

ABSTRACT

A QUALITATIVE EXAMINATION OF COOCCURRING DISORDERS: METHAMPHETAMINE AND MENTAL ILLNESS

Cooccurring disorders refers to individuals identified as having both a substance use disorder and a mental illness. This study sought to explore the personal and recovery experiences of individuals receiving treatment services for methamphetamine abuse or dependence and a mental illness. Five participants were recruited from an outpatient treatment program located in the Central Valley of California. Qualitative interviews consisting of six open-ended questions were conducted and recorded; a content analysis was performed in order to identify common themes. The study findings showed that the following common themes existed among all participants: traumatic experiences, using methamphetamine to avoid feelings and/or to control symptoms of mental illness, system frustration, and receiving support from the current treatment agency. Additional shared experiences reported by most of the participants were strained parental relationships, significant loss resulting in unresolved grief, and criminal justice system involvement. The implications of these findings for social work practice are discussed as well as limitations of the current study and recommendations for future research.

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