

## **Assessment 1 – Proposal**

First choice – Dr Alison Murphy

Second choice – Dr Charlotte Greenway

### **1. Working Title**

Experiences of teenage girls that suffer from gynecological disorders such as Endometriosis, Adenomyosis, or Polycystic Ovarian Syndrome (PCOS).

### **2. Project Type and Format**

This project will make use of a mixed-methods research design, by using both quantitative and qualitative survey research. The chosen method is appropriate for the project as the topic requires the depth of qualitative data in order to explore experiences, as well as the broad analysis that is possible by collecting quantitative data. The survey will gather numerical data to assess the mental wellbeing of the participants within the study, and will also provide open ended questions that provide richer data that can better represent the experiences of the participants. By combining these methods, it allows for a more comprehensive understanding of their experiences, and how such experiences may have impacted wellbeing, and what changes are required in policies in the future.

### **3. Rationale and Background**

Research about gynecological health has mainly focused on adult women, with large amounts of research highlighting the higher presence of poor mental health, particularly anxiety and depression, in women that suffer from gynecological disorders. Some research suggest that the symptoms of gynecological disorders can begin in adolescents of around sixteen years old, however there does not appear to be any research that explore the experiences of adolescents that suffer from any symptoms of gynecological disorders, or on the impact that such conditions might have on wellbeing in adolescence.

It is clear from previous research that has explored the experiences of women with gynecological conditions, and the prevalence of poor mental health, that alongside experiencing poor mental health, the symptoms of such conditions can impact on an individuals relationships, career, and education.

Research that explores the experiences of young people that suffer from chronic illness and/or chronic pain suggest that health conditions can impact upon mental health and increase the prevalence of poor mental health. It has also been highlighted within the research that chronic illness can impact on social development and social functioning, academic achievement, quality of life, and self-esteem.

It is reasonable then to consider how the symptoms of gynecological disorders may also impact upon adolescent women. This study aims to explore this particular gap within the research by exploring adolescent women's experiences of managing the symptoms of endometriosis, adenomyosis or PCOS, and in doing so it is possible to consider ways in which changes can occur to improve experiences and mental health outcomes.

#### **4. Aims and Objectives**

Aim:

To explore the experiences of teenage girls that suffer with gynecological conditions such as Endometriosis, adenomyosis, and polycystic ovarian syndrome, and to find out if their experiences may have impacted upon their mental health and wellbeing.

Objectives:

1. To identify the individual experiences of teenage girls that experience the symptoms of/or are diagnosed with gynecological disorders such as Endometriosis, adenomyosis, and polycystic ovarian syndrome.
2. To explore teenage girls' experiences of sexual education in regards to women's health; of accessing support, and managing pain and toileting needs while at school; of medical care to manage/investigate symptoms; and of social support and understanding from family and peers.
3. To examine the impacts upon mental health and wellbeing.
4. To provide evidence of the future changes to policy that may be required in order to improve the experiences of teenage girls that suffer from gynecological disorders.

Research questions:

- What are the experiences of teenage girls that suffer with the symptoms of Endometriosis, adenomyosis, or polycystic ovarian syndrome?
- What societal factors impact upon their experiences of receiving support, and/or treatment for their symptoms/illness?

- How do their experiences impact upon their mental wellbeing?

## **5. Literature Overview**

It is clear from the research that there is a link between an individual's mental health and the experience of living with a chronic gynecological disorder. Not to mention the challenges faced by women when attempting to attain a diagnosis for disorders such as Endometriosis, adenomyosis and PCOS.

Previous research has explored the ways in which gynecological disorders can also co-occur with other illnesses with finding suggesting a common occurrence of women suffering with other illnesses alongside their gynecological disorder, such as inflammatory disorders, autoimmune disorders, neurological disorders, and psychiatric disorders. It makes sense then to consider the possibility that better understanding the experiences of young women may help to improve their experiences and potentially reduce the likelihood of young women going on to develop poor mental health and other co-occurring disorders.

This study aims to make use of both quantitative and qualitative data to explore ways in which poor mental health may be linked to experiencing gynecological disorders by examine which experiences are common in young women suffering from the symptoms of gynecological disorders, and possibly consider which experiences reported by the participants in the study are likely to have potentially increased the likelihood of developing poor mental health or of a reduced quality of life.

## **6. Methodology / Project Approach**

The study will use a mixed methods approach, making use of both quantitative and qualitative data, by using both closed and open ended questions.

Participants:

The participants will be all women, due to the study exploring experiences related to woman's health conditions, aged 18-25. All participants will be asked to complete a survey, to explore their experiences between the ages of 13-18, to gather participants experiences retrospectively.

Survey:

The survey will include a pre-existing wellbeing scale, which will have already been fully tested to ensure reliability, and will be correctly measuring participants

wellbeing. There will also be some closed questions included to gather demographic data, and to identify the health problems experienced by the participant. The other questions included will be open questions that collect qualitative data about each participants individual experiences.

#### Analysis:

The data will be analyzed using a content analysis, which involves applying a numerical value to Qualitative data in order to identify how many times an experience occurs across all of the data. The content analysis will identify the common experiences that arise between participants within the study. Therefore the themes that will develop will be based on how frequently the occur within the data. Descriptive statistics will also be used, such as mean, percentages, and frequencies where needed, so that connections between the data can be identified, to help make sense of the data.

#### Recruitment:

Participants will be recruited online through Facebook groups. There are multiple groups available to post the survey due to already being a member of multiple groups for woman's health and part of the community.

### 7. Ethical Considerations

There were several choices made in order to ensure the study is not likely to cause any kind of emotional stress or harm. The participants will be adults between the ages of 18 and 25, that will be sharing their past experiences. The study will also rely purely on surveys to collect the data which is a lot less upsetting for participant if they chose to disclose personal experiences that are of an upsetting nature. The participants will also be provided with informed consent before participating within the study, and will be informed that they are free to withdraw at any point during the study, with all surveys remaining anonymous. The surveys will also include a debrief at the end, to ensure participants are fully aware of their participation to the study and right to withdraw.

### 8. References

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