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Capstone Project: Mental Health Disorder

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**Awareness Creation on Mental Health Disorder in Various Public Universities through an Outreach Programme.**

**Statement of the problem**

Over the last decade, the cases on mental health among students in universities have been increasing drastically. The cases reported by the health practitioners are depressions, anxiety and in extreme cases bipolar disorder and suicidal attempts. The students need to be educated on the early signs of mental health disorder, the subsequent symptoms, the services offered by the institutions, among them, counselling services. The indication of the increasing rate of mental health disorder among students is; frequent counseling center visits.

**Problem Statement**

In most universities, cases of mental illness have been prevalent among students where physicians have confirmed that most cases reported are on depression, anxiety, suicidal attempts, and in severe scenarios bipolar disorder. Therefore, this calls for swift action such as educating students on the early symptoms of mental illnesses. University institutions should include in their facilities counseling services so that such cases be minimised. On the same note, the public too should take part in assisting those with mental disorders. However, the public can be informed to support such people when there an awareness program is provided and well established. A study conducted by Pedrelli, revealed that "88 % of counselling centre directors reported an increase in "severe" psychological problems over the previous five years including learning disabilities, self-injury incidents, eating disorders, substance use, and sexual assaults." (Pedrelli, Zulauf & Wilens et al., 2014) Therefore, if the problem is not fixed, then the future generation will be affected.

It is apparent that universities report higher incidents of mental disorders for this reason; the project will seek to address the influence that an outreach program would create after creating awareness on mental health disorders among students in universities and colleges. Such mental diseases are caused by stressful times in the university such as examinations and the distance between family and close friends. According to Pedrelli, students first exhibit symptoms of mental illness when they are subjected to the factors as mentioned earlier. Additionally, old students start taking adult responsibilities since they tend not to be dependent on parents anymore (Pedrelli, Nyer & Yeung et al., 2014). Therefore, burdening students with such responsibilities even before they attain the mature age may subject cause them to have mental disorders. There is need for counseling due to the psychological and social issue that faces students. On the same note students do need lots of vocational guidance where students find themselves not knowing what career to choose, that alone may lead to depression.

Pedrelli noted that for the past five years, there was a surge in psychological disorders after 88% of the counseling directors attested to it (Pedrelli, Nyer & Yeung et al., 2014). Notably, the second most dreaded case of mental disorder is depression since it is reported by 9% of all university students. The third in position is having suicidal thoughts, and it has been found to lead to more deaths. According Assari, it is evident student’s exhibit 7% ideation, 2% suicidal Plans, and 0.5 suicidal attempts based on the statistics of last year (Assari & Moghani, 2018). The specific problem is that there is a tremendous demand for mental health services although only a few seek counseling services. Students seek assistance from family members and close friends. According to Brown, the reason they do so is for fear of stigmatization (Brown, 2018). Additionally, they take things for granted by assuming that everything is normal.

If the disorder is not treated on time, it could lead to more severe illnesses such as severe stress, schizophrenia, and inability to think in an upright manner. Additionally, people change their emotions and behaviours. A study conducted in universities and colleges revealed that above 11% of the entire population of students had been diagnosed and treated with mental illness (Cline, 2007). However, the first indicator of such illness is witnessed on emotional change.

**Purpose of the project**

The purpose of my project is to assess the impact that an outreach program would have in creating awareness on mental health disorder among students in the universities. Institutions of higher learning remain to have the highest cases of mental health disorder among the youth (Pedrelli, Nyer, Yeung, Zulauf & Wilens 2014).

**Integrative literature Review**

Attending the university can be stressful at times. Apart from the pressure from academic work that students have to undertake and examinations, there an aspect of separation from family and close friends. This is when the students experience the first onset of mental health disorder or an exacerbation of an already existing problem (Pedrelli, Nyer, Yeung, Zulauf & Wilens 2014). For the traditional students, they are normally younger and dependent on the parents and they have not been working, therefore, they start to take up adult responsibilities and yet they are not mature enough to do so and be independent (Pedrelli et.al 2014). For the non-traditional students, they face the challenge of juggling between their academics, working and providing for their families. This might be stressful and unbearable. “In a survey of 274 institutions, 88 % of counseling center directors reported an increase in “severe” psychological problems over the previous 5 years including learning disabilities, self-injury incidents, eating disorders, substance use, and sexual assaults” (Pedrelli et.al 2014).

Depression is ranked as the second most prevalent cases of mental health disorder among the university students at about 9% (Assari& Moghani 2018). Suicidal cases have also been reported which is said to be the third most leading cause of death among the adults (Assari& Moghani 2018). Among the students the statistics indicate 7% ideation, suicidal plans at 2% and 0.5% attempts last year (Assari& Moghani 2018).

Despite the increasing demand for mental health services, a third with the distress seeks counselling services. Therefore, they prefer seeking help from friends and family. The reason for this is the fear for stigmatization (Brown 2018). They also assume that stress is normal in school and they can handle it.

Mental health disorder is like any other medical problem that consists of several problems and different signs and symptoms. It is associated with several changes in a person’s emotions, how one thinks and behavior of a person or conjunction of all these changes. Example of this illness includes; thinking disabilities, schizophrenia, and stress. This type of illness mostly comes as a result of stress or issues in society, workplace and family actions. The illness is treatable if someone seeks medical attention and they can carry on with their daily activities as usual without any problem.

Mental illness has become a major concern since there is an increasing trend in this illness. It is widely spreading into universities and colleges where it has led to many lives of young people who are the backbones of the future generation. In universities, mental illness comes as a result of students having to leave their homes where they have an attachment with their parents and go to study in a different state or country hence they are affected emotionally because of the gap due to the distance. Also by students having to take adult responsibility that they were never used to and pressure from assignments in universities can cause this problem.

In a research that has been done in universities and colleges, it has shown that more than 11 percent of the total population of the students have been diagnosed or treated with the problem of mental illness due to emotional change and 10 percent have reported on being treated on the issue of depression or stress (Cline, 2007). Several students are reported of not seeking medical attention due to stigma and shame that they feel. Cases of students who commit suicide in universities have been on the increase due to mental illness problems.

**Critical Resource Review**

In recent years, there has been a tremendous rise in the case reported to health facilities on mental health disorder. This trend has been explicated especially amongst the university students. Apparently, around the globe, most people believe that mental disorder only occurs to a given group of individual, which makes them not be prepared for any uncertainty on their health prospects. Mental health disorder manifests in different ways including depression, anxiety, bipolar disorder, and suicidal thoughts. In a research conducted in the University of Nairobi, a 35.7% prevalence of depression amongst students was noted. The research points out that these depressive characteristics were however common amongst the first year students, economically disadvantaged, the married and those living off campus (Othieno, 2014). Takim 2013, conducted a study which yielded the result that there is a vast number of students who drop out of their studies before completion, His research also indicated that the rise in drop out level was as a result of the development of mental disorder that comes in after enrolment to college (Tamin, 2013).

The prevalence of mental disorders in the world account for 15% of the majority of maladies known to the world. According to Abera and Tekle,2018 student stage of human life makes them more prone to be mentally disordered. They point out that during the transition from high school to university education makes the students more prone to mental illness. Their research findings also point out that the female students in the university tend to be more affected by these changes compared to the male opponents (Tekle, 2018). In a research conducted on anxiety, behaviors explicate that a proportion of 45.7% population with a major depressive disorder had one or more lifetime anxiety disorders (Kessler, 2015). On the other hand, Scott. et.al. 2018, a mental disorder can be present in one’s life especially if there are past traumatizing events in the individual. These traumatizing events cause post-traumatic stress disorder amongst the victims (Scott, 2018). McLaughlin, et .al 2018 in her journal, explicates that adverse occurrences amongst the children tend to yield the post-traumatic stress disorders that amongst children. These adverse occurrences include the parent psychopathology, neglect, sexual abuse and physical abuse (McLaughlin, 2017).

Ideally, post-traumatic stress disorder as one of the common mental health disorder has been considered to be more prevalent among the younger age group, females, late marriage, low level of education, economic disadvantage and unemployment. Of these population with such mental disorder, only a half of them had taken the step seeking help and treatment options (Koenen, 2017). Pedrelli explains the college attendance is a stressful transition for most students since most of them have to deal with the separation, cope to the academic pressure and some of them have to respond to the family needs. With such exposure, a vast number of these students end up having meant health issues or substance use or even exacerbation of their symptoms (Pedrelli, 2015).

The transition to the university is not easy and calls for proper guidance of the student in the right mental health services. He explains that despite the high number of overwhelming feelings of joining college, some of the students experience the transition period a trying session. In his article, he explicates that an 87% proportion of first-year students have difficulty in adapting social aspects in college and the academic life. (Upfront, 2013). Most students who have been in the university speak of the depressive and anxious feelings that they have after transiting to the university. These feelings make them slip in their academic performance and lose the sense of having a future which yield in higher rate of human resource in the corporate world (Zivin, 2009).

**Synthesis and Integration**

**Mental disorders**

Mental problems are among the main health problems that face most students in schools. This is a medical condition that affects the central nervous system all the way to the brain. Different students in universities tend to be vulnerable in this issue from the kind of stress that they acquire from their studies and things that they do regularly. This problem has seen many institutions such as education centers come up with counseling activities and education of the students. Classes have been used to educate students on early signs of depression; this makes them to be in the best position of avoiding such disorder. However, the process requires mutual agreement by the members of the public to participate in preventing this problem. This will help in avoiding issues that come out of mental illness such as sexual assault (Scott p. 160), learning disabilities among others (Assari *et. al*) This paper will be effective in proving the effect that will be derived from the awareness initiative among university students.

Students in universities are always prone to stress that is derived from exams and normal learning lessons. Technical classes require students to be so serious in class with high levels of concentration; this makes some of them to feel that it is stressful to be in such classes. This has been the main cause of students shifting to the kind of life that includes substance use. It is the role of university planning teams to consider ways to deal with this issue; exams should be moderated in a way and friendly so as to avoid cases of anxiety derived from exams in such universities (Brown & June S).

When students move out of high school and into universities, they are exposed to the world, this makes them to face problems of fighting for their own survival, this poses a stressful kind of life to them. Some students may feel neglected by their parents, thus they engage in activities such as prostitution in a mission of making money, it is in this that more stressful life is achieved by them, most of them acquire infections that are transmitted sexually; which discourages life. This calls for the universities to put down many measures which can be effective in preventing mental illnesses.

Health disorders can be derived from a thought in someone that makes him or her to think that life is not of favor to him or her. The universities and parents should work towards preventing students from thinking negatively about their lives, positive thoughts can be effective in preventing issues of bipolar disorders and suicide. Many students kill themselves because of thinking negatively about life, parents are also required to constantly advice their children about life (Kessler, p. 212). Many students in universities face problems of economic disabilities, but it is the matter that should be solved by the parents talking to their children so as to make them understand their condition.

In conclusion, the issue of neglect, the issue of vulnerability and economic inabilities are among the common causes of stress among the youths. However, school regulations are important but should be considerate in the way that they are made and implemented. It is the role of everyone around a student to work towards clearing the issue of mental illness which has been increasing in most universities, problems are always bound to take place, but it is the role of everyone to identify them and prevent them. This may require all professionals such as psychotherapists and councilors to work together in improving public awareness and a solution will accomplished.

Mental Health Disorder

Mental health disorder is generally characterized by experiences or thoughts in individuals which appear rather odd with the reality. These experiences and thoughts include decreased participation, altered speech or behaviors, memory lapses, and concentration difficulties. The problem statement emphasizes immediate actions against mental disorders among university students. The basic factors presented were the inclusion of counseling services in universities and involving the public in helping individuals with mental disorders.

**Contributors of Mental Health Disorder**

There exists a wide range of mental illnesses contributors which have either a direct or indirect influence to the progression and development of these disorders. This medical condition is directly linked to the overuse of drugs that promote extreme anxiety such as caffeine, alcohol, and cannabis. Usage of cannabis, amphetamines, and cocaine has been linked with the development of schizophrenia and psychosis disorders (Pedrelli, 2015). The use of drugs is the major contributing factor to mental health disorder particularly to the youth and young adults since the drugs alter the nerve system and interfere with brain coordination. According to Pedrelli (2015), Individual traits such as anxiety, emotional instability as well as a propensity for increased neuroticism often trigger brain nerve cells resulting in mental illness. In the case of anxiety, attitudes, and temperament, such as pessimism, further increases the risks of the disorder. Social influences including traumatic events, abuse, social stress, neglect or other overwhelming life situations are likely to contribute to mental illness. Societal aspects including employment problems, migration problems, socioeconomic inequalities and unavailability of social cohesion have also implicated to the issue. These contributors often expose the brain to extreme stress which becomes quite difficult for it to process the stress.

**Causes of Mental Health Disorder**

Currently, the exact cause of some of the mental disorders remains unknown but recent research clarifies the fact that a combination of environmental, biological and psychological factors is the major causes of the conditions. The cause of mental illnesses is connected to the abnormal operation of nerve cell circuits which links specific regions of the brains. Malfunctioning of the nerve cell circuits inhibits communication of the brain through neurotransmitters which results to mental disorder. This could also be triggered by brain injury or defects to specific parts of the brain.

Genetic or heredity is also associated with mental disorders. In this case, individuals are likely to develop mental illnesses if a family member has the disorder. Genetic susceptibility is as a result of interaction between multiple genes that are passed through the family (Cline, 2015). Evidence proves that interference, such as loss of oxygen or trauma in the early development of fetal brain especially during birth could developmental disorder. Certain infections are also associated with the cause and development of mental illness. For instance, Streptococcus bacteria is connected with the cause of obsessive-compulsive disorder particularly in children. Exposure to dangerous toxins like lead also causes and develops common mental illnesses.

**Effects of Mental Health Disorder**

Without treatment mental disorders will definitely result in very unfortunate consequences due to the severity of the type of disorder in question. The effects range from emotional, behavioral as well as physical in every area of the affected individual. The major effects of this disorder are suicidal attempts, social isolation, interfamilial conflicts, the inability of the individual to work effectively or manage finances, drug use which could result in addiction and homelessness. To avoid these effects, early diagnosis and a comprehensive treatment plan are fundamental to treat victims with a mental disorder.

**Critical Analysis II**

**Causes and Effects of PTSD**

**Major Causes**

The four major causes of Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PSTD) include environmental causes, sociocultural causes, occupational causes, as well as personal variables.

**Major Effects**

According to American Psychological Association (APA), the effects of PSTD include depression, additional mental health problems, poor work performance, as well as suicidal attempts and ideation.

**Integrated Critical Analysis**

As for the environmental factors, frequent or repeated exposure to traumatizing events can lead to the development of PTSD. Solders that experience repeated wars and violence often tend to eventually develop or experience posttraumatic symptoms. In addition, the severity and duration of these traumas may also be a major cause of PTSD. However, lack of health support system for most of these solders who understands the situation and trauma could also play a significant role in PTSD development. Without proper treatment, these symptoms will worsen, leading to a number of short and long-term effects, including loss additional health disorders. According to Lange, Lange, and Cabaltica (2000), Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PSTD) predisposes people into developing other psychological problems, and estimate that about 80 percent of the victims suffer from certain kind of comorbid illness. They also argue that depression is recognized as being comorbid with PTSD.

Occupational factors are also important factors of PSTD. In particular, individuals, including solders, whose work exposes them into traumatic situations or events, may develop PTSD. Equally, those who are engaged in treating trauma survivors stand a high chance of developing PTSD. Moreover, the extent of risk for Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder is usually associated with three fundamental factors, including the level and intensity of exposure to traumatizing events, the employee or solder’s degree of empathy and sensitivity, as well as unsettled issues from the solder’s personal history. When evaluating the effect of stress as well as trauma on any individual within the context of the workplace, occupational factors must be particularly considered. Some of the occupational factors that might influence the level of stress include the occupation itself, degree of responsibility, interpersonal relationships, as well as the availability of support programs. A factor like lack of support system, especially when solders are involved in traumatizing events, could work to bring about suicidal attempts as well as ideation. Apart from the operational related traumatic stresses, there are also many other work-associated stressors that considerably affect most of the lives of service personnel. Pflanz and Sonnek (2002) studied the different sources of stress as well as their prevalence with the United States military. They found out that substantial work stress was indicated by 26 percent of the solders, while another 15 percent of the troops reported significant emotional agony connected to work stressors. This particular study also revealed that in combats, the exposure into heavy causalities as well as unexpected deployments worked to increase the levels of solders’ mental suffering, leading to poor work performances.

The sociocultural factors are also important causes of PTSD. A number of studies of specific populations of PTSD victims, including combat veterans and war survivors, shed light on the cultural as well as social causes of the Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder. In particular, those societies that are often highly authoritarian, engage in conflicts, or glorify wars have significant rates of PTSD even among their civilians. Thus, an unsupportive system could be a hindrance, especially when one’s close society or community fails to offer the required support.

Regarding personal variables, and even though the most important cause of PTSD is the traumatizing experience itself, people differ in terms of the intensity of their cognitive as well as emotional responses into such traumas. Some individuals might appear to be more susceptible compared to others. In other instance, this greater susceptibility is associated to the temperament or the natural disposition, with introverted or nervous individuals standing at increased risks. In other cases, the individual’s vulnerability could also result from chronic conditions, physical disabilities, or even previous traumatic experiences, especially direct war combat. These factors lead to distress, which in turn, contributes to the development of PTSD.

**Personal Reactions to Critical Analysis**

There is no doubt that is a real risk among most of the service men and women. Sometimes, stigma and sociocultural factors could prevent individuals from speaking up or getting the assistance they require. In particular, stigma can fundamentally prevent service members from speaking and seeking treatment due to the fear of being seen as violent, dangerous, or crazy. In addition, sometimes solders suffering from PTSD in the military could also fear being perceived as feeble or weak if they speak up or seek for assistance. However, PTSD can occur to any one after a traumatic experience or event, which makes them to feel shocked, helpless, stressful, or even fearful. PTSD can equally pose long-term effects, including depression.

It is fundamentally clear that these causes can be prevented from happening. For instance, individuals who work in professions in which traumatic events are most likely to happen, including the military can be given training as well as counseling in efforts to assist them cope or even reduce the risk of developing PTSD. For military physicians and emergency medical services teams, a form of debriefing identified as critical incident stress management, CISM, is important and should be offered in attempts to decrease the risk of stress and PTSD development. Moreover, these causes could also be prevented if the society or community could offer positive and supportive environments for most of the returning solders and veterans. I found occupational causes to be the most important factors in leading to PTSD, since most of these factors relate to solders workplace and working environments.

**Cause and Effect**

There are different factors that have been identified to cause mental disorders. Firstly, it is genetics. In this case, instances of occurrence of mental illness might run in the family tree. With that being the case, the susceptibility to mental illness will be passed on through the genes. Many experts hold the belief that some cases of mental illness are linked to a change in the structure of the genes. Secondly, mental illnesses might be caused by damage to the brain. In this case, if there is damage to certain parts of the brain, then it increases the probability of contracting a mental disorder. Thirdly, it is the abuse of drugs. In this case, it changes the composition of the chemicals in the brain which might result in the person developing mental illnesses. Fourthly, it is if the person has experienced psychological trauma. For instance, the loss of a loved one or if a person had undergone an instance of abuse when they were children. This might lead to instances of mental illness.

In the case that mental illness occurs and there is no proper treatment, then it can result in various effects. Firstly, it may lead to worsening issues. In this case, since mental illness is associated with a lot of stigmas then people might not seek treatment. This might lead to worsening of the condition where the person experiences the full extent of the symptoms (Henderson, Evans-Lacko, & Thornicroft, 2013). Secondly, if the person remains untreated there is a huge possibility that he or she will in end develop physical issues. In that case, a person with bouts of anxiety might be prone to develop gastrointestinal ulcers. Also, those with stress-related disorders might be prone to develop cardiovascular problems. Thirdly, there is a decreased quality of the relationship that one forms with other people. In this case, if a person is suffering from a mental illness like depression then he or she might not want to interact with other people. This can even result in divorce. Lastly, mental illnesses might lead to substance abuse whereby the individual will turn to drugs in the efforts to cope with the mental illness.

**Critical Analysis Narrative**

Mental illness is an expanding area of interest for scholars and doctors alike. While there has been a huge focus on demystifying mental illness, it remains largely stigmatized with many people shying away from discussing their stories in the public spectrum. For that reason, there is a need for discussion on the effect and the causes of mental disorders so that those who are affected can seek help. An example of the case of mental illness was a person suffering from generalized anxiety disorder. There are many causes of this mental disorder, for instance, genetics, damage to the brain, undergoing psychological trauma, and abuse of drugs. In the case of this individual, the most probable cause was genetics. Suffering from generalized anxiety disorder, the individual exhibited certain effects, for instance, worsening of the problem which was exhibited by psychosis, physical issues such as ulcers, and withdrawing from social life. So, for the individual, his case was acute. In this instance, the person cannot just push through the illness but should need help from a psychiatrist.

**The Reaction.**

In this case, the generalized anxiety disorder is affecting the ability of the individual to proceed with normal life activities and hence the need for medical attention. In this instance, the cause of the anxiety could not have prevented. Additionally, genetics played a huge role in the occurrence of generalized anxiety disorder and hence it is the most vital causal factor.

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