



# Addiction Recovery and Sibling Relations

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#### Abstract

Addiction can lead to long-term effects of aggression, depressive symptoms, and major health issues (SAMHSA, 2015). Those who experience addiction at a young age are at especially high risk to develop these ailments, as their developing brains are highly sensitive to rewards (e.g., Tezler, Fuligni, Lieberman, & Galvan, 2014). Investigating the impacts family members have on each other can provide information on their abilities to overcome life obstacles. Sibling relationships have positive benefits for promoting competence and life satisfaction (Hollifield & Conger, 2015), particularly during negative life events (Conger, Conger, & Elder, 1994). Sibling relationships may serve a salient role in recovery given that they can promote emerging adults' positive outcomes above and beyond peer and parent relationships (for a review, Kramer, Conger, Rogers, & Ravidran, 2019).

#### Introduction

**AIM:** This study proposes to identify the role of sibling relationships in promoting psychosocial adjustment during the addiction recovery.

These are our specific research questions:

##### Does effectiveness of sibling support depend on substance type? (RQ1a)

- Recovery is a process of change in which individuals with a substance abuse disorder aim to improve their health by abstaining from different drugs.

##### What aspects of sibling relationships affect the recovery process? (RQ1b)

- There has been limited research on the positive effects of family rehabilitation therapy, particularly in sibling relations.

##### Is there a unique effect of sibling relationships on adjustment during recovery compared to parental and peer relationships? (RQ2)

- Because sibling relationships can serve as a source of support throughout the lifespan, sibling relations act as a unique emotional resource to those in recovery from addiction.

#### Social Buffering Hypothesis

The Social Buffering Hypothesis proposes that mothers can buffer negative effects from stress and negative life experiences in early development.

- The absence of a caring parental figure during early-life stressors can have detrimental and permanent influences on the lifelong development of socioemotional processing as evidenced by hyperactivity in neurobiological functioning which helps to modulate the stress response (Gee et al., 2013).
- Moreover, social buffering of stress exposure by attachment figures during early life is believed to set the foundations for which individuals develop the capacity and expectations to receive stress-relief from their social relationships (Gunnar, 2017).
- Close and supportive sibling relations may buffer stress akin to parental attachments, and thus may promote psychosocial adjustment in the face of stressors during addiction recovery.

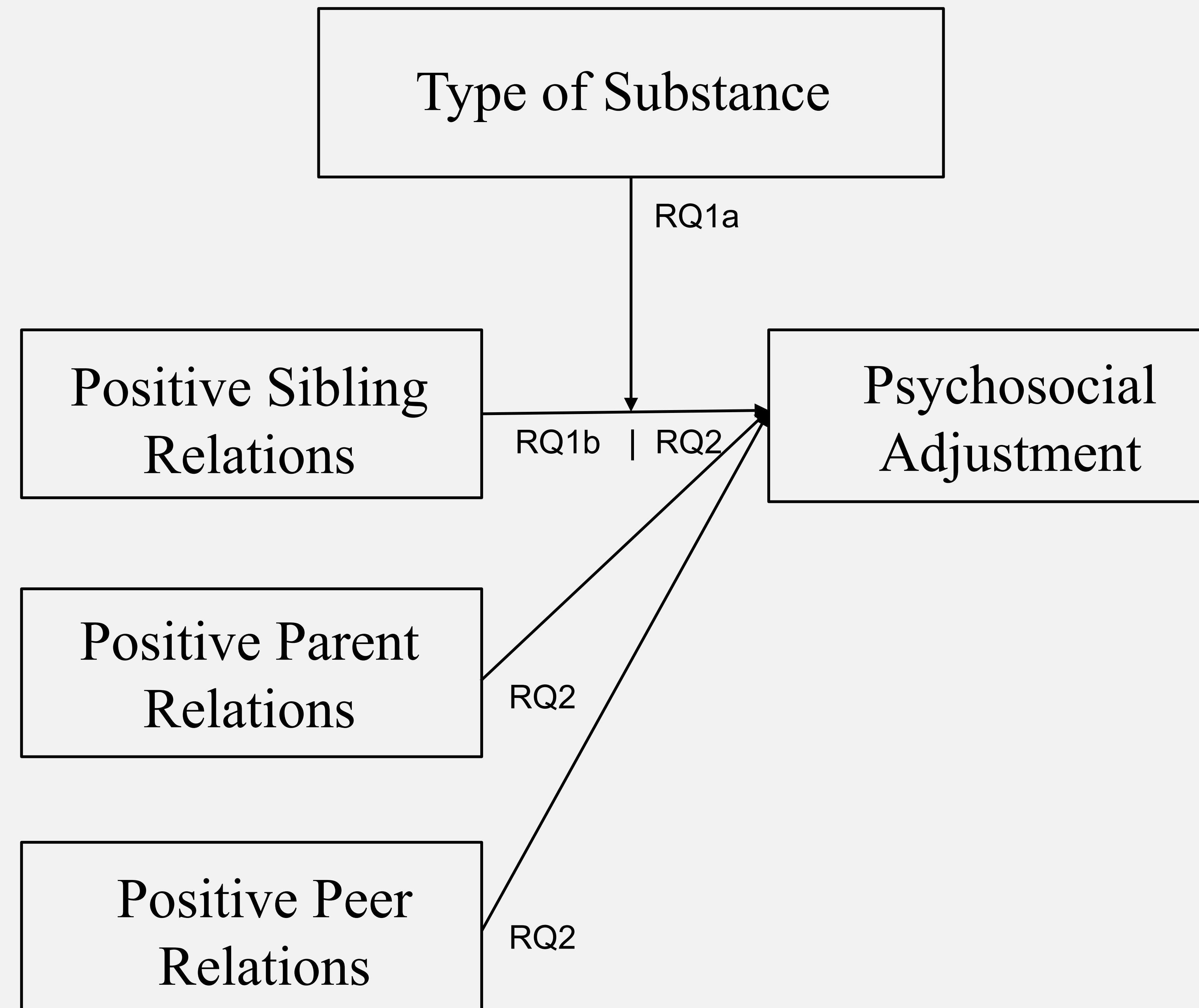


Figure 1. Conceptual Model. RQ = Research Question.

#### Methods

- The current study examines the recovery process of students enrolled in the Center for Collegiate Recovery Communities (CCRC) and their associated social experiences and adjustment.
- We are administering a breath of questionnaires about substance use, recovery, social experiences, psychosocial adjustment, and COVID-19 pandemic experiences.
- Our goal is to collect data from 100 student participants from the CCRC.
- Due to the COVID-19 pandemic data collection was very delayed; however, we have collected data from 15 participants so far, 14 of which who have provided demographic information.

Sex	Age Range	Age Mean	Student Type
8 Males	19 – 56	26.93	9 Undergraduate
6 Females	20 years old	years old	5 Graduate

#### Implications

- Treatment programs that involve the family unit may serve as tools for the individual in recovery by utilizing the benefits of close interpersonal relationships (Ohye et al., 2015). Rehabilitation centers which similarly consider aspects of the social network for people in recovery may help reinforce the rehabilitation process by maintaining healthy coping mechanisms.
- A treatment program that focuses on adolescent substance abuse recovery investigated a family-based design to promote recovery. The trial found better retention in adolescent recovery and a positive life trajectory compared to traditional rehabilitation programs (Hogue, & Liddle, 2009). Sibling contributions to the recovery process may especially provide positive reinforcements.
- Sibling support may act as a source of resiliency for students in recovery as siblings serve as as a source of support in promoting psychological needs and life satisfaction (Hollifield & Conger, 2015).

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