

Written assignment

Introduction

Both mental health and substance abuse are serious issues that affect many people, directly or indirectly (Alegria et al, 2021). Both illnesses are being discussed increasingly over the years to raise awareness. Stopping the stigma towards them is giving people the courage to open up and seek help. Less people are suffering in silence, and more have the courage to access support. Mental health and substance misuse can often co-occur. This reports aim is to find out what the relationship between substance misuse and mental health is. This is going to be done by looking in depth at two research articles, analysing the limitations or weaknesses of each one.

Background information

Mental health and substance misuse have long been stigmatized. The National Academy of science (2016) suggest that this is due to the amount of knowledge that individuals have about these conditions. It is not the social norm. Social norm is what is perceived as normal in society. It is what people believed to be acceptable behaviour. These are normally learned from a young age shaping people's behaviours and beliefs so that they fit in and are accepted (unicef, 2021). With media showing incidents of crimes committed by individuals that suffer with these illnesses, people can be quite scared if they are not educated on them, then automatically label everyone the same.

Over the years these conditions have increasingly been talked about. More people now have a better understanding and it's not stigmatised like it used to be. There is a lot more empathy towards people that suffer with mental health and substance misuse. More people have the confidence to speak up and seek help, knowing that they are not alone, that it is infact a lot more common than people used to think. Substance Abuse and Mental Health Administration (SAMHSA) is an agency that has an "Evidence-Based Practices Resource Center that work to give communities, clinicians, policymakers, and others in the field the information they need to incorporate evidence-based practices in their communities for prevention, treatment, and recovery services" (SAMHSA, 2023). SAMHSA (2023) believe that educating and providing early support can reduce the knock-on effect that substance misuse and mental health has on communities. With agencies like SAMHA doing research and raising awareness there is now many mental health services, and substance misuse programs that people can access to get the help and support that they need.

Substance misuse and mental health can have devastating effects on people's lives. Through the census 2021 data and analysis, Breen and Butt (2022) state that the number of deaths through drugs is on the rise. In England and Wales there were 4,859 deaths in 2021 which was 6.5% higher than the year before, and the highest since 1993 when the deaths had started to be recorded. Nasir, John and Mais (2022) state that 5,583 suicides in England and Wales were recorded in 2021 which was 6.9% higher than the year before, but this could have been because of the delay in deaths registered through covid. Even so this is still a massive amount of people taking their own lives.

For many people mental illness and substance abuse co-occur, this means that they have both the illnesses. Robnson, Smit and Segal (2023) state that it is more prevalent than people may realise, pointing out the reports that were published in the Journal of the American Medical Association, stating that about 50% of people with severe mental health problems also struggle with substance abuse, with 37% of alcoholics and 53% of drug addicts having one or more mental health issue, and out of everyone that is diagnosed with mental health problems 29% of these struggle with substance abuse. Prevalent is when something is common (Dictionary.com, 2023).

Health promotion is needed in these two areas to make people aware of the complexity of the co-occurring illnesses, so that individuals that suffer with mental health and substance misuse get the right treatment that they need, instead of being passed back and forth among services. The services can then work together to treat the individual. Only treating one of the illnesses is only tackling half the problem and ultimately not prevent anything as mental health and substance misuse affect each other, so both need to be addressed together (Szerman, 2022).

Research Article one

The first research article this report is going to analyse is 'The addiction Was Making Things Harder for My Mental Health': A Qualitative Exploration of the Views of Adults and Adolescents Accessing a Substance Misuse Treatment Service. This was written by Spencer et al in 2023. Spencer et al (2023) aim is to be able to provide information to help with intervention, prevention and treatment to improve the help provided for Mental Health and substance misuse service users. Intervention is important so that people that do suffer with the illnesses recognise that they do, as they may be in denial. With the much-needed help and support, a plan of action can be put in place to overcome this obstacle that is stopping people from receiving help, which will lead to the prevention and treatment (Mayo Clinic, 2023). Spencer et al (2023) does the research in this article by using a mixed methods approach. The mixed methods approach is a combination of quantitative and qualitative data. Mixed method research is used to get a broader understanding of the researched topic (Schoonenboom and Johnson, 2017). Quantitative data is to create statistics through numerical data, such as yes or no questionnaires to identify patterns, so predictions can be made (Mcleod,

2023). While Qualitative data is collected from doing Indepth research, using research methods such as interviews and observations. Qualitative data enables a researcher to find an explanation or to get a better understanding, not just to give statistics on the subject that is being studied (Austin and Sutton, 2015). The quantitative data in this research article is collected through a behavioural insights survey. Alongside the qualitative data that is collected through interviews, that are semi structured with both adults and adolescents, that access two different drug and alcohol treatment centres. The weaknesses of this article are that it only has a small number of participants, and it is conducted from only one treatment centre. It does not consider those that have not accessed treatment. It is also not gender balanced as Most of the participants are male.

Research Article two

The next research article this report is going to look at is 'Mental health problems among young people in substance abuse treatment in Sweden' written by Richert, Anderberg and Dahlberg in 2020. The aim of the research is to find out which mental health conditions patients of substance abuse services suffer with the most. If there is a difference in the number of males and females, also to see if certain mental health illnesses are connected to abusing substance (Richert, Anderberg and Dahlberg, 2020). Richert, Anderberg and Dahlberg (2020) obtained their data by interviewing substance misuse service users between the ages of 13 and 21. This was done with a structured interview known as UngDOK, which is produced specially for adolescents with substance misuse issues (Richert and Johnson, 2013). The questionnaire consists of 75 questions, that cover multiple details of the participants life to gain more knowledge into their upbringing, past and current situation, relationships, health and substance use (Richert, Anderberg and Dahlberg, 2020).

Firstly, research was done to see the gender difference for each of the variables on the questionnaire. Variables are characteristics, numbers, or quantity that can be measured or calculated (Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2023). Variables in this questionnaire are relationships, family, health and so on. This data was then analysed to see the degree of importance. when something is analysed, it is examined to see if there is a pattern, so it can be understood (Collins, 2023). Then research was done using different models to find out the link between mental health and substance use. There were three models. Each showing the extent of drug use. The three models were high use, early use and regular use.

The weakness of this research article is that most of the people that took part were self-diagnosed with only a few having a mental health diagnosis, due to this the findings of the research are not very credible.

Theme one

Spencer et al (2023) states that the more deprived areas have a greater number of people with mental health and substance abuse issues. With early prevention needed especially for those that have experienced adverse childhood experiences (ACEs). ACEs is when someone has been mistreated or witnessed something traumatic in their

childhood (Finlay et al, 2022). This shows that there is a correlation between substance misuse and mental health. Correlation is to see if two things are connected, if there is a relationship between them (indeed, 2023). People in deprived areas are more susceptible to developing these illnesses, with individuals that have ACEs being the most at risk. This article clearly shows and even states itself that health promotion is needed in mental health and substance misuse prevention. This can be done through information and awareness campaigns, so people are educated on the signs and symptoms of the illnesses. If people are given information on where to receive help, they can access it and hopefully receive treatment before it escalates. Awareness can be spread through social media and advertisement as well as doing public adverts. Supplying people with the knowledge about the illnesses including the risk factors and how common it is, the more people are likely to go and receive treatment. This will also reduce the stigma towards mental health illnesses and substance misuse, with the increasing evidence out there that proves this (Petersen et al, 2016).

Theme two

Richert, Anderberg and Dahleberg (2020) concluded from their research that mental health illnesses are typical with young people that abuse drugs and alcohol, especially with girls. This shows that there is a link between substance misuse and mental health, with girls being the most at risk of developing mental illnesses. Promotion is needed in this area so that people, especially health professionals are aware that mental health and substance misuse co-occur more often than they realise. If a person presents with one of the illnesses, there needs to be queries into the possibility of them also having the other illness, with the focus on young people more so girls as they are at greater risk. For treatment to be effective both the issues need to be addressed and treated simultaneously, with combined support from various services. When something is done simultaneously it is done at the same time (Merriam-Webster, 2023). Families of young people with these conditions also need to be supported as this will also have a great impact on them, so they will need the support and guidance (Henderson et al, 2017). This could be done through support groups where they could meet people in the same situation as them, or even accessing support over the phone so they won't feel so alone and in despair (Mind, 2023).

Conclusion

The findings from this report reveal that substance misuse and mental health co-occurring is prevalent, with adverse childhood experiences being a major risk factor for the onset of these illnesses. Among young people it is a real issue with it affecting a vast amount especially girls. Recognised in this report is the need for promotion and prevention of co-occurring illnesses, to educate people on the complexity of the

illnesses when combined. With more people having the knowledge it can reduce the stigma and effect people accessing and receiving treatment in a positive way. The target areas for promotion and prevention being the more deprived areas, as these have the highest number of cases of these illnesses. Interventions are also needed to be put in place, so that people that are suffering directly or indirectly without accessing treatment, get the very much needed support and guidance. With the limitations of this research, there needs to be more research into mental health and substance misuse co-occurring illnesses, as these findings are based on either a small number of people from a single service or are from mostly self-diagnosed people. They also do not consider those that are not accessing treatment.

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