the realm of the will. Stein turns to the analysis of D. Von Hildebrand, who expounds on the different concepts

of wanting⁽¹⁶⁾. We focus on the will turned towards the realization of a state of affairs, which, for us, is the moment when the consumption of substances ceases, representing the beginning of the movement that leads them to abstinence.

For the three participants, this movement occurred abruptly. Elza and Maria begin this process shortly after hospitalization. Elis, on the other hand, finds herself mobilized through her relationship with the Divine. Based on their experiences and the singularity of their perceptions, they embraced the events and chose to cease the consumption of substances. The journey was undertaken in different ways; however, the common element is the quest to assume the protagonism of their own lives, often lost to the automatism of addiction.

Conclusion

Through our encounter with some women in a CAPS AD, we were able to identify how different experiences (sensory, empathic, and volitional) can be mobilizing in the elaboration of abstinence processes. In dialogue with Stein, we acknowledge the shared process of accepting these mobilizing experiences, recognizing human finitude, and activating the will turned towards changing the state of affairs.

Starting from the interest in contributing to elucidations about substance abuse and abstinence in a feminine context, we conclude that it is possible to identify shared elements, while also emphasizing the specificity of each story and acknowledging the individuality of each woman who experiences or has experienced addiction. Although obvious, this conclusion deserves to be continually revisited, given the depersonalization to which women with addiction trajectories are often subjected. The three women participating in the research have distinct stories, not only in the features of a difficult life but especially in the ways they personally position themselves by choosing to follow the uncertain and costly path of interrupting substance abuse.

The present study aimed to analyze the lived experiences of each participant and contemplate abstinence as a distinctly human phenomenon, seeking to comprehend the central elements that emerged in their reflections. The mobilizing experiences reveal both the unique constitution of each participant, as evidenced by the events each one embraced within themselves, and the active nature of the human person, inherently endowed with the capacity to act as a subject in the face of events.

Our results invite recognition that excessive substance consumption exposes patients to various situations, but the phenomena upon which each person reflects, transfiguring sensation into elaboration, are distinct. Reflecting on something and, in fact, perceiving it, does not depend

on consent, and it is precisely that what constitutes each subject's own structure.

Simultaneously, it is possible to discern common features in the trajectories, such as the significance of elaborating provocations from lived experiences, the motivating force of recognizing finitude through near-death experiences - whether personal or observed in others - and the ability to establish purposes that mobilize action, even in situations of great vulnerability.

Casting a gaze over the entirety of our research journey, the question arises as to whether delving into the experiences of each participant, as well as the effort to intertwine their trajectories, allows for a discussion in terms of a gender perspective. This was the concern that initially prompted us to engage with women in the CAPS AD setting. Within the constraints of this work, such a discussion is not feasible, but it remains a horizon deserving further investigation, especially as we have not encountered any studies grounded in a gender perspective dedicated to the theme of abstinence in women with a history of substance abuse.

Recognizing additional limitations inherent in the research, particularly due to the limited number of participants and the cross-sectional access to their life trajectories, we understand these findings provide insights into the ways Brazilian women can elaborate on their individual processes of substance abuse and abstinence. We hope that these findings may contribute to Elis's purpose, in granting us the interview: assisting other individuals through the sharing of her narrative of triumph over adversity.

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