Institution: Newman University

Unit of Assessment: 4 – Psychology, Psychiatry and Neuroscience

Title of case study: Identifying the prevalence and clustering of preventable unhealthy behaviours in young adults

1. Summary of the impact (indicative maximum 100 words)

The impact of the research described, lies in its ability to identify the prevalence and clustering of unhealthy lifestyle behaviours in young adults, and describe the characteristics of the differing lifestyles. Unhealthy behaviours are primary causes of premature morbidity and mortality. Inactivity, smoking, alcohol use and poor diet are the four major behavioural contributors to chronic illnesses such as cancer, diabetes and cardiovascular disease. The findings have been used to highlight the powerful influence of these behaviours on health, and also to highlight the particular impact on health created by these behaviours interacting together. These timely findings will aid health professionals to develop appropriate health prevention programmes targeting young adults.

2. Underpinning research (indicative maximum 500 words)

The first research project (Dodd, Al-Nakeeb, Nevill & Forshaw, 2010) involved an investigation into the prevalence and clustering of five lifestyle risk factors: psychological stress, physical activity, fruit and vegetable intake, binge drinking and smoking, amongst students attending a UK HE institution. This research described the characteristics of the differing lifestyles in relation to demographic characteristics. To the best of our knowledge, this was the first study to examine the clustering of psychological stress with multiple health behaviours within a UK HE student population using a cluster analytical procedure.

The second research project (Dodd, Forshaw & Ward, 2012) followed on from the first. The first project identified a picture that gives cause for concern for public health; in particular identifying that 70% of this population did not meet the recommend guidelines of physical activity. Whilst a multi ***behaviour*** intervention may be a breakthrough alternative to a singular health behaviour intervention, a comprehensive picture of the factors that influence such behaviours is currently limited within the health literature. Such findings are essential for intervention development. Thus, the aim of this second study was to understand the salient factors associated with activity levels, and in particular, to examine the moderating effects of gender on the Theory of Planned Behaviour model in predicting physical activity intention and behaviour in HE students. Data were analysed using structural equation modelling (SEM). Findings supported the utility of the Theory of Planned Behaviour in predicting physical activity intention and behaviour, though the relative contribution of the models, and the strength of association between the Theory of Planned Behaviour constructs varied depending on gender. The findings have practical and theoretical significance, since they indicate that physical activity programmes for students tailored to gender are warranted for this population.

The projects were carried out at Newman University between 2008 and 2012. Both projects were carried out by Dr Lorna Dodd. During 2008-2009 Dr Dodd was MSc Programme Leader then between 2009-2012 Acting Head of Psychology. Both projects involved a research team, which included academics not only from Newman but also from the Universities of Staffordshire and Wolverhampton.

3. References to the research (indicative maximum of six references)

Dodd, L., Al-Nakeeb, Y., Nevill, A., & Forshaw, M. (2010). Lifestyle Risk Factors of Students: A Cluster Analytical Approach. Preventive Medicine, 51 (1), pp.73-77.

Dodd, L.J., Forshaw, M.J., & Ward, T. (2012). Predicting physical activity behaviour in male and female young adults. An application of the theory of planned behaviour. International Journal of

Sport Psychology, 43 (6), pp.542-555

4. Details of the impact (indicative maximum 750 words)

The two research projects that form the foundation of this submission were conducted in response to the high rates of unhealthy lifestyle behaviours in young adults, particularly Higher Education (HE) students within the United Kingdom (Steptoe & Wardle, 2001; Steptoe, et al., 2002).

The findings revealed both that the health of this population is a cause for concern and that unhealthy behaviours aggregate in clusters. Seventy per cent of the young people in this study did not meet the recommended guidelines of physical activity, 66% ate less than the recommended servings of fruit and vegetables per day, and 56% reported binge drinking at least once in a seven-day period. Psychological stress was also high amongst the sample, with females experiencing greater psychological stress than males. This research suggests that health promotion interventions targeting this population should be a priority and that such interventions should not focus on unhealthy behaviours in isolation from each other. Interventions should consider how behaviours cluster together and design effective programmes that mirror the patterns within clusters.

There has been limited previous research on the clustering of unhealthy lifestyle behaviours in this particular group, and there is a clearly identified need for the development of effective intervention programmes for this population.

Both projects resulted in journal publications and conference presentations. The findings have had regional and national impact. In particular, the Division of Health Psychology conference is attended by both practitioners and academics, with the practitioner audience including Health Psychologists working within both the NHS and third sector organisations. Considerable interest in the research has been expressed verbally at these conference presentations.

Dissemination has included the following audiences:

3rd International Congress on Physical Activity and Public Health, 5-8 May 2010, Toronto, Canada (Al-Nakeeb, Y., Dodd, L. & Nevill, A. *Young Adults' Lifestyle, Adiposity and Health*).

Division of Health Psychology Conference, 9-11 September 2009, Aston University (Dodd, L., Al-Nakeeb, Y., Nevill, A., & Forshaw, M. *Lifestyle Risk Factors of Students: A Cluster Analytical Approach*).

European College of Sports Science, Sport Sciences: Nature, Nurture and Culture, 14th Annual Congress of the ECSS, 24-27 June 2009, Oslo, Norway (Al-Nakeeb, Y., Dodd, L., & Nevill, A. *Lifestyle and Health Behaviours of University Students*).

Division of Health Psychology Conference, 9-12 September 2008, University of Bath (Dodd, L. *Predicting Physical Activity Intention and Behaviour using the TPB within Students: Gender Specific*).

5. Sources to corroborate the impact (indicative maximum of 10 references)

1. European College of Sports Science: 14th annual Congress of the ECSS, 24-27 June 2009: http://www.nih.no/Documents/ECSS/BOAOSLO0610bContent.pdf
2. The British Psychological Society, Annual Division of Health Psychology Conference: (http://www.bps.org.uk/DHP2013) at Aston University, 9-11 September 2009: http://www1.aston.ac.uk/staff/aspects/aspects/learning-teaching/archive/conference/