



Prifysgol Cymru

Y Drindod Dewi Sant

University of Wales

Trinity Saint David

MSc Public Health and Social Care in Practice

Module :practice-based Research (LCHS7008)

Title : Component 1 poster Presentation

Topic : Impact of drug abuse on mental health

Targeted population : Adolescences and adults (16 to 24 yrs)

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To systematically review the evidence on the impact of drug abuse on mental health outcomes among adolescents and adults in the UK

Introduction

- The issue of drug addiction has escalated into a crucial public health concern, creating an alarming increase of addictive substances worldwide.
- It is to be stated that as a long-term effect of drug abuse disrupts brain structure and life-long mental health (Ciucă et al., 2023).
- In the UK, the drug addiction cases have increased by 11% in 2023, where 137,749 adults have suffered from it (Priory, 2026).
- Thus, this presentation is focused on getting the critical evidence of drug abuse and its impact on mental health problems among adolescents and adults in the UK.

Rationale

- In the UK, it has been found that almost 18.1% of 16-24 years old adults are associated with using illicit drugs (Wigmore, 2025).
- Furthermore, instances of extreme drug misuse among the age group of 16-24 have been indicated, which has increased than previous years (Office of National Statistics, 2021).
- However, while 70% of people are having treatment due to drug abuse they are also facing mental health-related issues (RCP.UK, 2025).
- As an effect of drug abuse, such as cannabis, heroin, affects the mental health and behavioural patterns of adults and adolescents, creating depressive disorder, anxiety, and hallucination (Nawi et al., 2021).
- Thus, understanding the interconnection between drug abuse and mental health will guide UK healthcare to improve the existing prevention and treatment strategy.

Theoretical Background

- Dual Diagnosis Framework:** The Dual-Diagnosis framework offers a broader symptomatic and dimensional overview on the simultaneous presence of drug abuse and mental disorder (Bahji, 2024).
- Focusing on this notion, DD framework emphasises that drug abuse and mental illness are not separate but interconnected brain disorders (Szerman et al., 2022).
- The Biopsychosocial Model:** Similarly, the Biopsychosocial model in this matter promotes understanding on how substance use problems are connected with neurotransmitters, thus affecting mental health.
- Drug abuse frequently drives negative impact, which can lead to social consequences and also contribute to mental and physical disorders (Belfiore et al., 2024).
- Utilising these theories the proposed research will be conducted effectively.

Research Impact

- The UK Government is taking initiatives to eliminate illegal drug usage and investing in research on mental health disruption as an impact of substance misuse (GOV.UK, 2026).
- Therefore, evidence based research will offer clear research areas and provide ways to initiate medical intervention in healthcare areas for reducing the scenario (Pereira et al., 2022).
- With the notion of evidence-based policy making, this research will help to provide further direction to the public health service to manage healthcare policies accordingly (Brownson et al., 2025).
- Further, it will offer HSC professionals as caregivers, the direction to effectively deal with the patients whose mental health got affected (Wong and Denson, 2025).
- This research will be beneficial for reducing the drug misuse that has been detected among adults and adolescents in the UK.

Prevalence

- Approximately 329,646 adults in the UK are suffering from extreme drug usage, which has affected their mental health, acting as a challenging issue in healthcare (GOV.UK, 2025).
- Notably, drug misuse and addiction have affected 74% of the people aged 18 and above, living in the UK (GOV.UK, 2025).
- Similarly, in the UK, adolescents are also engaging with drug experimentations leading to excessive usage, impacting their mental health and creating behavioural change (NHS, 2026).
- Notably, consistent engagement with drug usage has a poor impact on mental health, which can also cause depression, anxiety like long-term mental disorders (Hines et al., 2020).

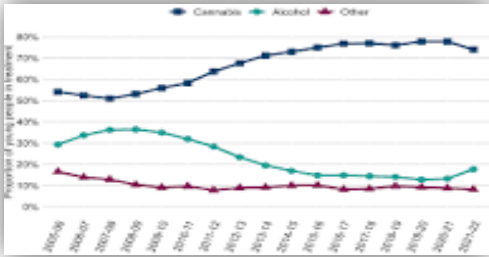


Figure 1: Young peoples' drug misuse in UK. (Source: GOV.UK, 2023)

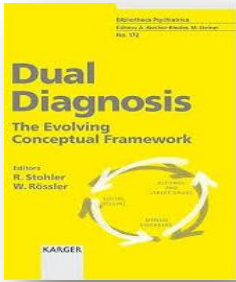


Figure 2: Dual-Diagnosis framework (Source: Amazon, 2026)



Figure 3: The Biopsychosocial Model (Source: WashU, 2021)

Research Gap

- Nawi et al (2021) have explored the effect of cannabis, cocaine on the mental health of adolescents.
- Reflecting limitations in existing literature, on broader evidence-based research on the interconnection of drug abuse affecting adults and adolescents' mental health.
- Thus, this research will offer a broader evidence-based overview, which will provide policy making, intervention strategies to healthcare professionals in the UK to reduce drug abuse and offer mental health treatment.

Research Objectives

- To find a relation between drug abuse and its impact on mental health outcomes.
- To evaluate the impact of drug misuse and its effect on mental health disorders such as anxiety, depression, psychosis.
- To analyse the public evidence regarding the impact of drug abuse on mental health.
- To evaluate gaps in the literature and public health practices regarding drug abuse and its impact on mental health outcomes, to offer effective policy making and intervention angles.

Research Question:

What is the impact of drug abuse on mental health outcomes among adolescents and adults in the UK?

Research Aim:

To form a systematic review to get evidence regarding the impact of drug abuse on mental health among adults and adolescents in the UK.



Figure 4: Drug misuse (Source: Mental health foundation, 2026)

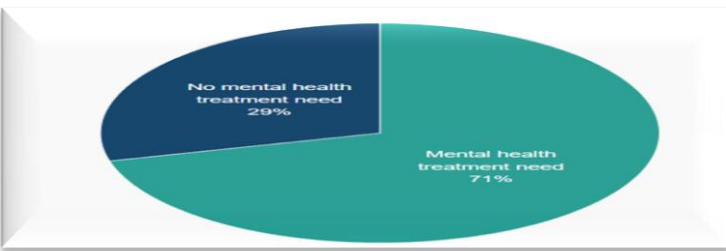


Figure 5: Percentage of need for mental health treatment due to drug misuse in the UK among adults. (Source: GOV.UK, 2023a)

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