

Public Health Institute Journal

“Celebrating academic work
by PHI students”

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Welcome

Welcome to the seventh issue of the PHI journal. Our guest editorial comes from Chloe Smith who has completed both her BSc and MSc within public health at Liverpool John Moores University. Chloe is now working as a researcher within the School of Nursing.

Throughout my time at university, I developed a growing interest in research and found my assignments to be interesting, but I never truly had a passion for it until I started my BSc dissertation. My BSc dissertation explored misinformation on Instagram regarding diet and food habits and how this impacted people's body image and weight-related behaviours. Having been exposed to online diet culture and falling victim to celebrity-endorsed diet myths myself, I knew it was important to explore just how influential these messages are, particularly as they are shared with a wide audience. Conducting qualitative research as part of my BSc dissertation, and subsequently my MSc dissertation, proved to me how important research is and how powerful it can be to give participants a voice on topics and issues that affect them. Research is now a huge part of my life, and I am grateful to work at LJMU to conduct research which informs service delivery and practice across the UK.

The word "dissertation" is often veiled by a sense of apprehension, and rightly so, as it is one of the biggest challenges that a student must face during their time at university. Whilst it can be daunting at first, it can truly be an enjoyable and motivating experience. I found that choosing a topic that I genuinely cared about was the key to enjoying my dissertation. Writing a dissertation allows students to develop a wealth of skills, including organisation, communication, critical thinking, and time management, which are crucial when leading a successful career in Public Health.

The challenges to Public Health are ever-changing, as we have all experienced in recent years with COVID-19 and the fallout from the pandemic. This journal is a clear example of some of the key Public Health challenges that we face today, and it highlights that students have been able to identify critical questions to explore. The abstracts included are a fantastic representation of the hard work that students put into their dissertations and provides us with valuable insights and perspectives into a range of issues, which will undoubtedly benefit the future of Public Health discourse and efforts. This journal provides students with the opportunity to acknowledge and share their achievements at LJMU and I extend my congratulations to all the students for their exceptional work and wish them every success in their future careers.

Chloe Smith

Fatima Ali

Assessing the awareness and understanding of the risk factors of dementia amongst adults in the UK

Dementia is a growing public issue, particularly as life expectancy increases. Therefore, looking at ways to reduce the risk of dementia is something that could contribute to reducing the pressure on the healthcare system. The aim of the project was to assess the current awareness and understanding of the risk factors of dementia amongst adults in the UK.

An online survey administered through different social media platforms was used to identify trends in data that influenced adults' awareness and understanding of dementia risk factors. This quantitative methodology allowed for the investigation of data to describe relationships between variables. The survey found that from the total 207 participants, the highest proportion of respondents (38%) were aged 18-25 and were from a healthcare and medical professional background (23%). They identified multiple types of dementia, with 40% of those over 50 choosing 3-5 types, which showed good understanding. Most respondents agreed that dementia progression was difficult in later stages, with struggles identified with movement (84%), eating and drinking (60.4%), and speech (42%). The majority correctly identified depression (12%), excessive drinking (11%), and social isolation (11%) as significant risk factors. They also believed a healthy lifestyle could lower dementia risk. However, the awareness of dementia and risk factors through different promotional platforms was low. Healthcare platforms were identified as the primary source of dementia knowledge, with a preference for billboards, GP, and Instagram being used to promote dementia awareness. Moreover, the significance of Admiral Nurses (Specialist Dementia Nurses) was acknowledged by both carers and ex-carers.

The study highlights the importance of bridging the gap in knowledge about risk factors among the public. Recommendations include exploring more recent studies on public awareness, understanding, and sources of knowledge. It is suggested that promoting not only the risk factors but also the side effects of dementia is necessary to increase public understanding and support those struggling. Further investigation into the significance of Admiral Nurses and a larger sample size is recommended to identify patterns and significance in different categories.

Keywords: Dementia, Risk factors, Awareness, Understanding, Alzheimer's, Public, Dementia awareness, Dementia understanding, Online survey, Dementia risk factors understanding



Nawaf Aljohani

Exploring the relationship between homesickness and academic performance in Saudi students at Liverpool John Moores University

This research explored the multifaceted phenomenon of homesickness among Saudi students at Liverpool John Moores University (LJMU) and its impact on their academic performance, social integration, and coping strategies. Utilizing a comprehensive questionnaire answered by 39 Saudi students, the research gained insights into demographics, frequency, and aspects of homesickness, coping mechanisms, physical symptoms, and its overall impact on academic engagement and satisfaction. The demographic analysis revealed a diverse student body with a broad age range, a higher proportion of male students, and varying levels of English language proficiency. The majority of the participants were enrolled in undergraduate programs, with many reporting having no family or dependents accompanying them in the UK.

The results indicated that homesickness is a prevalent issue, with over half of the students (51.2%) experiencing it frequently. The aspects of home missed the most included family (79.5%), as well as friends, food, and cultural practices, highlighting the emotional and cultural disconnection experienced while studying abroad. In terms of coping strategies, maintaining contact with family and friends back home emerged as the most common mechanism, followed by engaging with local Saudi or international communities and participating in cultural or religious events. The study also identified physical symptoms attributed to homesickness, such as changes in appetite and sleep disturbances, indicating the physiological impact of emotional distress. Academically, while many students expressed satisfaction with their academic progress, a considerable number acknowledged that homesickness negatively affected various aspects of their academic life. This included decreased motivation to continue studies, reluctance to attend lectures, hindered participation in class discussions, delays in completing assignments, and reduced engagement in academic-related activities. Nonetheless, the study also highlighted a mixed pattern of seeking help from tutors, with some students actively seeking support while others showed hesitance, possibly due to cultural barriers or fear of stigmatization.

The research highlighted the significant impact of homesickness on the academic and social experiences of Saudi students at LJMU, emphasizing the need for targeted support services that address both the academic and emotional challenges faced by international students. The findings advocate for the implementation of comprehensive support mechanisms, including peer mentoring, cultural assimilation programs, and counselling services, to mitigate the effects of homesickness and promote academic success and well-being among international students. Future research should explore the long-term effects of homesickness and the efficacy of specific interventions in enhancing the academic and social integration of international students.

Keywords: Homesickness, Academic performance, Saudi, LJMU



Hutoon Alqurashi

A qualitative study of evacuating Saudi Arabian students from the United Kingdom during COVID-19

This study investigates the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic and subsequent evacuation of Saudi Arabian students attending British schools, with a focus on their academic motivation, support structures, and health and well-being. In particular, the study explores the students' subjective experiences, perspectives, and attitudes toward the evacuation process during the COVID-19 pandemic. A qualitative research design was used to explore and understand the experiences of people in their natural settings. The study utilized snowball sampling that recruited seven participants who share the experience of being Saudi Arabian citizens studying in the UK who were evacuated during the COVID-19 pandemic. The study obtained official approval from Liverpool John Moores University's ethics committee before the researcher started data collection. A record of oral consent, participant recruitment email and participant information sheet were used to assure the participants that their participation was voluntary and needed only for purposes of academic research. Data were analysed using thematic analysis to examine the data for the purpose of identifying common themes that include ideas, topics, and patterns of meanings that come up repeatedly. The study found that all the respondents were subject to emotional and negative hardship, suffered feelings of isolation and loneliness as well as travel restrictions because of the pandemic. They were happy with the support provided by the Saudi government throughout the evacuation process and revealed great appreciation and gratitude for the substantial care provided by authorities. The study concluded with recommendations to researchers, policymakers and higher education institutions in how to respond to and handle future potential pandemics and evacuations.

Keywords: Saudi Arabia students, COVID-19, Academic support, Evacuation, Saudi Arabia government, Quarantine, Qualitative research, Study abroad



Brooke Bell

Exploring the effects of diabetes on the mental health of socioeconomically disadvantaged adults in the United Kingdom

Exploring the complex relationship between diabetes and mental health among ethnic minority populations in the United Kingdom highlights a vital healthcare issue in our local communities. By 2051, ethnic minority communities are estimated to represent at least one-third of the population in the United Kingdom. Diabetes and mental health status have a two-way relationship; their challenges often intertwine, which, therefore, present unique obstacles that affect health outcomes. This relationship would suggest that effectively managing one condition can have a beneficial influence on the other. People living with diabetes have relatively high levels of depression, which is associated with increased risk for all-cause mortality. These issues resonate deeply within public health due to the impact on well-being and the healthcare system as a whole.

In this study, the aim was to explore the complex interplay between diabetes and mental health among adults in the United Kingdom and to provide insights into effective interventions for promoting psychological well-being. This review identified the prevalence of diabetes in the United Kingdom while also highlighting its impact on ethnic minorities and disadvantaged communities. This review found a higher risk of mental health issues among adults with diabetes, which underscored the need to address socioeconomic disparities and improve access to mental health support. Cultural beliefs were found to shape attitudes, beliefs, and behaviours, which indicates the need for culturally tailored interventions. The study recommends adopting an integrated, culturally sensitive approach to diabetes care in the UK that support the psychological aspects of the condition. The research highlights the vital significance of taking a comprehensive approach to managing diabetes in ethnic minorities in the UK. By recognising and addressing the condition's physical and mental dimensions, we can significantly improve patient well-being and overall quality of life. However, achieving this goal requires collaborative efforts from various stakeholders in the healthcare system. Recommendations for improving healthcare outcomes for ethnic minority adults in the UK include enhancing cultural competency training, addressing language barriers, and collaboration among stakeholders. Together, we must ensure that everyone, regardless of their background or status, has fair and equal access to the care and support required to manage their diabetes and lead fulfilling lives.

Keywords: Type 2 Diabetes, Mental health, Depression, Anxiety, Socioeconomic status, Ethnic minorities



Fatoş Cengiz

The role of social media on university students' mental health

This quantitative dissertation explores how social media use affects university students' mental health in the current digital age. It recognises growing concerns about the impact of social media on young adults and seeks to understand the unique mental health issues faced by all university students. The study primarily explores how popular social media apps such as YouTube, TikTok, Instagram, Snapchat, and Facebook affect this groups mental health. The relationship of social media and mental health is explored within the context of today's digitally connected era, particularly focusing on young adults aged 18-25. This age group are important as they are moving into adulthood and gaining increasing independence. It is during this period that young adults navigate various social, academic, and personal challenges, all of which are related to their use of social media.

To gather data, I have used an online questionnaire on social media habits and mental health indicators among the target population. The sampling strategy involves a combination of convenience and purposive sampling. I collected data from my personal networks and also specifically targeted the age group of 18 to 25 to ensure the accurate representation across diverse sociodemographic backgrounds, with recruitment through university, social media platforms, and academic departments. The key research questions driving this investigation include the impact of social media usage on mental health symptoms, the influence of different social media platforms, social pressure, sleep patterns, body image perceptions, experiences with online negativity, coping mechanisms, emotional states and the prevalence of social media breaks from young university adults.

Overall, this research adds to the ongoing discussion on the impacts of social media on university students' mental health. This topic needs further exploration to identify how we can make social media have a more positive influence on our well-being.

Keywords: Social media, Mental health, University students, Anxiety, Depression, Social media platforms, Protective factors, Academic performance, Mood, Pressure, Sleep, Connection, Body image, Online negativity, Coping mechanisms, Emotional state



Louise Crane

Reasons for non-participation in the National Child Measurement Programme:
An interview study with parents



Childhood obesity has reached epidemic levels. The causes are complex and varied, with lasting impacts on whole-life health outcomes. Since 2006 the National Child Measurement Programme (NCMP) has collected height and weight data on primary school age children in Reception and Year 6 to monitor prevalence and trends of obesity in England and Wales. This data is used to develop interventions and target support to areas of need. The programme is voluntary, requiring parents to actively withdraw consent, and rates of participation have been decreasing since 2016/17. The aim of this study was to uncover the reasons why parents withdraw consent for their children to participate in the NCMP through interviews with parents who had refused consent for their children to take part. Participants were recruited through parenting forums and social media posts, self-selecting to take part in a semi-structured online interview to discuss their thoughts and feelings towards the NCMP. Seven participants were involved across six interviews.

Thematic analysis of the interview data revealed five themes. Parents cited concerns over causing harm to their child's body image or triggering eating disorders as a primary reason for non-participation. Many attributed their reluctance to their own experiences of weight-related issues to growing up in the 1990s and early 2000s in a "toxic diet culture" surrounded by media portrayals of "super skinny women" and societal expectations around female appearance and beauty standards. The use of Body Mass Index (BMI) as an indicator of child health was problematic for all participants, including those from a health professional background. There was no identified link between non-participation in the NCMP and withdrawal from childhood vaccinations although this would need wider investigation given the limitations of a small-scale study.

Recommendations from this study include an information and education campaign promoting the programme benefits including addressing the concerns raised by non-participatory parents and highlighting some of the targeted initiatives informed by NCMP data. There is an argument to be made for increasing the number of screenings to three to include secondary school children in year 8 or 9 to further monitor and track children identified as overweight or obese, allowing for an assessment of the efficacy of the programme in weight reduction and behaviour change. Considering a move from BMI to waist-to-height ratio (WHtR) could provide more accurate data on obesity prevalence in children as well as address the concerns of parents who do not feel BMI is an appropriate measure for use in children. A recommendation for further study on a larger scale would address a gap in the current knowledge around the NCMP and childhood obesity, to include the impact of Covid-19 with regards to obesity prevalence and NCMP engagement.

Keywords: National Child Measurement Programme, Childhood obesity, Diet culture, Body image, Eating disorders



Ryan Dodds

The relationship between social media use and mental wellbeing amongst university students

This dissertation uses age, gender, and academic year as major demographic variables to investigate the effects of social media use on the mental health of UK university students. The study is centred around four primary research questions: (1) How many times a day do students at universities use social media platforms? (2) What are the main reasons behind university students' use of social media? (3) Which particular social media sites are used by university students, and to what extent? and (4) How do social media usage habits relate to mental health as determined by the Warwick-Edinburgh Mental Well-Being Scale (WEMWBS)? Using a mixed-methods approach, the study collects data from a sample of 18–36-year-old university students, both quantitative and qualitative. In addition to the answers to the questions mentioned above, participant demographic data, such as age, gender, and academic year, is gathered. Participants shared details about their experiences of mental health, and social media usage via an online questionnaire.

The results show that university students use social media in a variety of ways, with differences seen across age groups, genders, and academic years. The most popular platforms are Instagram, which is followed by Snapchat and TikTok. Communication, entertainment, and information consumption are the main drivers of social media use in this study. The study also finds links between social media use habits and mental health, which has consequences for intervention and support plans that are geared towards demographic groups. In summary, this research advances our knowledge of the intricate relationship between university students' use of social media and mental health. The demographic factors of age, gender, and academic year are integrated to offer significant insights into the complex dynamics influencing students' digital behaviours and psychological well-being.

Keywords: Warwick-Edinburgh Mental Well-being Scale (WEMWBS), Mixed-methods, United Kingdom, Age, Gender, University students, Mental health, Social media



Kane Fraser

A qualitative study on the self-perceived effects both positive and detrimental of the self-medication of cannabis and cannabinoid products in people aged between 18 and 65 in the Liverpool city region

In the United Kingdom there are approximately thirty million people that have been diagnosed with conditions that make them eligible for treatment using cannabis and/or cannabinoid products. Although cannabis and cannabinoid products have been legal in the United Kingdom since November 2018, the only route of access for patients is through specialised private clinics. With very little information being given to the public around policy changes in reference to medical cannabis there are still many misconceptions over the legality of medical cannabis, what conditions it can be used to treat and the side-effects of medical cannabis on patients. This study used qualitative research methods to research the self-perceived effects of cannabis and cannabinoid products in those who are self-medicating with illicit cannabis and legal cannabinoid products and their reasoning for use. Individuals aged between 18 and 65 who live within the Liverpool city region and currently use or have a history of using cannabis or cannabinoid products for health-related purposes were recruited into the study, on a voluntary basis, through the researchers pre-existing networks using convenience sampling with the potential for the individuals to refer or recruit appropriate individuals through snowball sampling methods. Three participants took part in semi structured interviews to gather data pertaining to their use of cannabis and/or cannabinoid products. All data was then transcribed with emerging themes being identified and subsequently compared to existing research and available data in relation to the research question. Results showed that there are various reasons for use of cannabis and cannabinoid products, in varying quantities, for health-related purposes with use of cannabis predominantly as an aid to sleep and relieve anxiety whilst cannabinoid products being predominantly used for pain related illness. Reasons for use also varied from initial recreational use, individuals looking for an alternative to synthetic or derivative medicines and individuals wanting to try cannabis as a sleep aid. All participants reported a willingness to be prescribed cannabis and/or cannabinoid by medical professionals if it was available to them. Further research should focus of gaining greater participation for the study and utilising unstructured interviews with participants to gain the greatest amount of in-depth data in relation to the positive and detrimental effects of cannabis and/or cannabinoid product use on the health and daily lives of participants. There are suggestions from this study that the legalisation of and eligibility criteria for medical cannabis and/or cannabinoid products in the United Kingdom are not widely known to the public.

Keywords: Medical cannabis, Cannabinoid products, Reasons for use of cannabis and/or cannabinoid products, Effects of cannabis and/or cannabinoid products, Cannabis for self-medication in the UK



Binita Gharti Pun

A quantitative study investigating LJMU students attitudes towards cannabis

This dissertation presents a quantitative analysis of the attitude, knowledge, and beliefs of Liverpool John Moores University students towards cannabis. Over the past decade, cannabis use has become increasingly normalized among young adults in the UK leading to an emerging public health concern. An online survey was distributed using convenience sample with 29 students recruited. Participant attitudes toward the government policy of legalising cannabis were supportive (86.2% for medicinal cannabis) with 68.9% of the participants supporting the idea that recreational cannabis should be legalized in the UK. When the prevalence of cannabis was measured, men were more likely to use than women. Conversely though women were more supportive for the legalisation of cannabis. Over eight in ten (82.7%) of the study sample were aware of the cannabis components with 48.2% being from the Faculty of Health, with the results demonstrating that the students from health backgrounds are more likely to be knowledgeable regarding cannabis when compared to other student cohorts. When the prevalence of use was assessed among different age groups, the students who were aged between 18 and 24 years of age were found to more likely to use cannabis, as well as having been previously offered.

Further research on factors influencing attitude toward cannabis is needed to understand how different cultures, religion and environments influence the behaviour, perception, and attitudes towards cannabis use. The researcher also suggests that the government should develop an evaluation approach to examine the effectiveness of the drug policy that are already implemented.

Keywords: Cannabis, Medicinal cannabis, Tetrahydrocannabinol (THC), Cannabinoid (CBD), Attitude, Policy, Health, Impact



Joshua Greeves

The perceptions of high street food business operatives in Liverpool towards food safety regulations and the Environmental Health Practitioners (EHPs) that enforce them

Food poisoning is a major concern for public health, reports from the Food Standards Agency (FSA) suggest that there are around 2.4 million estimated UK cases of foodborne illness occurring each year. It has been suggested that the majority of these outbreaks have been the result of poor practices within the food industry. Barriers that potentially prevent good practice and food safety within the food industry include a lack of trust in Environmental health practitioners (EHPs) and Regulatory authorities.

This dissertation explored the barriers to compliance and factors that influence these behaviours, by surveying people who work in the High Street food industry on their levels of trust and compliance with EHPs and regulatory authorities. Reviewing the literature revealed minimal previous research on this topic, although provided insight into behaviour theory and outlined the environmental health concerns that this paper addresses. The majority of food workers are young and have been in the industry for approximately 2-3 years. Overall it was felt the current regulations do not ask too much and are easy to understand, with confidence in their business's understanding of the regulations. Furthermore, the majority of food operators agreed that EHPs provided clear guidance and they would trust the advice given to them by an EHP. Further research should explore trust as a barrier to compliance.

Keywords: EHP, Food safety, Compliance, Trust, UK, High street, Food business, Perceptions, Regulations, Environment, Health



Georgia Herbert

An exploration of adherence to the requirements for School Food Regulations 2014 in primary schools in Trafford

Parents send their children to school expecting them to be fed nutritionally. If they have opted for a school provided lunch by law it should adhere to The Requirements for School Food Regulations, 2014. There are 24,442 schools in England with a total of 9,073,832 pupils of which 23.8% of those pupils are eligible for a free school meal. The aim of this research was to investigate if primary schools in the Trafford Local Authority area were compliant with the regulations set out in the legislation and identify any trends for difficulties experienced if not compliant. Quantitative and qualitative data was collected in the form of a postal survey. The questionnaires were sent out to primary schools in the Trafford area. Alongside the questionnaire, a content analysis of school menus in Trafford and recent Ofsted inspection reports were reviewed to identify similarities and disparities. Data retrieved was analysed using framework analysis.

This research highlights a lack of regular checks of legislation compliance by a governing body who has the power to take enforcement action against non-compliance. At present Ofsted are conducting routine inspections to visit and check that compliance is met of the school food standards, however a review of recent inspections at primary schools in the Trafford area show no evidence this is occurring. The average school food standards compliance score was 84.7% which means that schools are not adhering to some of the requirements. Previous research in Blackpool highlighted that out of 33 primary schools (33%) in the area, only 11 were meeting the school food standards. Ofsted research from 2018 showed that there were no reasons to believe that schools were not meeting the school food standards which contradicts the results from this research and other studies conducted after 2018. There are certain requirements that schools find easier to adhere to than others which further research needed to identify underlying issues.

Further research is needed on the school menu review policies and the implementation of changes, packed lunch policies and how these are monitored and enforced by the schools including the consideration of expanding the free school meals policy. It is recommended that the UK government needs to make a decision on which governing body will be instructed to carry out routine school food standards checks with clear guidelines and enforcement action powers.

Keywords: School food standards, Primary school, School dinners, Nutrition, Obesity



Alex Jones

A quantitative survey study to understand students' knowledge and attitudes towards rewilding in England

Rewilding is a strategy that attempts to return an ecosystem to their original state before human alterations were imposed. Rewilding is a concept that originated from North America in the 1980s where it was originally called wildness recovery. The aim of this study is to explore and gain an understating of student's knowledge and attitudes towards rewilding in England. The objectives were to ascertain student's knowledge of wildlife and conservation in England, and to understand student's attitudes towards rewilding projects in England. An online questionnaire was developed and distributed to students aged eighteen and over who are currently enrolled in a university based in England. A convenience sampling approach was used in recruiting participants via social media such as Instagram and Facebook. The researcher also approached LJMU gatekeepers and posted it onto their online platform CANVAS.

There was a higher percentage of female student participant's and those aged 33 years old or older taking part in the study. The data shows that students have a positive attitude towards nature and think rewilding is a good idea that can benefit society and the economy. The study concluded that a gap in the literature has been filled as the student demographic has been represented. It also concludes that students feel that rewilding is a good idea and can have a positive impact on physical and mental health.

Keywords: Rewilding, Knowledge, Attitude, Questionnaire, Quantitative, Nature, Wildlife, Conservation



Priya Kundi

A quantitative study to explore the changes in eating habits of university students after they have transitioned into university

The transition to university is a changing period in a person's life, where students are faced with newfound independence that can shift routines and impact dietary habits. A quantitative study was conducted to explore the changes in eating habits among young adults after they have transitioned into university. An online survey was used, recruiting using a self-sampling approach via various social media groups and student chat groups. A total of 65 students participated in this study and the data was analysed using Google Forms; 64.6% were female and 35.4% were male, with the highest proportion aged between 21 and 23 years (43.1%). A substantial percentage of participants consumed two meals per day, which may indicate a shift away from the commonly associated three-meal diet with healthy eating patterns. Furthermore a considerable amount of data shows that students eat less healthily after transitioning to university as opposed to predominantly eating moderately healthy before their transition. Socioeconomic factors heavily influenced food accessibility and preferences, potentially impacting students ability to eat healthily during the transition to university. Overall, the findings and results show the importance of promoting education and awareness on how to eat healthier, moderate, and balanced meals. Interventions and promoting awareness of available services can help students to make informed choices about their well-being and eating habits.

Keywords: Eating, University, Young people, Food, Work, Stress



John Murapa

A qualitative study exploring LJMU students' vaping habits

An e-cigarette is defined as 'an electronic hand-held vaping device that produces for inhalation by a person an aerosol formed by heating a liquid' and its use has increased internationally in recent years among young people. It is important to note, there are two routes of access for people who want to quit smoking via use of e-cigarettes, or vaping with access via purchasing from commercial markets being by far the most popular. Less common however, is access via health care professionals. In the UK, both medical and commercial approaches have been embraced due to public health bodies acknowledging e-cigarettes or vaping's potential for assisting smoking cessation and supporting e-cigarette use for this purpose. This study employed qualitative methods to explore vaping behaviour of LJMU students. Interviews were employed as they were an appropriate tool to elicit individual vaping behaviour. Understanding individual behaviour gives a deeper and more meaningful understanding of what shapes or characterises this behaviour and in essence can equip health promoters with pertinent information to know what behaviour to target in the bid to promote health or behaviour change.

A convenience sampling method was employed which purposefully targeted current LJMU students who vape at least occasionally. A recruitment email was posted on LJMU canvas and those who were interested in taking part in the research study contacted the researcher via LJMU email. Five participants took part in individual interviews conducted on Microsoft Teams. Prior to commencement of interviews oral consent was read out to participants and once the participants were satisfied and happy to proceed the interviews were commenced. Data was transcribed and emerging themes were identified; ultimately those emerging themes were applied to this research and available evidence in relation to the research question.

The results show there is more appeal to using e-cigarettes or vaping compared to smoking combustible cigarettes. The results also show the way e-cigarettes are designed and marketed appear to target young people and in essence young people are drawn to these products. Most importantly, e-cigarettes or vaping is seen as an effective tool in helping smokers of combustible cigarettes to quit smoking in favour of e-cigarettes. They are also viewed as safer than smoking combustible cigarettes. The results also highlight peer influence as the main driver in determining one's vaping behaviour or habits. The end goal for those that took part in the study was to eventually quit using e-cigarettes/ vaping altogether but did acknowledge the challenges of nicotine addiction. Future research should seek to establish LJMU vaping behaviour as a whole or university wide as opposed to only those students based within health disciplines. Moreso, future research should aim to be more diverse as this research only had one female participant with the rest being male, and all participants were of white ethnicity.

Keywords: E-cigarettes, Combustible cigarettes, Vaping, Vapes



Shola Noble

A survey study investigating the public's perception of vaccine hesitant parents

Vaccine hesitancy has been a growing concern in the UK for many years. Health services are failing to meet national targets annually and uptake in childhood immunisations has rapidly decreased, causing the UK to recently declare a national outbreak in the once controlled measles virus. In order to tackle this growing public health concern, it is vital that further understanding of public knowledge, understanding and reasonings behind hesitancy is established. At present, there is a significant lack of research into the public's knowledge, awareness, and perceptions of vaccine hesitant parents. This study analyses current awareness, knowledge and perception surrounding the topic of vaccine hesitancy and vaccine hesitant parents. This study took mainly a quantitative approach, through the use of an anonymous, online questionnaire, posted to the researcher's personal social media platforms. The questionnaire gathered both qualitative and quantitative data including open-ended questions to allow participants the opportunity to express personal thoughts and opinions. The researcher used a convenience sampling method, to obtain 62 participants. Data obtained in this study was converted to SPSS software for detailed statistical analysis of quantitative data along with comparing this data to the written qualitative responses. This study used a number of comparison graphs, to establish any relevant patterns and trends, amongst both forms of data, presented in the forms of bar and pie charts.

The findings from this study indicated that women are more likely to participate and engage in studies relating to vaccine hesitancy, and awareness of this topic is extremely low in men, compared to women, and younger adults- middle aged individuals are more likely to be considered vaccine hesitant, compared to those aged 60+. This study has also found that the public has an in depth understanding of the public health implications, caused by vaccine hesitancy and can clearly identify a range of affected key areas. When looking to understand the public's perceptions on vaccine hesitant parents, the media has portrayed these individuals to be 'uneducated'. However, this study has found this to be untrue, as all but one participant (who chose not to state), have some level of education. This study has discovered that a very small number of participants identify as vaccine hesitant, however data from this study has found more participants are showing significant signs of hesitancy, leading to believe this could be due to fear of judgement or lack of awareness. This study has found that the majority of participants are accepting of childhood immunisations which would match the national statistics, and although misconceptions surrounding vaccine hesitant parents being 'uneducated' and 'misinformed' has been identified within this study, the public seem to understand the potential genuine reasoning behind hesitancy and are mainly concerned about the ongoing spread of infectious diseases amongst communities.

Keywords: Vaccines, Vaccine hesitancy, Child vaccinations, Childhood immunisation Programme, Public perception, Parental hesitancy



Phil Perrett

Environmental Health Practitioners' opinions on whether food hygiene standards have declined post pandemic

Food hygiene standards in establishments undergo continuous scrutiny by local authorities to safeguard public health. The onset of the COVID-19 pandemic introduced unprecedented challenges for both food establishments striving for compliance and local authorities attempting to sustain planned inspections. This situation has resulted in a significant number of establishments still awaiting inspection even four years after the pandemic's onset. The aim of this study was to investigate the perspectives of Environmental Health Practitioners (EHPs) regarding the potential decline in food standards since the onset of the pandemic and the underlying reasons for such changes. The research entailed conducting interviews with EHPs employed by local authorities to gather insights into their thoughts, knowledge, and opinions on whether food standards had indeed declined in the post-pandemic period.

Interviews were carried out online with nine EHPs from various local authorities. Analysis of transcribed interviews provided data for six identified themes that had emerged from the research. Findings from this study indicate that EHPs believe that standards within food premises have declined with various contributing factors. This study revealed that local authorities encountered substantial challenges during the COVID-19 pandemic, navigating the dual responsibility of mitigating virus transmission and upholding food safety standards. The surge in new business registrations, combined with staffing shortages, heightened the strain on local authorities to conduct planned inspections, resulting in a persistent backlog. Food establishments grappled and continue to grapple with implications stemming from COVID-19 and financial pressures related to the cost-of-living crisis. In conjunction with understaffing in the hospitality sector, these challenges intensify the pressure on food businesses to maintain the necessary standards required to comply with food law.

Recommendations stemming from this study advocate for an increase in the recruitment of EHPs to address the ongoing challenges and persisting backlog of inspections. Additionally, the study suggests considering legislative changes to enforce the mandatory display of the Food Hygiene Rating Scheme and enhance the food business registration process. Given the substantial pressures on food establishments and their inspectors, further action is imperative to mitigate potential risks to public health.

Keywords: COVID-19, Environmental Health Practitioner (EHP), Backlog, Challenges, Inspections, Food hygiene, Food Hygiene Rating Scheme (FHRS)



Adeel Rasul

A survey study analysing the impact of greenspaces on the physical and mental health of Liverpool students

This dissertation examines the physical and mental changes to students in Liverpool as a result of attending greenspaces. The main aim of the dissertation is to provide a scientific explanation behind the role of greenspace provision for the human mind and body, and what benefits greenspaces can have on an individual level. The study also examines the societal benefits greenspaces can have, such as the mitigation of climate change and the potential to reduce burdens on public health services. This study uses an online questionnaire, which recruited 63 students who are studying in Liverpool and asked them about their thoughts and feelings towards greenspaces, physical and mental wellbeing, stress, anxiety, and overall life satisfaction. The questionnaire was initially distributed through personal acquaintances, which then further developed into snowball sampling through student groups and societies. The main findings of the study are that students overall have a positive association of greenspaces, generally live near to them, and have mixed feelings towards their life happiness, and levels of stress and anxiety. The study concludes with some recommendations for future similar investigations, and possible solutions from an environmental health perspective as how to best tackle the current mental health crisis of students in Liverpool.

Keywords: Health, Physical, Mental, Wellbeing, Greenspaces, COVID-19, Environment, Questionnaire, Stress, Anxiety



Elham Sheikholeslami

A quantitative study exploring physical activity levels in children under 11 years old

Physical activity does more than fight obesity and keep people from getting sick, it is also essential for children's emotional, social, and intellectual growth. This study explores levels of activity in children. Due to technological advances and living in cities, people are becoming less active, which is creating public health issues. We must therefore reconsider how children interact with physical exercise. This study explores how family, environment, and social norms affect children's levels of physical exercise. The aim is to find out what stops children from being active, what makes children more active, and what recommendations can be made to get children more active.

A questionnaire was sent to parents or legal guardians of children aged under 11 years old living in semi-urban or urban areas, exploring their children's levels of physical activity. The questionnaire was distributed through media platforms such as Facebook, as well as targeted recruitment through email. Many things affect how active children are and these factors affect each other in complicated ways. Some important factors are how parents feel about physical exercise, the number of safe outdoor areas, and the results of school programmes that try to get children fit and moving. Key findings highlight the role of family support, outdoor space availability, and effective school programmes in improving children's physical activity levels. Addressing the blocks to physical activity requires a collaborative approach that includes policy changes, community planning, and parental education to foster energetic lifestyles among children.

In conclusion, the research suggests that parents, legal guardians, teachers, policymakers, and community planners should collaborate to create and execute multifaceted plans to get children more active. Some suggestions are to improve physical education programs in schools, make outdoor play areas safe and fun, and start efforts to teach families how important it is to be active. Ultimately, this study helps future generations live more physically active, healthy, and sustainable lives by focusing on the variables that affect how active children are.

Keywords: Children's physical activity, Sedentary lifestyle, Parental influence, Environmental factors, School programs, Active living



Matty Spurgin

A small-scale quantitative survey into the public awareness of the Food Hygiene Rating System ("Scores on the doors") and how the rating system influences the public's decisions

In the UK there were approximately 2.4 million cases of foodborne illness during 2020 by the Food Standards Agency (FSA), much higher than 1 million cases estimated in 2009. It is estimated that these cases cost the UK £9 billion per year. To reduce this number Environmental Health Officers (EHOs) from local councils are sent to food businesses across the country. These local councils then report back to the FSA, this is so that food businesses can receive a food hygiene rating. However, the food business can choose whether or not to display the rating given to them if they are located in England.

This project aims to explore the awareness of the public around the Food Hygiene Rating System (FHRS) and if the FHRS also known as "Scores on the doors" affects the public's decision making process when choosing an establishment to purchase food from. The specific objectives are to explore the public's knowledge of the FHRS, assess the public's attitude towards the FHRS and analyse if the public's behaviour is influenced by their knowledge and attitudes towards the FHRS. This dissertation used a quantitative method to collect data, via an online questionnaire. The researcher thought that this would be the best way to collect data because it is quick and simple for the participants to complete, and it is also easily analysed. The researcher used the website JISC to create the questionnaire as well as collect data and analyse said data.

The main findings of this study show that participants have a basic knowledge of what the FHRS is. However, they lack more in-depth knowledge that could possibly help them such as knowing that the FHRS does not reflect the quality of food as 61.8% of participants thought it did. Some of the recommendations that the researcher would suggest is a nationwide awareness program to educate the public so that they are aware of what the FHRS is, as well as to give business owners an incentive to improve their potentially low hygiene ratings. A nationwide awareness program might also give business owner an incentive to display their hygiene ratings if they are not already doing so.

Keywords: FSA - Food Standards Agency, FHRS - Food Hygiene Rating System, CDC – Centres of Disease Control and Prevention



Kiera Tonks

How media influences public behaviour when a public health scare occurs



This research delves into the influence of media portrayal regarding public responses to health threats and proposes strategies to improve future responses from the public. This is a literature review format, analysing past studies in peer-reviewed journals and books as well as historical news reports on certain health incidents. Three case studies, the HIV/AIDS epidemic in the 1980s, the anthrax attacks in 2001, and the COVID-19 pandemic in 2020, are analysed to understand public reactions and moral panics, using Stanley Cohen's model of moral panic. This model is an important method used when analysing the research in this literature and showing how each stage of the model is met in each instance to cause a social change and moral panic. The analysis focuses on how these events unfolded, their impact, and whether the media contributed to moral panic and negative behaviours being displayed. The study explores the role of media in shaping public behaviour during health crises. By understanding the media's influence on moral panic and public behaviour, the research suggests harnessing media to prevent negative outcomes during future health scares would be beneficial. Recommendations include ensuring accurate media reporting to prevent speculation and regulating social media to combat misinformation and conspiracy theories. Successfully utilising social media could significantly improve public health management now and in the future. Overall, the research highlights the significant role of media reporting in instigating moral panic during health crises throughout history. It encourages harnessing media influence to eliminate negative impacts and improve public health responses. The findings demonstrate the importance of accurate reporting and regulating social media to effectively manage public health crises and mitigate the spread of misinformation.

Keywords: Media credibility, Moral panic, Media-influence, Health scares, Public behaviour



Leah Villiers-James

An investigation into drug consumption rooms: Would they be beneficial if introduced throughout the UK?

The following literature review presents an investigation into the individual and community impact of drug consumption rooms globally. The injecting of drugs is a global public health issue not only affecting the individual by partaking in risky behaviours but the wider community with effects of public nuisance, open drug scenes and public order issues. In a harm reduction attempt to combat these issues drug consumption rooms were first introduced in Berne Switzerland 1986, and since then drug consumption rooms have become more widely accepted as a successful harm reduction initiative with over 100 facilities globally. Whilst there has been research globally investigating the success and effects of drug consumption rooms there are still many barriers and laws and policies in place slowing down the introduction of these facilities. The approval of the drug consumption room in Scotland in September 2023 brought wide attention to local news outlets and sparked a conversation within communities. This provides a significant opportunity for reliable information on the effects of drug consumption rooms to be conveyed to the public and raise awareness to build support for these facilities and further trust throughout communities.

There are many factors affecting how successful a drug consumption room is to the individual and wider community, many of these factors are reviewed throughout this dissertation. The evidence highly suggests the success of drug consumption rooms depends on legislative barriers to get them running effectively, trust between clients and staff to build access to services and repeat clients all resulting in lower spread of disease, risky behaviours, public nuisance, and overall harm reduction. There are recommendations made for whether drug consumption rooms should be more widely introduced throughout the UK. By following the recommendations made, harm reduction will continue throughout the UK and globally

Keywords: Drug consumption room, Drugs, Injecting, UK



Tasha Westall

A quantitative study assessing the knowledge, attitudes and beliefs surrounding cervical cancer and cervical cancer screening in UK based females aged 18+

Cervical cancer is a worldwide burden affecting women from all backgrounds; if detected early cervical cancer is highly preventable. The UK aims to eradicate cervical cancer by 2040 through Human Papillomavirus (HPV) vaccinations and the National Screening Programme, however screening rates in the UK have been declining for the past decade. The aim of this research was to investigate women's knowledge, attitudes and beliefs towards cervical cancer and cervical screening in the UK. A questionnaire was used to examine women's knowledge of cervical cancer towards and the willingness to access cervical screenings. The online surveys were circulated on the researcher's personal social media. Additionally respondents were recruited through QR codes on leaflets which were distributed in a local charitable organisation and to university peers; the overall number of respondents was 184. Results from the study found that women have good knowledge regarding the risk factors for cervical cancer but showed a lack in knowledge around the curability of cervical cancer. It was also found that women have accurate levels of knowledge around risk factors for cervical cancer and this increased with educational levels. Recommendations are for further research to be conducted on women's attitudes and beliefs of cervical screening to highlight potential barriers to the National Screening Programme. Also, recommendations around providing equal levels of knowledge across all platforms and levels of education would be beneficial.

Keywords: Cervical cancer, Cervical screening, HPV, Curability, National Screening Programme



James Williams

A quantitative study exploring the relationship between physical activity and mental health of UK residents aged 18-24

Mental health issues amongst 18–24-year-olds is of the highest rate and is increasing yearly. Methods of mental health promotion such as talking therapy and the prescription of antidepressants, have increased in recent times, however rates of mental illness are still increasing yearly. This study explored the relationship between physical activity, a method of health promotion, and mental health in the UK amongst 18-24-year-olds. More specifically, the aim of the research was to identify how exactly physical activity impacts mental health by exploring the experiences and attitudes of 18-24-year-olds towards these two topics. The study was quantitative, and data was gathered in the form of an online questionnaire of which the criteria was UK residents aged between 18 and 24 years. This data, based on 31 respondents, provided an insight into the physical activity levels, mental health states, attitudes towards physical activity and the different methods in which young adults choose to keep physically active.

The researcher used SPSS to analyse the data and create graphs, from which trends were identified such as higher levels of physical activity being strongly associated with better states of mental health and lower activity levels being associated with poorer states of mental health. Another main finding was the majority of participants feeling very strongly towards certain benefits of physical activity. Although there are numerous studies available that discuss the relationship between physical activity and mental health, the researcher felt there were certain gaps in existing literature such as primary focus on the age range of 18-24 and understanding their attitudes and personal experiences with mental health and physical activity. Recommendations such as providing evidence in promotional campaigns for physical activity, specifically its impact on mental health as well as ways in which local councils can take action to support local residents in keeping physically active.

Keywords: Mental health, Physical activity, Young people, UK



Sa'idah Zubairu

A quantitative study to investigate the knowledge, attitudes, and practices of menstrual health hygiene among female LJMU students

Menstruation is a natural and essential part of the female reproductive system, that goes beyond its biology to impact upon various aspects of a woman's life. It is a physiological process that not only signifies reproductive health but also carries psychological, emotional, cultural, and social significance. This study aims to explore the knowledge, attitudes, and practices of menstrual health hygiene among female LJMU students. It will also compare the relationship between their knowledge, attitudes, and practices and demographic characteristics. To gather the data for this study, a quantitative research design was employed using an online questionnaire. The questionnaire was distributed on Canvas, with the help of a gatekeeper. Data analysis was conducted using SPSS, and Chi squared tests were used to measure relationships between variables. The sample for this study consisted of 57 female LJMU students. Overall female LJMU students possess some accurate knowledge about menstruation including the origin of menstrual blood, average menstrual cycle, and average menstrual bleeding duration. Participants revealed family, friends, their GP and the internet were their main source of information about menstruation and generally women felt able to discuss menstruation with their family, friends, and GP. In terms of attitudes, the participants described menstruation with words such as 'bloody', 'messy', 'dirty', 'pain', 'inconvenient' and 'mood swings' and while some students exhibited positive attitudes and openness towards menstruation and menstrual health, others expressed feelings of embarrassment, shame, and discomfort. The study found that younger women exhibited a more positive attitude towards menstruation, revealing excitement when they had their first period and not allowing menstruation to interfere with their usual activities. The study also found that participants consider factors such as comfort, price, easily disposable and quality/absorbency when choosing menstrual products. These results can contribute to the public health evidence base on menstruation and menstrual health for university students in the UK. The study recommends future studies to be conducted to investigate the knowledge, attitudes, and practices of menstruation among women in the UK. This includes the intersectionality of menstrual health hygiene with factors such as socioeconomic status, and cultural background. The study also recommends educational initiatives around menstruation for all genders to promote inclusivity, foster empathy and remove stigma.

Keywords: Menstruation, Menstrual health, Knowledge, Attitudes, Practices



For more information, please contact the editorial team:

Dr Jen Germain: J.S.Germain@ljmu.ac.uk

Dr Jane Harris: J.Harris@ljmu.ac.uk

Dr Conan Leavey: C.Leavey@ljmu.ac.uk

Dr Lorna Porcellato: L.A.Porcellato@ljmu.ac.uk

PHI | Public
Health
Institute
LIVERPOOL JOHN MOORES UNIVERSITY

Public Health Institute
Faculty of Health
Liverpool John Moores University
3rd Floor, Exchange Station
Tithebarn Street
Liverpool
L2 2QP

Telephone: +44 (0)151 231 4511

Email: phi@ljmu.ac.uk