Empirical Evidence to Beliefs and Perceptions on Mental Health Disorder and Substance Abuse: The Role of a Social Worker

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Abstract : The US has developed numerous programs over the past 50 years to enhance the lives of those who suffer from mental health illnesses and substance abuse, as well as the effectiveness of their treatments. Despite these advances over the past 50 years, there hasn't been a corresponding improvement in American public attitudes and beliefs about mental health disorders and substance abuse. Highly publicized acts of violence frequently elicit comments that blame the perpetrator's perceived mental health disorder since such people are thought to be substance abusers. Despite these strong public beliefs and perception about mental disorder and substance abuse, concreate empirical evidence that entail this perception is lacking, and evidence of their effectiveness has not been integrated. A rich data was collected from Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA) with a hypothesis that people who are diagnosed with a mental health disorder are likely to be diagnosed with substance abuse using logit regression analysis and Instrumental Variable. It was found that depressive, anxiety, and trauma/stressor mental disorders constitute the most common mental disorder in the United States, and the study could not find statistically significant evidence that being diagnosed with these leading mental health disorders in the United States does necessarily imply that such a patient is diagnosed with substances abuse. Thus, the public has a misconception of mental health and substance abuse issues, and social workers' responsibilities are outlined in order to assist ameliorate this attitude and perception.

Keywords : mental health disorder, substance abuse, role of a social worker, evidence based research
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