

Special Issue

Mental Health and Substance Abuse

Message from the Guest Editors

Mental health and substance abuse issues are significant global health challenges, especially the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic, which has seen elevated levels of anxiety, depression, and alcohol use disorders. The bidirectional relationship between mental disorders and substance abuse—stemming from shared underlying factors such as genetic vulnerabilities, changes in brain structure and chemistry, and environmental stressors—promotes high rates of dual diagnosis. Indeed, dual diagnosis can lead to poorer health and social outcomes for affected individuals. These challenges are often inextricably linked to a lack of political will, limited financial resources, inadequate governance and policy frameworks, and insufficient human capital. Yet, some countries have successfully adapted by developing and implementing relevant, impactful interventions and initiatives such as task shifting and sharing in the mental health workforce to increase the reach and impact of mental health services in low-resource contexts. Such efforts have highlighted the importance of strategic innovation and collaboration.

Guest Editors

Dr. Patrice Whitehorne-Smith

College of Education, Psychology and Social Work, Flinders University,
Bedford Park, SA, Australia

Dr. Sophie B. Haywood

School of Population Health, Curtin University, Bentley, WA, Australia

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Editorial Office
MDPI, Grosspeteranlage 5
4052 Basel, Switzerland
Tel: +41 61 683 77 34
behavsci@mdpi.com

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Prof. Dr. Jerrell Cassady
Department of Educational Psychology, Ball State University, Muncie, IN
47306, USA

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